Mediated Deposit – doing less … by doing more?

Introducing Mediated Deposit for research outputs at the University of Birmingham

Who are we?
Scholarly Communications Services (SCS) - manage institutional repositories.
Repository Collections Specialists (RCSs) – check and process research output records: the ones at the sharp end!

Why does it matter?
Next Research Excellence Framework (REF 2029)
University must publicly evidence outstanding research to secure critical major funding.

PROBLEM: Academics find Pure hard to use - create poor records / just avoid it

- User interface complicated and unintuitive: unclear what to add and what to do.

RESULT: More work for everyone

- Poor records for research outputs, incorrect and confused information, missing key details which need chased up by RCSs, irritating academics and threatening their future engagement with Pure.
- RCSs use already stretched staff resources inefficiently fixing poor records without improving underlying issues with engagement.

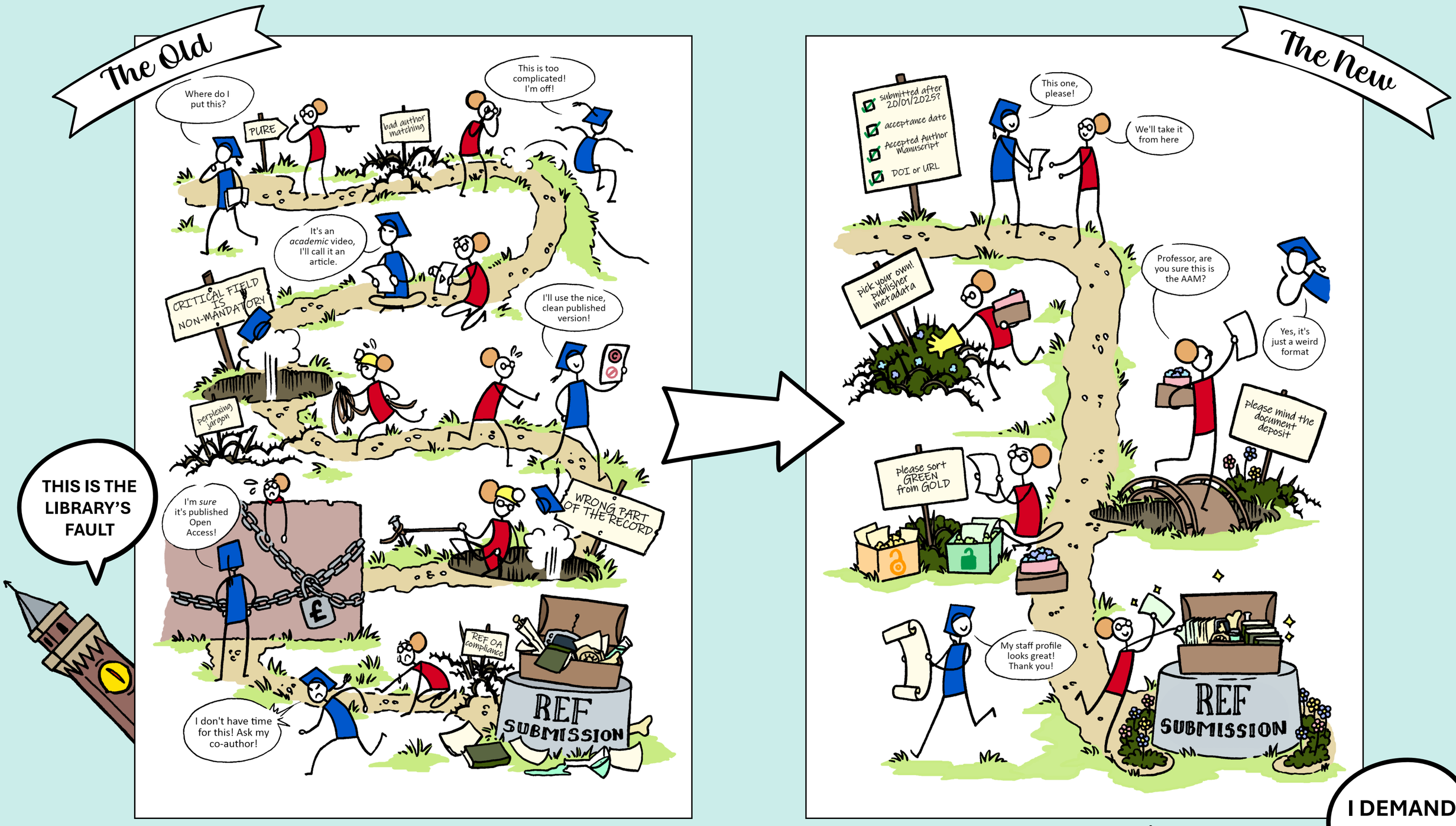
MEANWHILE: the University…

- Will scrutinise *us* if the REF OA compliance rates are not looking good.

Why is Mediated Deposit better?

- Simple online form, designed by us: academics supply the minimum essential bibliographic details and documents - quicker and easier for us all!
- RCSs make Pure records, ensuring they are correct and compliant - outputs appear quickly and neatly on Research Portal and Staff Profiles.
- Putting together a great REF submission should be smoother and simpler.

Extra initial work by us RCSs on records should be balanced out by smoother progress ahead?



PILOT (July-September 2025)

- College of Life and Environmental Sciences - wide range of publication types, mix of engagement / skill levels on Pure.
- Mediated Deposit form designed and tested by RCSs, with feedback form.
- Do academics prefer Mediated Deposit? Can we handle the workload?

ROLLOUT! (May 2026)

- Form output spreadsheet too cumbersome for our team - couldn't handle research outputs for the whole university like this!
- Solution: automation! Head of Service took a crash course in Power Automate and devised a cleaner, more robust spreadsheet.

Boss, the Power Automate flow broke!

Mediated what?

This is great! Can you do [extra task] too?

ONGOING CHALLENGES

- Reaching academics who just don't deposit by any route – tips??
- Only Head of Service knows how to use Power Automate.
- Managing expectations… we haven't 'done more with less', we're balancing doing more upfront to do less down the road.

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

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