

# The DRCP and McMaster's Evolving Digital Research Support Landscape



Fall 2023 Feedback and Engagement Sessions

Digital Research Commons Pilot (DRCP) | [AskResearch.McMaster.ca](https://AskResearch.McMaster.ca) | [AskResearch@McMaster.ca](mailto:AskResearch@McMaster.ca)

# Overview

- ❖ About the DRCP
- ❖ Current state of digital research support: Findings
- ❖ Feedback and next steps





# Digital Research Commons Pilot

- A 3-Year Office of the Provost Strategic Alignment Fund-funded project
- Co-sponsored by the
  - Office of the Vice-President, Research (OVPR)
  - McMaster University Library (MUL), and
  - Office of the Associate Vice President (AVP) and Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

## Vision

To build a more connected, capable, and researcher-focused approach to digital research support, which will improve access to systems, services, software, and training for researchers across the institution.





# What is digital research support?

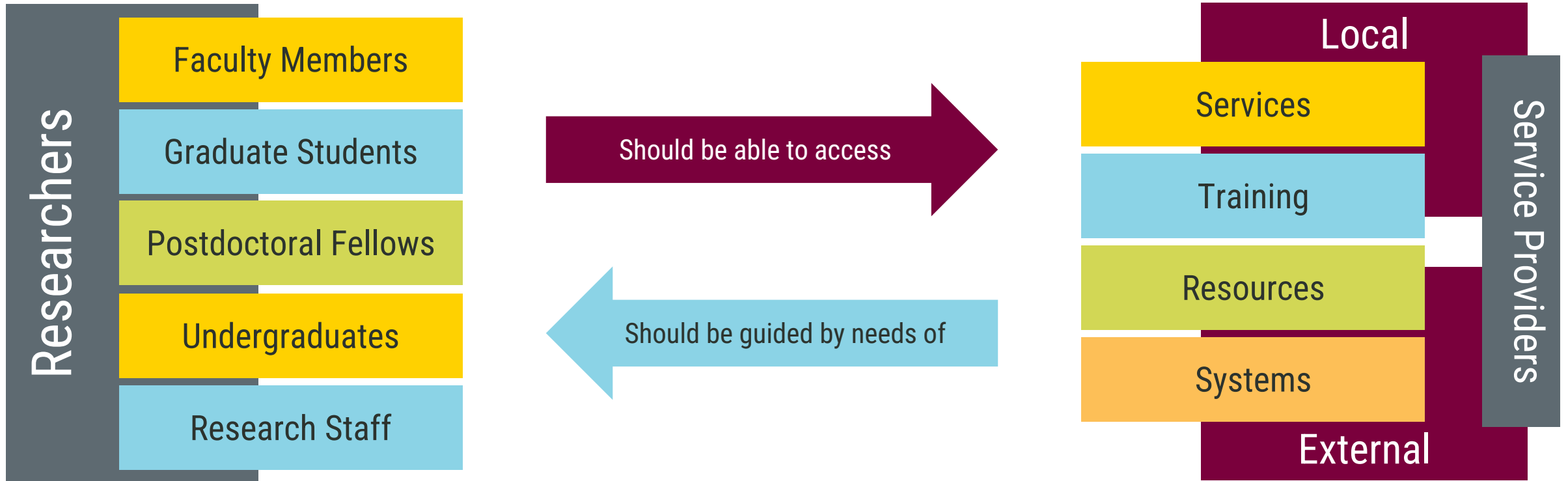
**Digital research support (DRS)** includes the digital technologies, as well as associated services, resources, systems, and people that work together to enable scholarly activity.

Digital research support providers facilitate access to systems, services, software, and the necessary expertise to use digital technologies effectively.

*"As a researcher, I use digital resources and technologies to complete my research."*

*"As a digital research support provider, I help researchers find, access, and use digital resources and technologies."*





## Mission

The DRCP will build into and around existing digital research support, so that:

- ❖ Researchers can easily find and use the services, systems, training, and resources they need to succeed in their research.
- ❖ Service providers and support units can collaborate to identify support gaps and develop complementary and shared services that meet the diverse needs across campus.





# The DRCP Team

## Operations

### Admin

Jay Brodeur  
Angela Di Nello  
Tracy Dallaire  
Ranil Sonnadara

Matthew Burns  
Ratika Sharma  
Kat Williams

## Research Data Management (RDM)

Emilie Altman  
Danica Evering  
Isaac Pratt (on leave)

## Research Impact (RI)

Jeff Demaine  
Jack Young

## CIPP Evaluation

Kestrel McNeill  
Katie Sonier

## Information Security for Researchers (IS4R)

Greg Atkinson  
Miro Cika  
Danny Johnston

## Research Software Development (RSD)

Dave Beardwood  
Ola Hejazi  
Kelvin Lee  
Elias Eid





# Key functions

## Engage with the community

- ❖ Identify needs, gaps, opportunities for collaboration
- ❖ Co-create a vision for coordinated digital research support

## Develop shared resources, services, communities

- ❖ Research Data Management, Research IT Security, Research Impact, Research Software Development, Online Data Collection

## Provide researchers a single support interface

- ❖ Compile and present information about local, provincial, or national services and training opportunities
- ❖ Deliver support services to help researchers find what they need

## Assess our approach

- ❖ Continually assess and refine the pilot – during and after





# The DRCP at work

## **Building capacity for research success and compliance**

Digital Research Workshop Series

Training modules for IT Security for Researchers & Research Software Development

REDCap support and training

## **Developing resources that support research**

Transcription guidance document for human participant research

M365 resources for researchers (including Project for the Web)

Software management plans (SMPs)

Single Sign-On (SSO) enablement for researchers' systems

Resources for new members of the research community (with Faculty IT leads, RHPCS, MUL, UTS)

View the resources and read our progress reports at:

[askresearch.mcmaster.ca](https://askresearch.mcmaster.ca)

## **Operationalizing access to services and resources**

Software licensing catalogue: Phase 1 (with Faculty IT leads, RHPCS, MUL)

Digital research services catalogue: Pilot (with Faculty IT leads, RHPCS, MUL)

Connecting service ticketing and support systems





# The current state of digital research support at McMaster

## McMaster's Evolving Digital Research Support Landscape

(Version 1.0; Fall 2023)

A report by the  
Digital Research Commons Pilot (DRCP)



Digital Research  
Commons Pilot  
askresearch.mcmaster.ca

This report is shared with the McMaster research community for review and comment and will be updated periodically as additional feedback and new information is collected.

Please use this form: <https://u.mcmaster.ca/drcp-feedback> (survey opens November 8, 2023) to provide feedback. Information collection for this period ends December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023.





# Themes

1. Organization and coordination of services
2. Alignment of research support provision with researcher practices
3. Discovery of digital research support services
4. Access to digital research support services
5. Availability of resources and training





## Theme #1: Organization and coordination of services

The decentralized and uncoordinated nature of digital research support has led to operational inefficiencies and confusion regarding support offerings.

The lack of a central mechanism to gather information on researcher needs hinders support units' ability to allocate resources.

*"I don't know where to begin to find the digital research information I need."*

*"I would like to know more about other service providers so we could coordinate better."*





## Theme #2: Alignment of research support provision with researcher practices

Researchers and service providers have contrasting practices and expectations pertaining to the provision of digital research support.

These contrasting practices and expectations contribute to the underutilization of McMaster's digital research supports.

*"I need to balance my research and institutional obligations."*

*"I have limited resources and capacity to deliver digital research support."*





## Theme #3: Discovery of digital research support services

Decentralized and uncoordinated service delivery results in a digital research support landscape that is difficult to navigate.

Researchers may find it difficult to find/access reliable assistance, and they may direct their inquiries to incorrect support units or abandon their search altogether.

*“I don’t know what’s available. I don’t know how to get what I need.”*





## Theme #4: Access to digital research support services

Some researchers face larger barriers accessing digital research support due to variations in funding availability, service offerings across faculties, technical expertise, and research types/goals/values.

Researchers may avoid certain support units, seek support elsewhere, or forgo certain types of support.

*"I know which digital research resources I need but there are obstacles in my way."*





# Theme #5: Availability of resources and training

Several critical gaps in services, resources, and training were identified.

Some of these supports are already offered (at McMaster or externally).

Ideally, training programs can be customized to accommodate different audiences by role, skill level, discipline, and technical familiarity.

*“There are digital research support resources missing from this menu.”*





# Summary of challenges

- **Researchers** face difficulties navigating the digital research support ecosystem to discover and access relevant services and resources.
- **Service providers** operate with varied and often incomplete understanding of researcher needs and the services and resources available elsewhere.
- **Administrators** have difficulty assessing the efficacy and efficiency of the distributed and uncoordinated support environment.







# Opportunities for improvement

- Ongoing engagement and information collection
- Enhancing communications within the research community
- Realigning service priorities and operations
- Coordinating service delivery
- Improving awareness of digital research supports
- Engaging researchers at career milestones



# Next steps & feedback





# The continuing work of the DRCP

## 1. Current state report

1. Further information collection and feedback [Nov-Dec 2023]
2. Analyses and revision [Jan-Mar, 2024]
3. Community validation and updated release [Summer 2024]

## 2. Recommendations for digital research support

1. Synthesis of current state report data [Jan-Mar, 2024]
2. Additional information collection and synthesis [Jan-June, 2024]
3. Community review and revision [Summer, 2024]

## 3. Continuing to connect the digital research ecosystem [until Aug, 2025]





# Your input & feedback!

- What, if anything, in this report particularly resonates with you?
- What aspects of this report do you disagree with or feel requires further characterization/contextualization?
- What have we missed in terms of service providers, issues, or opportunities?

Your feedback will be used to refine **these findings** and develop recommendations for improved digital research support and the DRCP's role going forward.

Please consider providing feedback via our survey:

[u.mcmaster.ca/drcp-feedback](https://u.mcmaster.ca/drcp-feedback) (survey closes December 31, 2023)

