

DANS witness statement: the challenge of a business model with diverse income streams.

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Conference paper

Summary

The DANS organization

Data Archiving and Networked Services (DANS) is a national service provider based in the Netherlands. DANS has a mission to promote sustained access to digital research data [1]. DANS encourages scientific researchers to archive and reuse data in a sustained form, for instance via the online archiving system EASY and DataverseNL. Through its national portal to scientific information NARCIS, DANS also provides access to thousands of scientific datasets, publications and other research information in the Netherlands. The institute furthermore provides training and consultancy and carries out research on sustained access to digital information. Driven by data, DANS ensures the further improvement of access to digital research data with its services and participation in (inter)national projects and networks.

The DANS business model

DANS is an institute of and funded by the national research council NWO and the national academy KNAW. The structural funding coming from these mother organisations covers some two thirds of the budget. The other third is project funding.

Next to these two main income streams DANS has been exploring other income streams for some time now. These income streams involve fixed hourly fees for processing and documenting individual data deposits, that have not been handed over according to the DANS guidelines, fixed hourly fees for consultancy and training services and fees for archiving services. This last category includes institutional agreements with universities

as well as (dark) archiving services for third parties (both public and private, national and international). Pricing of these services depends on a number of factors: the type of storage (number of copies, access time) and other requirements of the customer as well as the value of the data for DANS. Payments will be asked either yearly or one off.

The challenges we face

With funders mandating open data and data sharing the present time offers many opportunities for data repositories as trustworthy, long-term nodes in an open science infrastructure. As a relatively small and largely disciplinary data archive DANS tries to fulfill its mission in this continuously and rapidly changing data landscape.

The amount and complexity of data is rapidly growing and the structural funding DANS receives from its two mother organizations is inelastic and will not keep pace with the growing tasks DANS has to fulfill. The project funding is incidental by nature and requires a large acquisition effort with a rather low success rate. There is tension between the long term mission of DANS as a trustworthy digital repository and this dependency on incidental funding. Therefore, DANS looks at alternative income streams. However, these income streams require a lot of negotiations with customers, the development of custom made financial solutions and a separate administration.

Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

Notes

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