JURY REPORT
SURF Research Support Champions 2021

It's great to see that there are so many excellent research supporters around, working hard in different ways to achieve so many different goals.

Higher education institutions in the Netherlands are currently devoting a lot of attention to data professionalisation. Many software tools exist, data should be stored using FAIR principles and GDPR rules make some research projects more complex. An award for research supporters who have accomplished major tasks in this area fits in beautifully with these developments.

While researchers are often put in the spotlight, supporters are indispensable for high-quality scientific and scholarly output. They do vital work, but their work is often invisible. From an IT and data management perspective, research supporters are the bridge between researchers and research IT. The SURF Research Support Champion award ceremony recognises those who have made remarkable efforts to support research within their institution.

The jury of the first ever SURF Research Support Championship was delighted to discover how highly colleagues appreciated the research support staff they nominated for the Award. The nominations sent to the jury were surprisingly extensive and enthusiastic.

The candidates for the Award were nominated by their immediate colleagues, by researchers and by managers, and the jury determined the winners based on the descriptions in the nomination forms. It was no easy task to decide on a top 3, since so many strong candidates were put forward. The task was all the more difficult because the nominees hold different functions and perform different roles, while the institutions at which they work organise research support in different ways. For the jury, this sometimes felt like comparing apples and oranges.

Nevertheless, we unanimously came up with the following winners:

Category Universities:

Maria Kamp, Coordinator Research Support - Universiteit Twente

Maria was nominated by no fewer than 5 colleagues. She inspires others with her decisive approach and collaborative mentality. Maria played an essential and driving role in setting up the Research Support Team of the Engineering Technology faculty. As a result, the team has become a recognisable unit for the faculty's researchers.

Maria puts herself in the shoes of the researchers, which really helps her to support them. She takes all kinds of administrative work off their hands, so that the researchers can focus on their primary task, and always comply with data management and ethics requirements. She has ensured that all kinds of administrative processes have been standardised, which means that they cost researchers less time. For example, she has developed an online tool with which researchers can easily go through all the necessary steps in the ethical approval procedure.

Maria knows a lot of researchers personally, visits them when they have questions, and attends departmental meetings when necessary, so that people know how to find her. In addition, she maintains the same personal contact with colleagues from research support throughout the university, so that she is always exactly up to date with the latest developments, about which she then informs the researchers.

Finally, she is praised for her positive, optimistic attitude when she has to explain subjects that are boring and tedious to researchers, such as data management and ethical reviews, and encourage them to deal with these issues.

Category universities of applied sciences:
Mariëtte van Selm, Coordinator Research Data Management (RDM) support at the UvA-HvA library

'An indispensable advisor', according to one of the colleagues who nominated Mariëtte van Selm. With unflagging energy and pragmatic commitment, Mariëtte helps researchers obtain, process, manage and sustainably archive research data, and she is not afraid to break through professional and bureaucratic barriers. She listens well and brings the right people together at the right time. In addition, she has 'an enormous capacity to cope and persevere'.

Because she was nominated by a colleague from the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, she was declared the winner in this category, but she is in fact a valuable link between the worlds of applied sciences and academia. In the past year, she has worked hard and successfully on the creation of a Research Management Portal for the UvA to facilitate researchers in all procedures concerning RDM, ethics and privacy. In 2021, she will use this knowledge to do the same for the HvA.

Mariëtte has been working on RDM support for researchers of the UvA and HvA for almost 10 years. Within these institutions, the term RDM is inextricably linked to her name. Mariëtte initiated and set up the support for research data at her institution and has since supported all researchers at the UvA and HvA with tailor-made advice, procedures for RDM and infrastructure for sustainable data storage.

Mariëtte has laid a solid foundation for the acceptance of RDM within both institutions and has brought together not only researchers but all parties that play a role, such as IT, legal affairs and

privacy officers. In addition, she has played a role in the Netherlands and internationally (in the Research Data Alliance) in the creation of awareness and training courses. Without her efforts, knowledge about and the use of RDM would not have progressed as far as they have.

Category UMC & Research:
Bob van Dijk, High Performance Computing adviser - Amsterdam UMC

Because of his solid, substantive, cross-domain knowledge, organisation-wide contacts and very helpful approach, Bob is the pivot of all HPC activities within Amsterdam UMC. This Research Support Champion builds the bridge between researcher and research IT by guiding researchers in technical solutions and translating their support request to technical requirements for research IT, such as computing capacity and cloud environments. He has also supervised pilots for AzureDRE and SURF Research Cloud, among other things.

As a co-initiator of the Digital Competence Center (DCC) of Amsterdam UMC, Bob makes an important contribution to its effective organization. Within the DCC, the support in the field of Research Data Management (RDM), High Performance Computing (HPC) and research software support is combined.

Moreover, this widely respected expert can always be approached by colleagues for a virtual coffee, to inform new RDM colleagues of the available ICT services that researchers can benefit from.

The jury:

Ron Augustus
chief innovation officer SURF (chairperson of the jury)

Joris van Eijnatten
director Netherlands eScience Center

Petra Drankier
senior policy advisor Nederlandse Federatie van Universitair Medische Centra (NFU)

Mariska van der Giessen
chairperson Vereniging van Lectoren

Lisa Oskam
board member Promovendi Netwerk Nederland