The use of the Digital Object Identifier (DOI) standard in government

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is the regulator for the social service workforce in Scotland. Our work means the people of Scotland can count on social services being provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce.

We protect the public by registering social service workers, setting standards for their practice, conduct, training and education and by supporting their professional development. Where people fall below the standards of practice and conduct we can investigate and take action.

In addition to our regulatory function, we are also an Official Statistics and National Statistics provider. For example, we are responsible for annually publishing the Scottish Social Services Workforce Data report and the Mental Health Officers report.

The Adoption of the DOI standard

The SSSC supports Government moves to adopt digital object identifiers (DOIs) for public sector work. DOIs, along with associated metadata systems, will increase transparency by fulfilling FAIR principles, making work Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable.

The adoption of the DOI standard will allow ideas to be appropriately recognised. This will highlight organisations' place in the flow of information. We determine this will benefit the government by making it easier to track which outputs are being used by others, and also the increased awareness of better citation will improve citation generally. Adopting the DOI standard will also mean publications will be able to better recognise the contributions of staff.

This would benefit us as we would be able to see clearly where the statistics we publish are being used or how reports that we publish are disseminated throughout the sector and beyond.

Providing persistent web links will improve the transparency and uptake of government work. It will also reduce the incidence of redundant web addresses being returned when searching for reports, making sure that the correct resources are always available.

Cost implications

We do not have any information regarding the financial cost for implementing the DOI standard. There are several platforms which already exist for providing DOIs and do so free of charge.

In order to address any costs associated with deploying the infrastructure required to implement DOIs, we feel that lessons should be learned from those currently using the DOI standard. Learning the lessons early on will ease deployment and should reduce potential delays to implementation.

Deployment

We feel that a reasonable deployment choice would be to add DOI functionality to existing services like data.gov.uk and statistics.gov.scot, although these would need to be extended to host other output types such as reports and presentations.

When the DOI standard is deployed, the priority should be making it as easy to use and accessible as possible for those creating outputs. There is likely to be a wide variety of ways government departments currently approve and release outputs, so streamlining this would be helpful. However, top-down constraints would not be welcomed and any new system must be easier than the current one.

Organisational structure of DOI

We feel the priority when implementing the DOI standard should be ensuring ease of use. The system used for DOI should be smoother and more user-friendly than the current system. Considerations regarding prefix identity should be secondary to user experience.

To our knowledge, DOIs are not in widespread use outside academia, but with ever increasing use of digital solutions, being able to consistently reference digital objects will only increase in importance.

Impact on users

Users who have not yet used DOIs are unlikely to see any difference to current operation, with the exception of a more consistent publication approach and metadata record. Ultimately DOIs will reduce confusion as their persistent nature will make government outputs more findable for a longer duration than they currently are.

Scottish Social Services Council
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