

# 'This looks a bit dodgy' : data usability and maintenance when funding runs out

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# What do we mean by sustainability?

- Assumption of scientific model
  - Closed data set, finished, stable
- Sustainability means
  - Terabytes of storage
  - Dark archiving
  - Preservation for later access
  - Migration to new platform as necessary

## The nature of Humanities data

- Often small amounts of data
- Not a closed resource
- Scholarly effort represented by arrangement, linkages, search
- Presentation of material vital
- Maintenance & updating needed
  - Usually by someone who understands material

# The nature of the problem

- [Example 1](#)
- [Example 2](#)

## Why is this a problem?

- Users decide on website in fractions of a second
  - Reaction is visceral not thought out
  - ‘That looks a bit dodgy’
- Grown used to look of commercial resources
- Don’t trust something that looks ‘wrong’
- Lack of trust leads to non-use
  - Unless resource already known or absolutely vital

## Financial reality

- No budget for updating and maintenance
- Grants run out, PIs move on, RAs have other work
- Funders won't provide ongoing budget

## Implications of this?

- If people won't use 'dodgy' resources all money spent is wasted
  - As well as intellectual effort
- Only commercial resources usable long term?
- Implications for universities
  - What about the REF?
  - What about impact?

## Possible solutions

- Dedicated funding for updating and maintenance
  - Without having to promise bells and whistles
- Not just for a few outstanding projects
  - Successful and usable ones
  - Could be related to end of grant assessments
- Universities need to dedicate resource to this
  - REF may be a driver
- Funding bodies need to check this is done



## Resource aggregation

- Could we use ‘small science’ model
- Bring small humanities projects together with common front end
  - Web services layer
  - Doesn’t require data to be changed
- But that means....

## Designing for the long term

- Design as well as possible for current users
- Follow recommendations on user testing
  - LAIRAH, JISC Impact toolkit
- Don't just design for yourself and your colleagues
- Use open standards
- Try to make front end and backend work independently

# Documentation

- Provide as much documentation as possible
  - Technical and user orientated
  - Link it to resource
- Imagine someone trying to understand the resource without your help

**It can be done!**

[Example 1](#)

[Example 2](#)