

APB Rembau e-Bulletin

e-ISSN: 2682-776X

Edition: 13/2024

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Collaborative Pathways: UiTM's Journey to Open Science Initiative

Written by: Wahidah Mohd Zain

In March 2023, Information Science Studies, College of Computing, Informatics and Mathematics, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Negeri Sembilan Branch, Rembau Campus embarked on a transformative journey with the launch of the "Open Science Readiness in Malaysian Academic Institutions" project. This pivotal initiative, in partnership with Paula Lackie, a seasoned Fulbright Specialist from Carleton College, MN, USA, was a strategic move to fortify the academic infrastructure with research data management (RDM) and open science principles, thanks to the Fulbright Specialist Program which facilitated this international collaboration.

Over a dynamic two-week period, the project unfolded a series of meticulously planned activities, each designed to progressively integrate open science into Malaysia's academic and research ethos. The endeavor commenced with essential administrative arrangements and strategic meetings with the Malaysian-American Commission on Educational Exchange (MACEE) team, setting a solid foundation for the knowledge exchange to follow.

The heart of the project's mission was to delve deep into open science and RDM through engaging workshops and

discussions at UiTM's College of Computing, Informatics, and Media. This was complemented by insightful sessions at Perpustakaan Tun Abdul Razak, which underscored the critical role of libraries in supporting the open science framework. The engagement extended to the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), where comprehensive discussions highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of open science, bridging various academic domains.

A significant highlight of the project was the International Symposium on Open Science for Information Professionals, held from March 13-15, 2023. This event, partially sponsored by IASSIST, represented a milestone in Malaysia's journey towards open science. Hosted at UiTM Negeri Sembilan Branch, the symposium drew over 100 participants from 45 institutions across Malaysia, illustrating the widespread interest and burgeoning commitment to open science within the national academic community.

The symposium was a vibrant platform for exchanging ideas and experiences, featuring a lineup of esteemed speakers and panels. Among them was Prof. ChM. Dr. Noorsaadah Abd. Rahman, Chair of the Malaysian Open Sciences Alliance, who provided valuable insights into the national open science agenda. Additionally, panels of Citizen Scientists from the US and IASSIST members, including Tim Dennis from UCLA,

Deborah Wiltshire from GESIS, Jenny Muilenburg from the University of Washington, and Paula Lackie, enriched the discourse, offering international perspectives on the open science movement.

The project was not just an academic exercise but a practical endeavor to empower participants with the knowledge and tools necessary for implementing open science in their respective institutions. Through Paula Lackie's expertise in research data lifecycles and data management, the project illuminated the path to developing sustainable and FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) research practices, thereby enhancing the participants' capacity to advocate for and adopt open science.

Reflecting on the symposium and the broader project activities, it's evident that international collaboration is a powerful catalyst for advancing open science. The project underscored the value of bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise to enrich the academic dialogue and practice in open science, as previously seen in the successful grant project on open science awareness and the engaging session at the IASSIST conference in Philadelphia.

Looking ahead, the groundwork laid by this project is poised to catalyze further research grants and international collaborations, aiming to broaden and deepen the open

science ecosystem in Malaysia. These future endeavors promise to bring additional resources, expertise, and networks, enhancing the overall impact and sustainability of open science initiatives in the country.

The "Open Science Readiness in Malaysian Academic Institutions" project, highlighted by the International Symposium on Open Science, signifies a major advancement in Malaysia's academic journey. It exemplifies the transformative power of international collaboration in fostering open science, setting a benchmark for future initiatives, and paving the way towards a more open, collaborative, and transparent research environment in Malaysia and beyond. This journey, marked by shared knowledge and collective effort, inspires and shapes the future of academic and research practices, promising a more interconnected and open world of scientific discovery.

In closing, it is imperative to extend heartfelt appreciation and congratulations to Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Negeri Sembilan, Perpustakaan Tun Abdul Razak (PTAR), Persatuan Pustakawan Malaysia (PPM), the Malaysian-American Commission on Educational Exchange (MACEE), the Malaysian Open Science Platform (MOSP), the International Association for Social Science Information Services and Technology (IASSIST), and all

the dedicated committee members involved in the project. Their full dedication and hard work were the linchpins of the program's success, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to advancing open science. This collaborative effort achieved its immediate goals and set a precedent for future initiatives, marking a significant milestone in the journey toward open science innovation. The collective endeavor and the synergistic partnership have paved the way for a brighter, more open future in scientific research and academic excellence.

Picture 1:

International Symposium on Open Science for Information Professionals held on March 13-15th, 2023 in AKEPT, Nilai, Negeri Sembilan



Picture 2: Workshop on Research Data Management in Academic institutions delivered by the Fulbright Specialist



Picture 3: Paula Lackie as the moderator in the collaborative forum with international speakers on Open Science



Picture 4: Fulbright Specialist visited Big Data Lab and College of Computing, Informatics and Mathematics, UiTM Shah Alam



Picture 5: Greet and meet at Fulbright Malaysia

