Policy and planning questions for VIVO data

What data belongs in VIVO?

This is of course fundamentally a local choice based on what's available to you, what you can get permission to harvest and post publicly, what time span you deem relevant, and what role individual researchers want to have in reviewing content about themselves in VIVO.

The public/private issue is an important one to address early on. Some data elements can be addressed uniformly as a matter of local policies and/or any legal restrictions on what information can be posted on the Web. Some universities operate with an opt in policy for posting data or photos about individuals on the Web, while others may assume more information is public and follow an opt-out policy.

In other cases good judgement will dictate information to leave out of VIVO such as tenure or leave status. At another level the decision may be more practical – for example, Cornell does not include office addresses or phone numbers on VIVO pages but includes a link to the online campus directory to assure that information is current.

More about public vs. private data

Sensitivities

Personal preference also enters the picture, and it will be important to consult with data stewards in your organization or on your campus to understand any mechanisms that may be available to determine exceptions to general policies.

Sensitivities to be aware of:

- Political sensitivity: a researcher may not want it to be widely known that he is studying stem cells, or experimenting with animals.
- Relevance/age: a faculty member may feel that older papers do not represent her current areas of interest.
- Competitive advantage: a researcher may not want to make it easy for competitors to discover his sources of funding.

Data review or approval

One challenge in building any information system that relies on individual people as data sources or data reviewers is the balance between the desire for control and the lack of time to do the review. Several universities in the VIVO effort have worked carefully to minimize the number of times a typical faculty member or researcher is asked to provide or review information about themselves; this "ask" happens most commonly in connection with the annual performance review process, or faculty reporting.

In a smaller institution, VIVO may serve as a platform for researches to build a dossier of information in the absence of a formal reporting tool, but annual reporting at larger institutions involves private as well as public information, whether contributing to a cradle-to-grave employment record or just to annual review procedures. It is very common, however, for much of the publicly-visible data gathered in faculty reporting systems to be re-used for web pages at the department or institution-wide level, and such systems are very often a major source of data for VIVO.

When VIVO does consume data from another reporting system, it's worth trying to capture any display preferences captured at the time that the researcher conducts his or her review of their profile and signs off on its accuracy. By reflecting the same choices on what to include and/or the selection or ordering of publications, VIVO will reflect the larger information ecosystem at the institution and minimize the data entry and review effort required of researchers.

Organizational complexities

Entire colleges or departments may decide that they do not want to appear in VIVO.

- Frequently this can overcome by limiting the types of data that will be ingested.
- In other cases it may be necessary to nuance ingest processes for the same data source to address differing requirements on what data each was willing to share, and when.

Don't compete with my web page

Individuals and departments or centers frequently invest considerable effort in carefully designed and curated web pages. It has proven helpful at Cornell to offer a version of organization and people pages featuring a prominent image of the preferred, hand-curated web page. VIVO is functioning in this case as rich, contextual search results that visually more attention and traffic to the preferred page, reinforcing rather than competing for prominence.

Further resources

The 2011 Implementation Fest at Washington University and 2012 Implementation Fest at the University of Colorado both featured extensive presentations on policy and planning issues prior to adoption and during VIVO implementation.