



L-Università
ta' Malta

Driving the sustainable development of an open research data culture: Two examples of collaborative best practice from the University of Malta.

University of Malta Library

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The University of Malta (UM)

- The leading higher education institution in Malta, with a 400-year history.
- Some 11,500 students yearly.
- About 3,500 students graduate in various disciplines annually.
- Around 1,700 academics and 1,000 administrative and technical staff.
- The University is composed of 14 Faculties, 16 Institutes, 13 Centres, 3 Schools and a junior college.

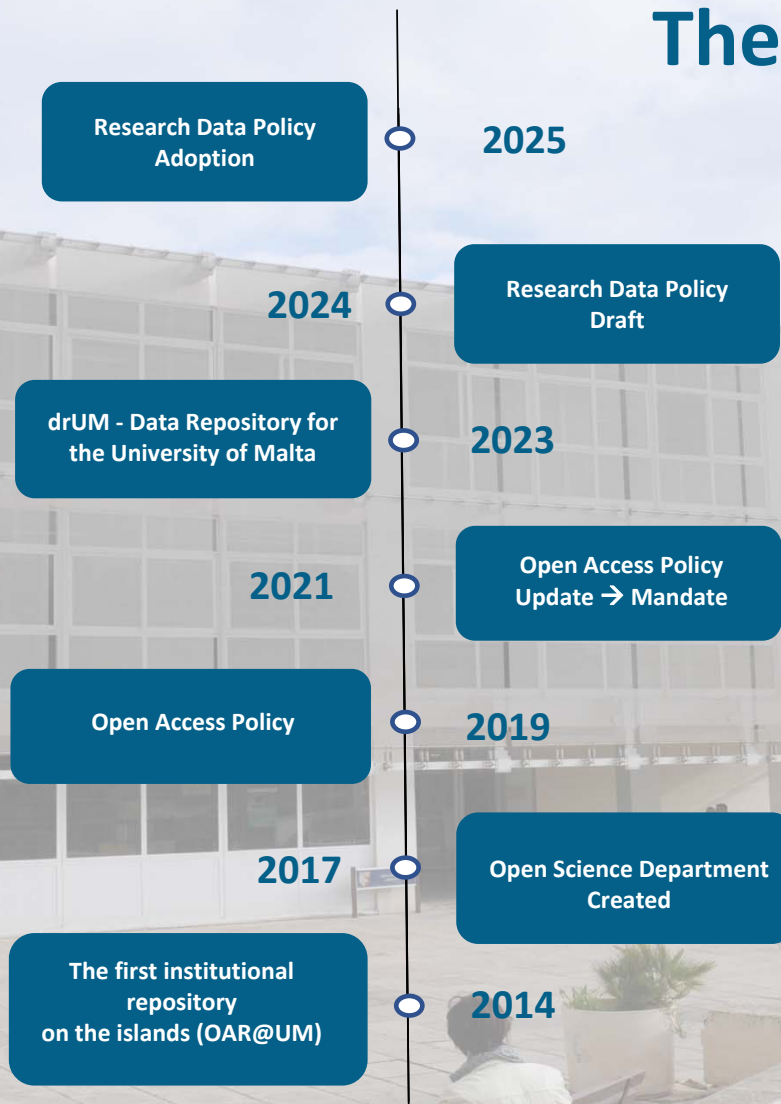


How we got here

- A member of the European Union since 2004.
- Since 2014 the University of Malta Library has been at the forefront of the Open Science 'movement' in Malta through various initiatives:
 - Establishing the first institutional repository in Malta.
 - Establishing an office that handles Open Science queries and takes care of the repository.
 - More importantly through its various activities, try to bring a shift in culture from a closed off 'traditional' one to a more Open one.



The role of UM's library



How we got here

- Challenges at the University of Malta:
 - Entrenched academics, with a specific way of doing things.
 - Increasing the visibility of our research as a 'small' University.
- How to change academic attitudes towards Open Science:
 - Create infrastructure.
 - Workshops, to showcase the technology and ease fears. Whilst these might not be the most efficient use of time, they do serve a purpose.
 - Meeting with stakeholders – one-on-one meetings while time consuming yield more results.



Some of our Open Science initiatives

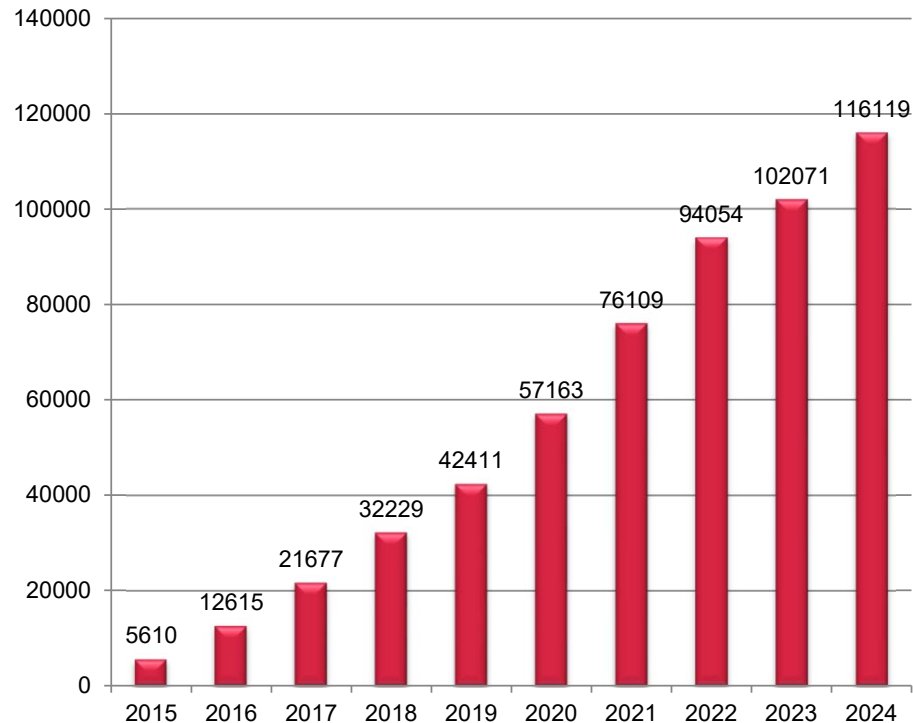
- General information meetings about Open Science, explaining various aspects:
 - Repositories.
 - Access rights – and the idea that not everything has to be Open Access.
 - Benefits of Open Science.
- Workshops:
 - Hands on workshops on how to use the repository – both general use, how to upload and created simple guides.
 - How to create and use Google Scholar and ORCID accounts.
- Open Science Conference and attendance at University events



What has been achieved in numbers



O OAR@UM growth:



O Uploading of research:

- More than 600 researchers and academics have their research in full deposited in the repository.
- Integration of repository into publication lists.
- Around 50,000 academic publications deposited.

O Digitising and uploading of c. 40,000 dissertations.

O Digitisation of archival materials so that they can be better enjoyed by patrons and the public.

SEA-EU Alliance Overview

- SEA-EU, a European Commission's initiative, unites 9 coastal universities across Europe (Cadiz, Western Brittany, Kiel, Gdansk, Split, Malta, Algarve, Naples, NORD).
- Create an international and interdisciplinary European University that enhances scientific cooperation, fosters innovation, and promotes knowledge transfer.
- UM Library led in Work Package 5 on Open Science and Open Research initiatives.



- Work Package 5 - [Building an Open Future: Fostering Open Science across the SEA-EU Community and Beyond](#)
- Key deliverable, a SEA-EU RDM Policy Framework and the creation of:
 - [SEA-EU Research Data Management Toolkit](#).
 - Report on best practices in Open Science.
 - Design of an Open Research Data (ORD) System.
 - Open Science Ambassador Programme.
 - Consolidation of SEA-EU Open Research Data Policies
- Working towards harmonisation and cooperation, creating of guidelines that can be adopted by Universities who might not have the resources to create their own policies.



Moving to Research Data

- Create a dedicated repository, just for research and replicate the same success we had with OAR@UM.
- This is a more niche sector for the UM – whilst data is present, there is no culture of archiving, sharing and preserving data.
- Supports FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) data principles.
- In line with SEA-EU Goals.
- Required a system that is less HR intensive, needing less maintenance, easy to use and intuitive – researchers would be uploading themselves.



- Adoption of Research Data Policy (from SEA-EU) and adoption of figshare for the creation of a data repository branded as drUM.
- While uptake and interest has been encouraging, data is still a niche topic and it requires much more effort to 'convert' researchers.
- It is much harder to demonstrate the benefits of sharing and archiving data than it is to showcase publications.
- drUM isn't just storage - it's an enabler. It empowers researchers to meet funder requirements, increases visibility, and enhances collaboration. As a result, researchers are embedding data management earlier in their projects.



WORKFLOW



23364



10 TB



Academic staff
(1GB by default)

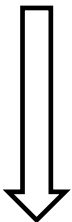


Students
(Consent form for depositing)

Self Deposit



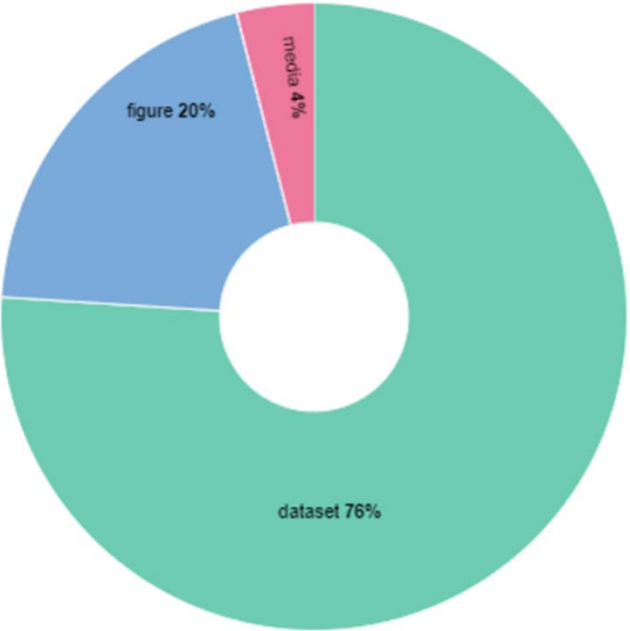
Open
Science
Department



Publishing data

- ✓ Approving items for publishing
- ✓ Distributing quotas
- ✓ Correcting metadata
- ✓ Creating sub-groups
- ✓ Consulting services encompassing publishing, licenses, embargo periods, copyright clearance

Group	Uploaded items
University of Malta	32
Faculty of Arts	5
Faculty for Social Wellbeing	2
Faculty of Science	2
Institute of Earth Systems	2
Centre for Biomedical Cybernetics	1
Centre for Labour Studies	1
Faculty of Economics, Management and Social Sciences	1
Institute of Space Sciences and Astronautics	1



Key Takeaways

- Open Science is a process, not an endpoint – it takes time, but results are clearly observable, and culture shifts are possible!
- Institutional leadership and infrastructure are essential – the UM Library took the lead in trying to implement Open Science technologies and promote its benefits.
- Cultural shifts require consistent engagement: workshops, information sessions, one-on-ones and willingness to meet with academics, researchers and projects.
- Collaboration multiplies impact – it serves as a multiplier for researchers but can also reduce the burden on institutions.



Useful Links:

OAR@UM:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/>

UM Open Access Policy:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar//handle/123456789/20022>

UM Library Website:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/library>

drUM:

<https://drum.um.edu.mt/>

SEA-EU Alliance:

<https://sea-eu.org/>

Library Help A-Z

https://www.um.edu.mt/library/help_az/



Thank you for your attention!



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