THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh Research Office

Researcher Development

Leadership Stories



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COLLEGE: College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
RESEARCH AREA: Design Informatics
ROLE NAME: Post-doctoral Research Associate in Creative Informatics

What does leadership mean to you in this role?
I work as part of a research programme called Creative Informatics (https://creativeinformatics.org/), which aims to encourage creative, data-driven innovation within Edinburgh. Within the programme, my leadership role has been about supporting and connecting academics from a variety of fields, who are doing research at the intersection of creativity and technology.

Specifically, I have done this by: leading a small grants call that supports academics and PhD students in carrying out research that falls within the remit of Creative Informatics; gathering and posting blogposts about the research emerging from this small grants call; and supporting (as well as occasionally leading) networking events that bring together academics and creative practitioners who have engaged with Creative Informatics.

What supported your move into this role?
I have been lucky to work for very supportive programme directors who prioritise the career development of their team members. In particular, the directors of Creative Informatics have actively encouraged me to take on leadership responsibilities that would support me in later seeking a permanent academic position, including those listed above.

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What type of skills do you use in this role?
Leading a grants call requires strong organisational skills, specifically to keep track of funding call advertising, monitor funding applications and organise decision panels. After projects are funded, I also monitor and record each funded project's progress until its completion. Beyond this, I have found that having a curiosity and enthusiasm for the work of others even beyond my own field, has been instrumental - especially for my role in supporting network building.

Has this role created any new opportunities for you that you wouldn't otherwise have come across?
This role has been a fantastic way of stepping out of my immediate field of Human-Computer Interaction and making new links with researchers who are working across creativity and technology more broadly. It has introduced me to exciting research going on within disciplines that I did not know much about, which has in turn also informed my own research. The role has also given me opportunities to gain a better understanding of grant writing and review processes, which has been valuable when writing my own grant applications.

This work ties closely into the reporting that the Creative Informatics programme feeds back to its funders. Because of this, the role has also taught me about governance and transparency processes when assigning funds.

What is the main piece of advice that you would give anyone looking to move into a leadership role?
I think that discussing your career goals with supportive line managers and/or mentors is crucial. They are likely to have great ideas for what leadership roles might be beneficial for building your experience in line with future goals, and will be able to support you in seeking those opportunities out.