

Practice Research

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“Practice is not just for REF”

“...avoiding the REF graveyard”

PRAG's long term aim is to ensure that bodies of Practice Research are visible and searchable, and that the creative and cultural industries can fully contribute to the UK's industrial and creative economy and the advancement of innovative interdisciplinary research. This is a capacity building project. It will produce tangible exemplars, stimulate and focus discussion, and work towards the development of a sustainable framework. In addition, it aims to provide HEIs and researchers with tools, guidance and confidence in the submission of Practice Research for RCUK/UKRI funding and in the preparations for the UK's REF 2021.

PRAGUK

Bulley/Şahin
Reports

(Research England 2021)

SPARKLE

PR Voices

Repository?

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graph LR; PRAGUK[PRAGUK] -.-> Bulley[Bulley/Şahin Reports]; Bulley -.-> SPARKLE[SPARKLE]; Bulley -.-> PRVoices[PR Voices]; SPARKLE -.-> Repository[Repository?]; PRVoices -.-> Repository;
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The diagram is a flowchart illustrating a process flow. It starts with a white box labeled 'PRAGUK' at the top left. A dashed arrow points from 'PRAGUK' to a green box labeled 'Bulley/Şahin Reports'. Below this green box is the text '(Research England 2021)'. From the 'Bulley/Şahin Reports' box, two dashed arrows branch out: one to an orange box labeled 'SPARKLE' and another to a pink box labeled 'PR Voices'. Both the 'SPARKLE' and 'PR Voices' boxes have dashed arrows pointing to a large black box on the right labeled 'Repository?'.

PRACTICE RESEARCH



James Bulley
&
Özden Şahin

What we have discovered through all of our investigations is the pressing need for clarity in how we talk about practice research: without it practice researchers will continue to be frustrated in applications for funding, in gaining institutional support, and in the ability to disseminate¹ research effectively. Practice research allows intuitive, embodied, tacit, imaginative, affective and sensory ways of knowing to be shared in ways that other more traditional research forms often do not. Furthermore, nourishing and developing ways of sharing practice research creates a vital opportunity for modernising and revitalising research communication, mapping novel dissemination routes in a digital and networked era. Practice research affords a huge opportunity for academia, but its progress will be impeded unless it proceeds from a coherent, open and well-established grounding. Our concluding remarks take as a basis the fact that practice researchers operate across all disciplines and beyond disciplinary boundaries, inside and outside of academia.



practice research - an umbrella term that describes all manners of research where practice is the significant method of research conveyed in a research output. This includes numerous discipline-specific formulations of practice research, which have distinct and unique balances of practice, research narrative and complementary methods within their projects. The term is non-capitalised in general usage, in common with other research fields.

research narrative - in a practice research output, a research narrative may be conjoined with, or embodied in, practice. A research narrative articulates the research inquiry that emerges in practice.





<https://bl.iro.bl.uk/downloads/b3afceff-c502-4c59-8855-6fc5889a41f4?locale=en>

REF is not the point!

But...

...the REF definition of research is very useful.

For the purposes of the REF, research is defined as **a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.**

REF2014  REF2021

What have we learned?

REF2014 panel feedback to the sector

- there are too many instances where **the sector still has difficulty distinguishing excellent professional practice from practice with a clear research dimension.**
- More generally, the [support] statements too often displayed a misunderstanding of what was being asked for and provided evidence of impact from the research, or a descriptive account akin to a programme note, rather than making the case for practice as research.

“...new **insights**,
effectively shared.”

REF2021 panel feedback to the sector

- Practice research submissions were significantly improved in terms of detailing the research dimensions of the submitted outputs. (p. 24)
- outputs were supported by a precise [supporting] statement that articulated the research context, methods and methodology, insights and dissemination. Outputs were often further supported by additional contextual information. (p. 24)
- strongest practice research outputs were characterised by precision, depth and brevity in presenting the research dimensions of the work (p. 24)

REF2021 panel feedback to the sector

- Weaker submissions did not always sufficiently identify or articulate a research dimension in the materials submitted, with limitations in critical depth, rigorous process or research contextualisation. (p. 24)
- In weaker submissions, it was unclear what the output comprised of and what elements were to be assessed [...] or conflated research and professional practice. (p. 166)



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Funding opportunity

Scoping future data services for the arts and humanities

Towards a repository for practice research

What's a 'repository' then...?

an archive for collecting, preserving, and
disseminating digital copies of the intellectual
output of an ~~institution~~ researcher

Not a platform (youtube, vimeo)

Not a network (facebook, Instagram)

Not a publisher

What have SPARKLE & PR Voices done?

SPARKLE Project

Dr Scott McLaughlin

University of Leeds

Sustaining Practice Assets for Research, Knowledge, Learning and Engagement (SPARKLE)

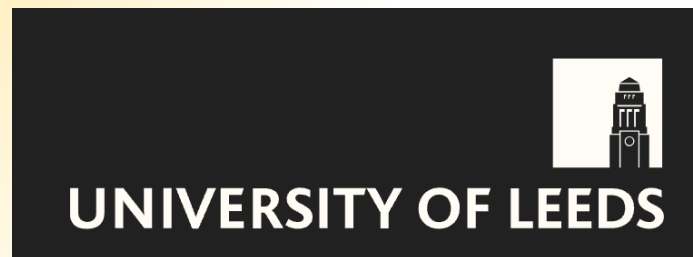
Principal Investigator – [Tom Jackson](#)

Co-Investigators: [Claire Knowles](#), [Scott McLaughlin](#), [Rachael Kotarski \(British Library\)](#)

Post-Doctoral Research Associates (PDRA): [Alex De Little](#), [Matthew Warren](#)

Overview

- SPARKLE project aims
- Interview summary findings
- (draft) Technical proposals



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

SPARKLE proposes a national infrastructure for the storage, discovery, access, analysis, and preservation of practice research assets: which may include text, but also image/video/audio/software, and other less common mediums.

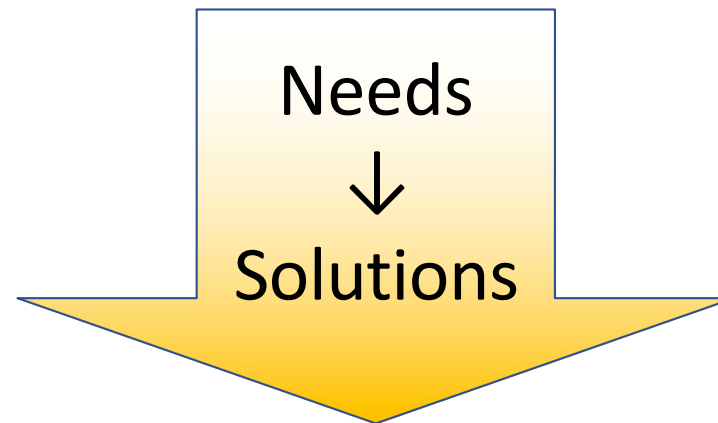
Practice research is a broad community that cuts across disciplines and is not well-served by current text-focussed repositories, needing a more considered approach to a wider range of mediums. Equally, the current repository focus on single outputs is a poor fit for the processual and interconnected nature of practice research. SPARKLE will address these issues and fill in a significant gap in the interconnected trusted repositories landscape. It will provide **an integrated technology infrastructure** for innovative practice research, along with economies of scale through a **cloud-based data service**, encompassing **critical FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable)**.

As a holistic service to support practice research for now and the future, SPARKLE will include capabilities for analysing quantitative, thick, and big data, and learning resources to support documenting, accessing, and reusing practice assets. This project will produce an initial scoping of the required data infrastructure and community training needs.

Methodology

Semi-structured interviews

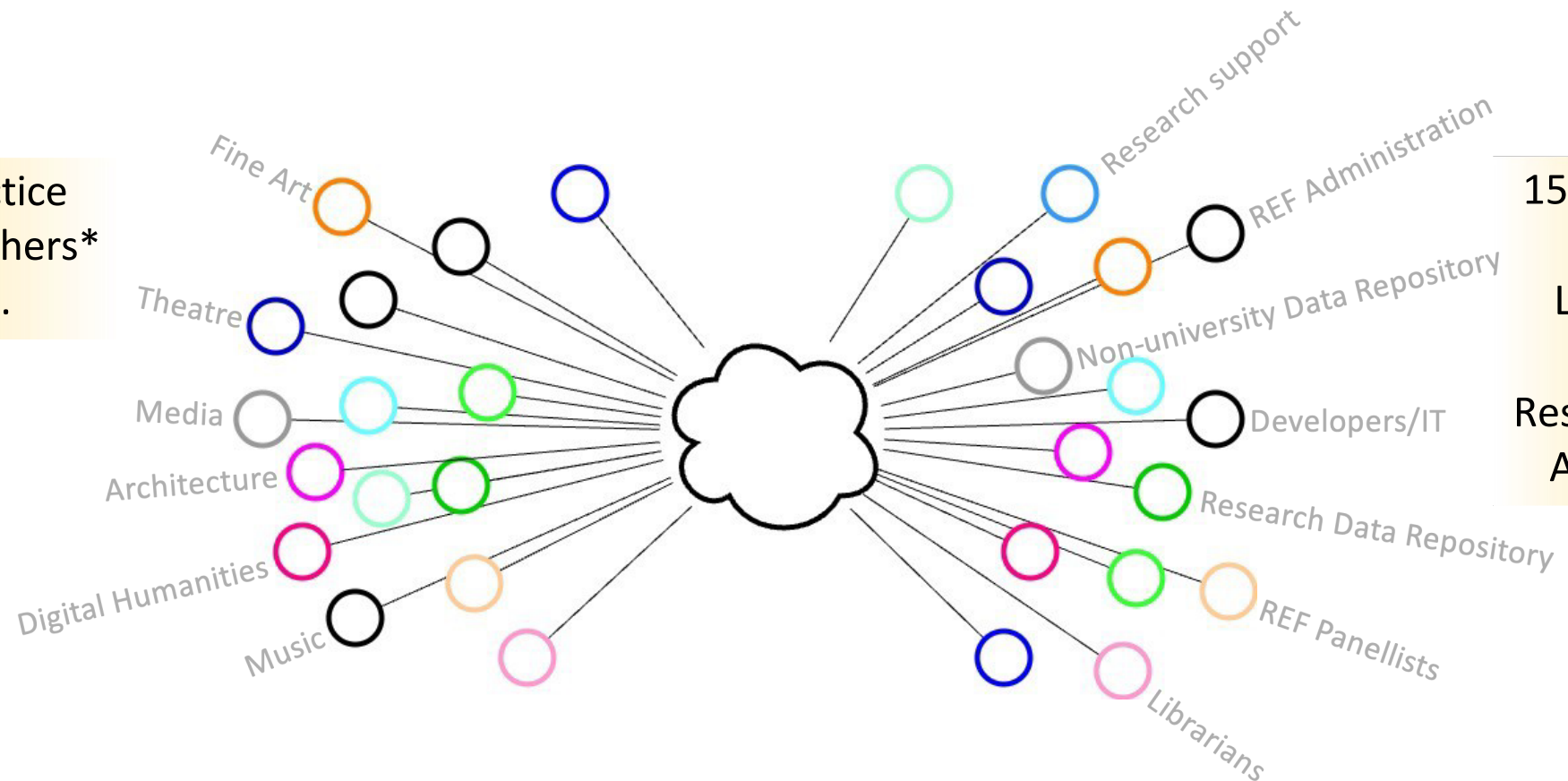
User-story analysis



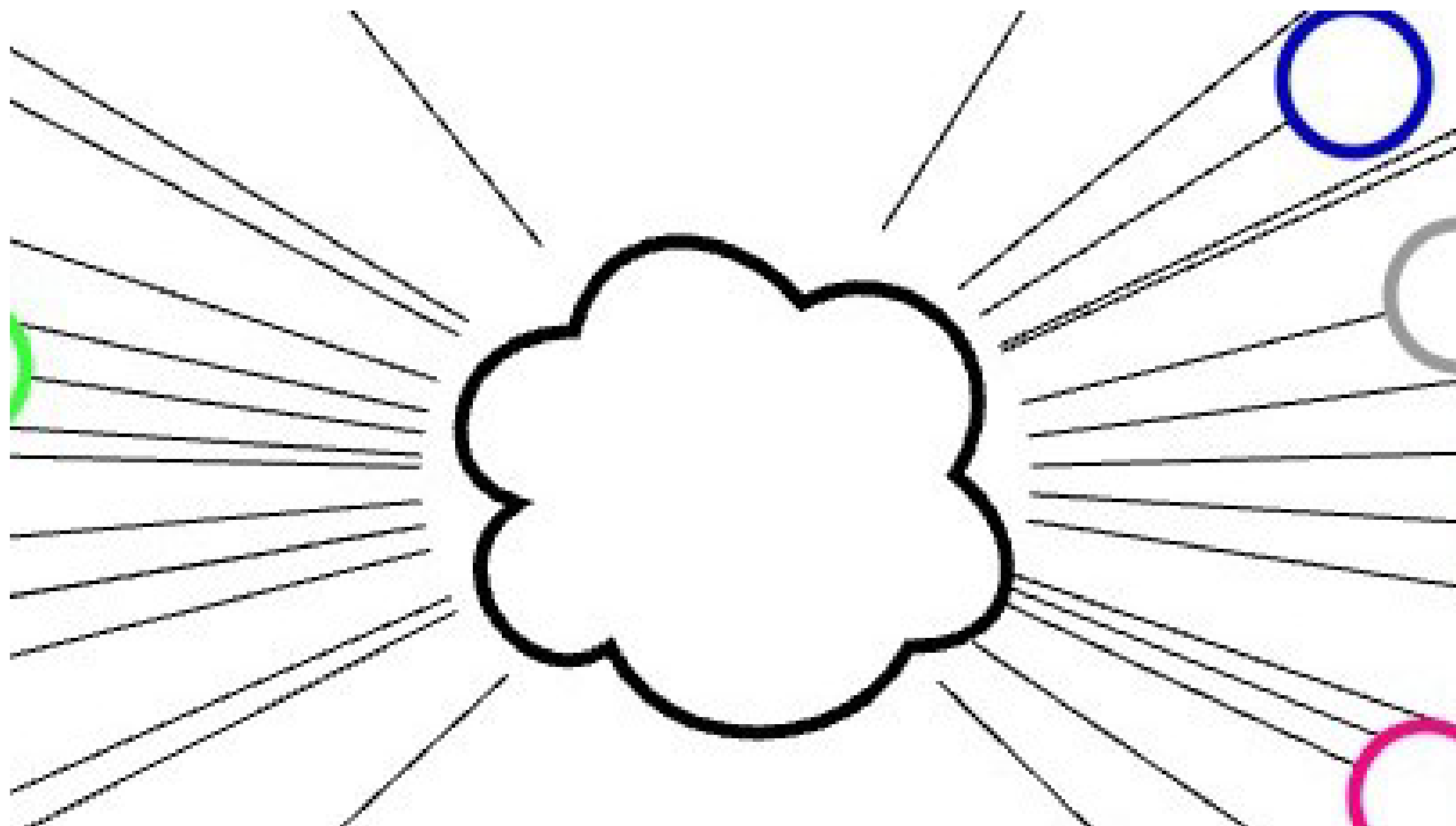
Technical consultation

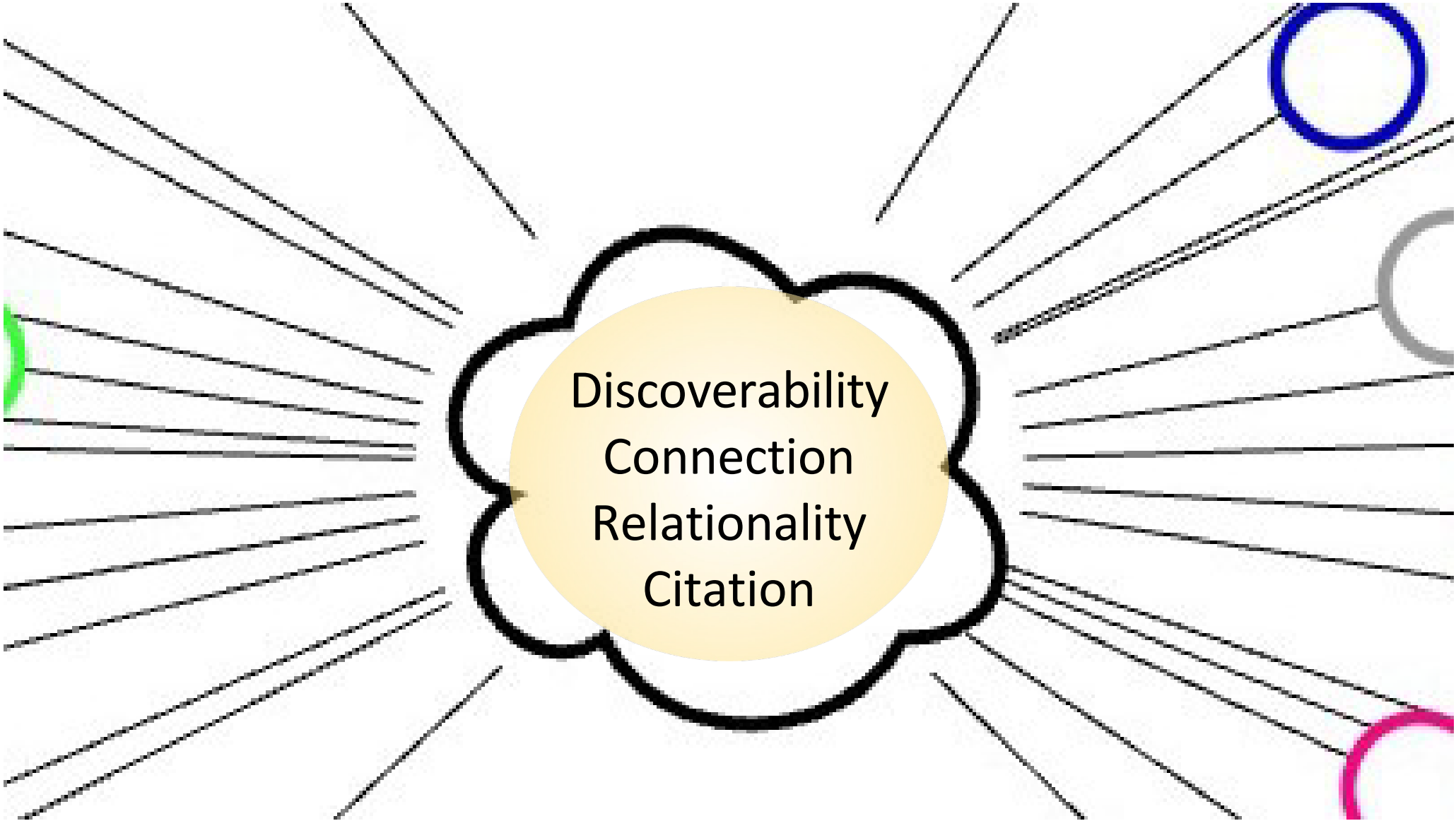
Interviews with stakeholders

15 practice
researchers*
across...

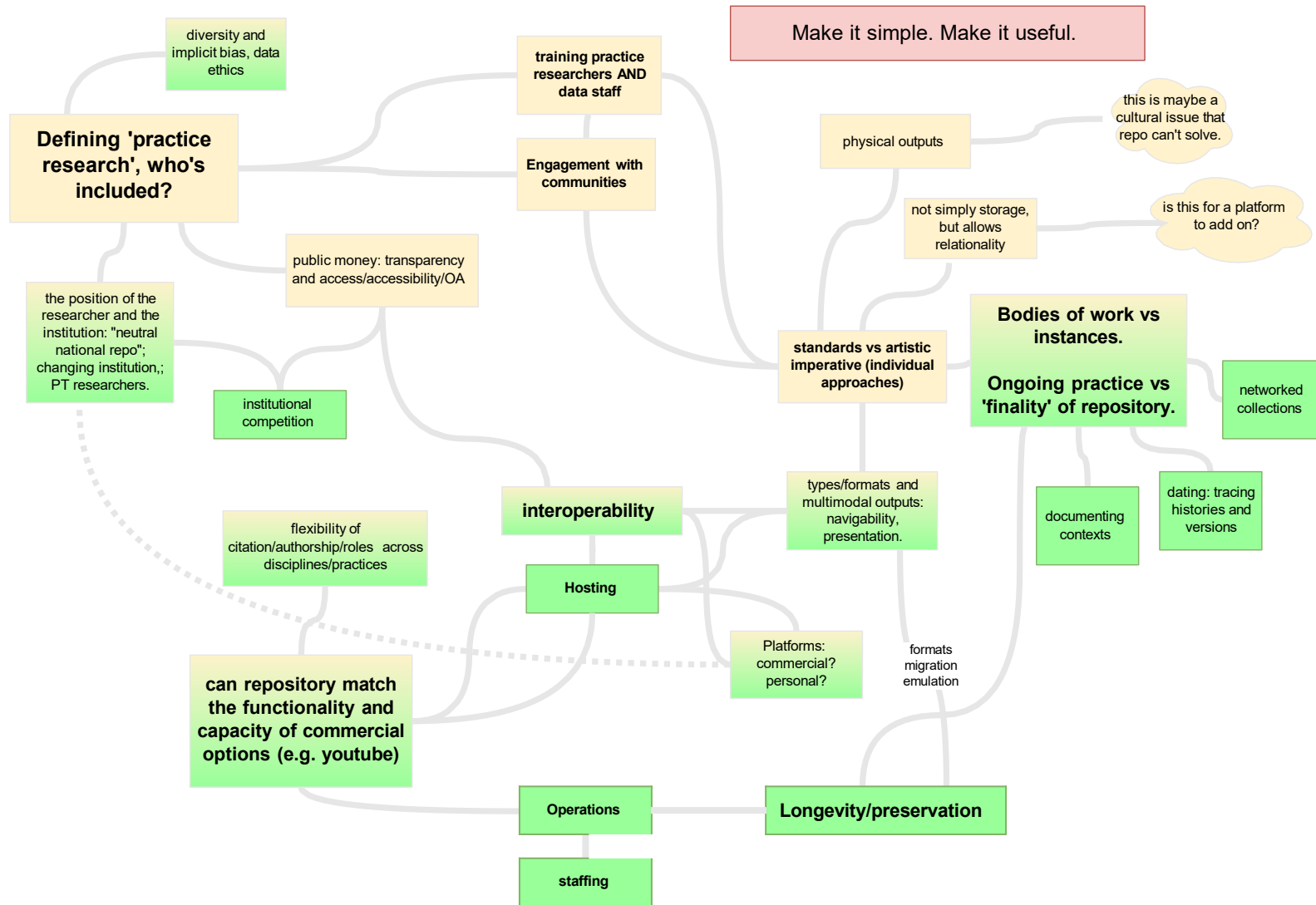


* incl. PGRs and freelancers





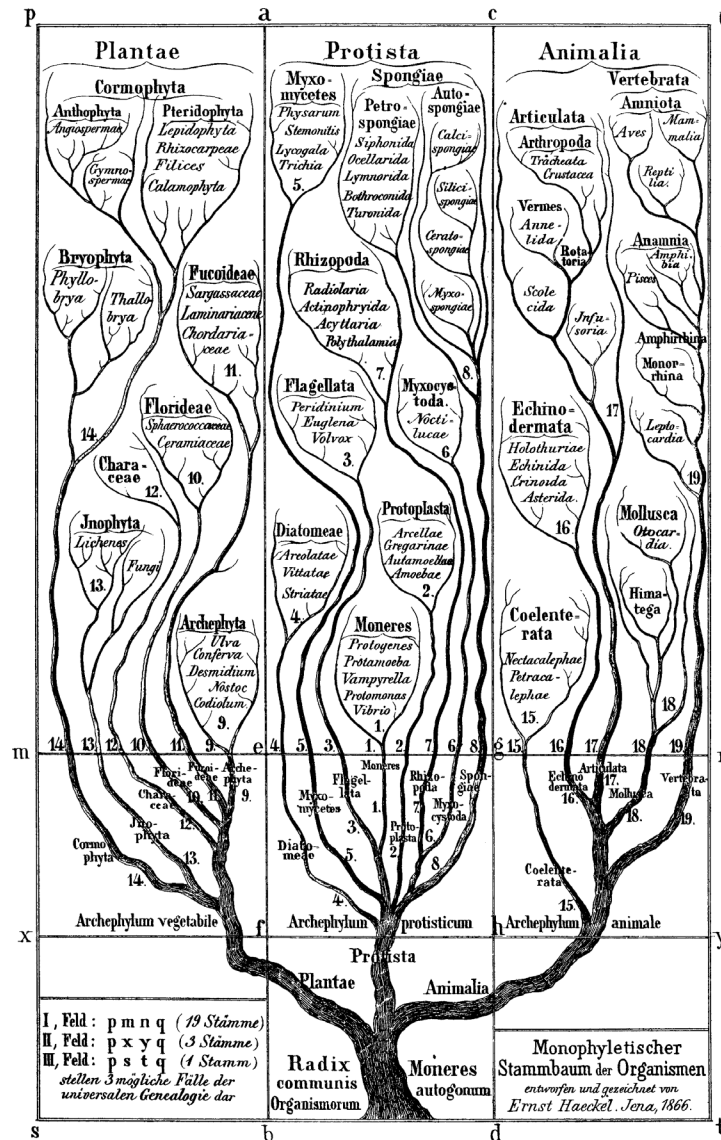
Discoverability
Connection
Relationality
Citation





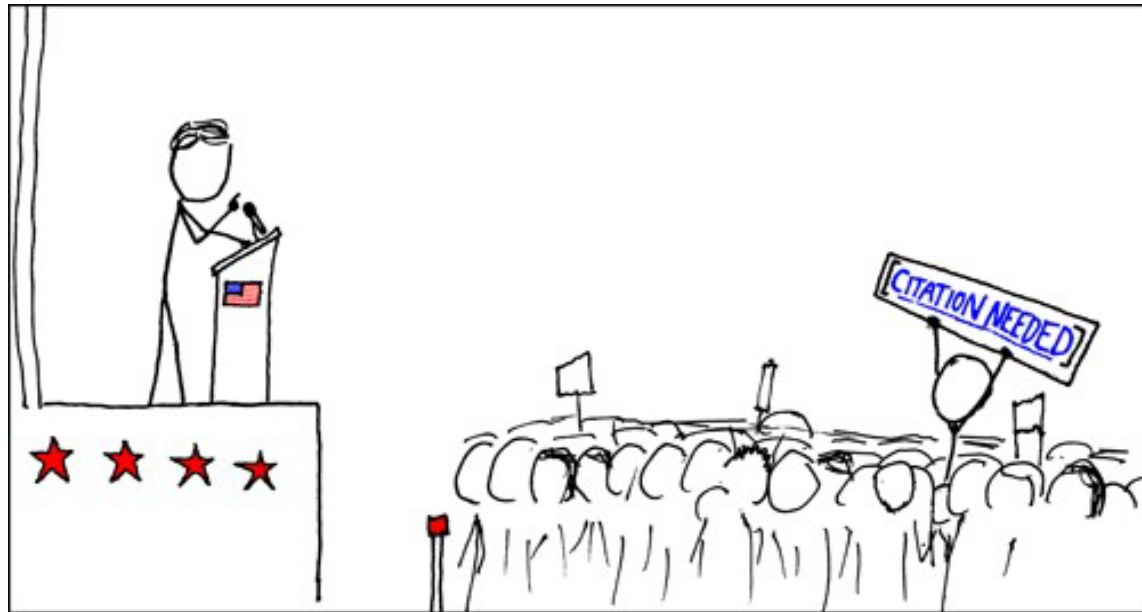
Collections/projects

Dating & Histories





Contexts & translations



Citations and impact

Authors

Creators

Collaborators

Roles

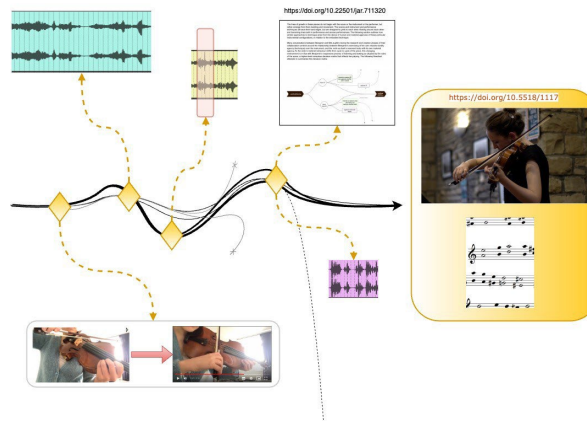




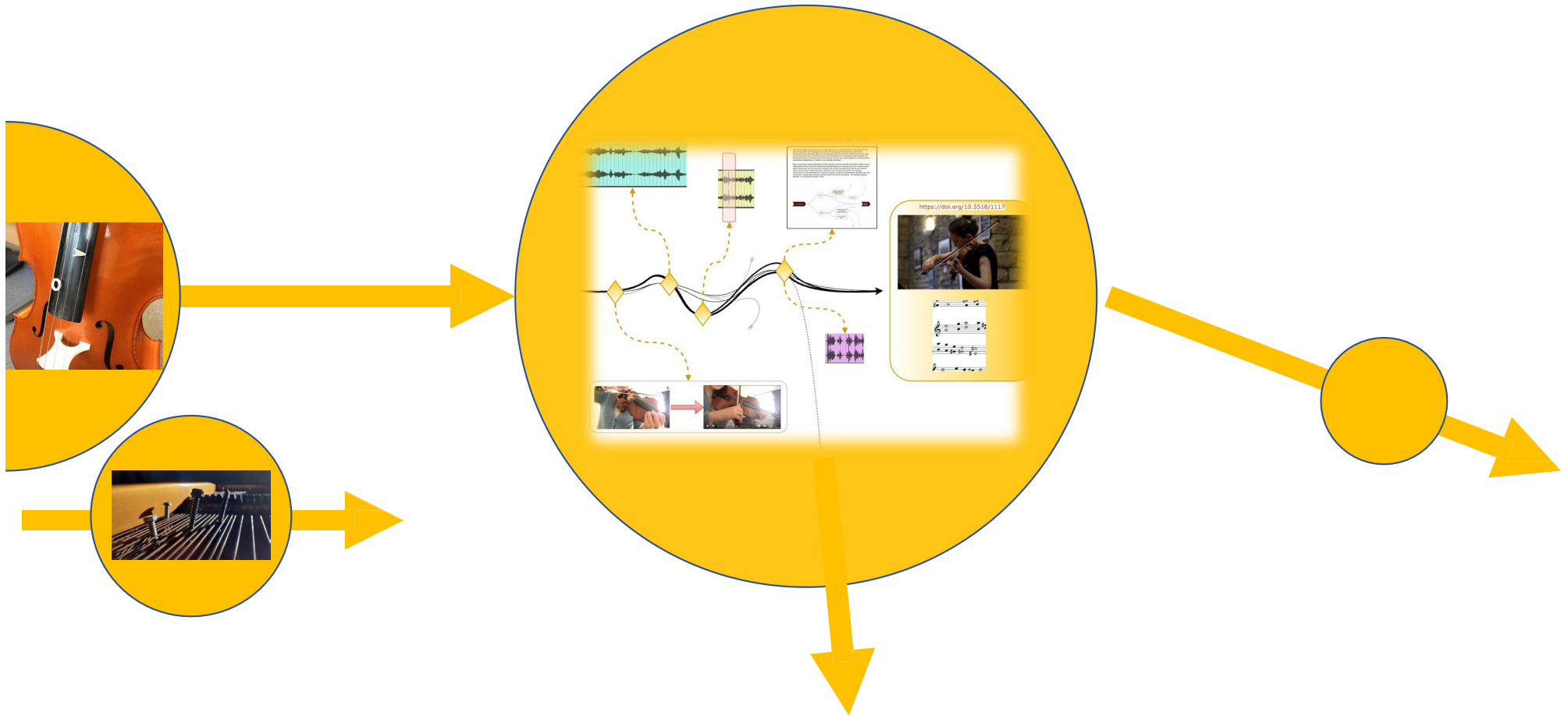
Institutional affiliation

For example

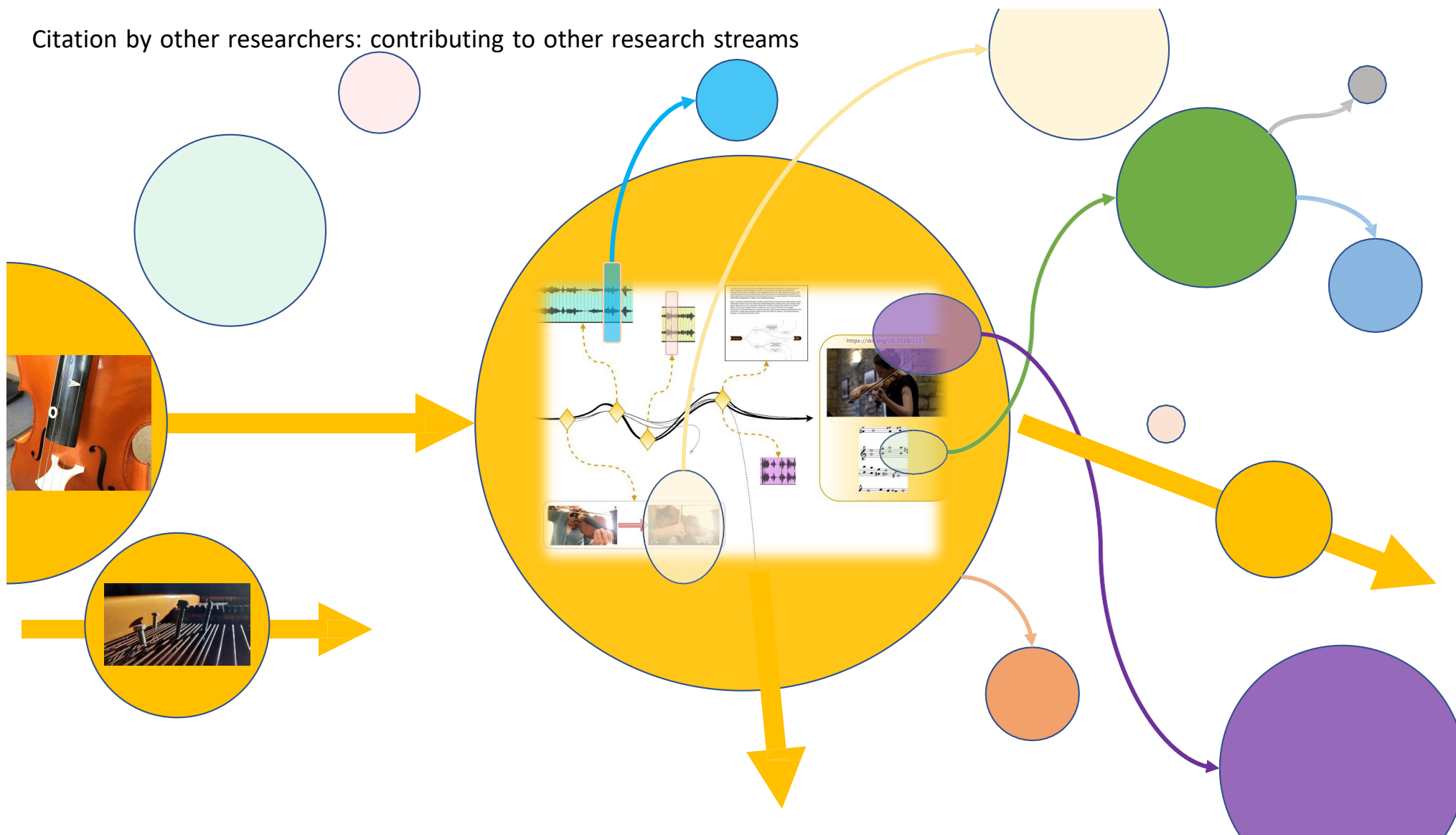
(a speculative future)



Relations within my larger research picture

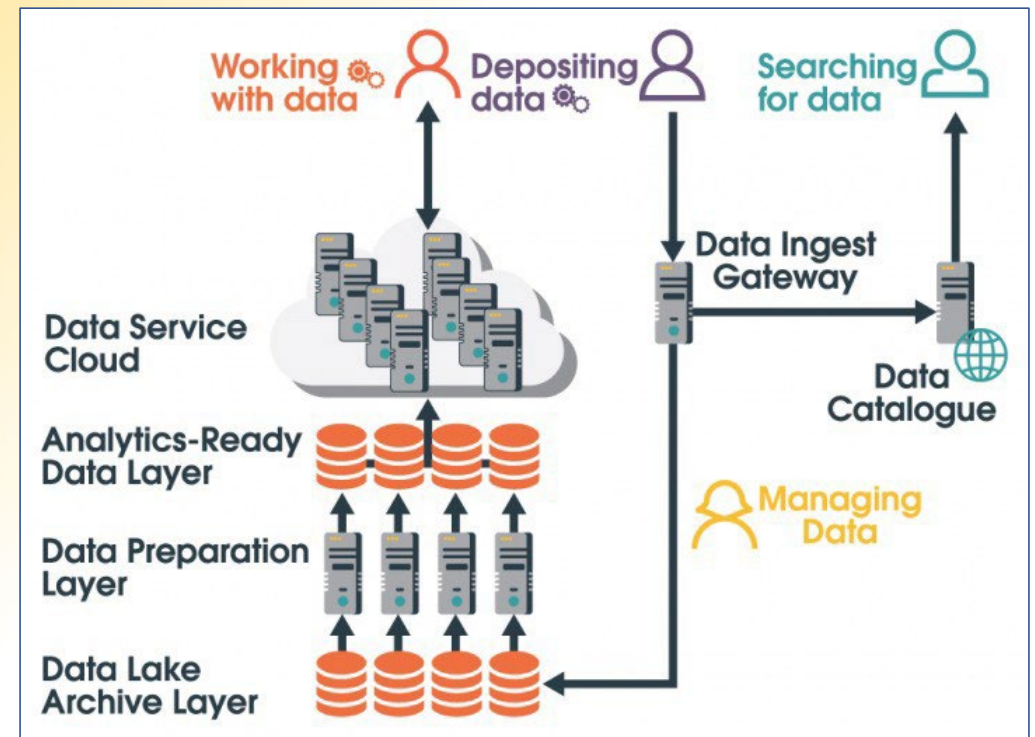


Citation by other researchers: contributing to other research streams



Draft Technical Proposals

- Data lake infrastructure
 - Demands careful metadata curation by user.
- Citation/linking to arbitrary-sized data in any format
 - Image, or section of image
 - Audio/video file or segment
- Annotation tools for media files



Summary

- A repository that researchers and institutions want to use.
- Promoting discoverability of research.
- Affording relational networks of research/researchers
- Needs consultation, investment, training, and cultural shift away from 'REF graveyard'.