



Responsible Conduct of Research in Research-Creation: Moving into Uncharted Terrain

Cloutier, M., Voarino N., St-Hilaire E., Bélisle-Pipon J-C., Couture V., Williams-Jones B., Mathieu-Chartier S., Birko, S.; , Noury C., Marsan C., Gauthier P., Lapointe F-J.

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Introduction

Responsible conduct of research (RCR) is ubiquitous, and present in most areas of research. One area that has received little attention is Research-Creation (RC):

- an emergent field at the interface of academic research and creative activities
 - in Quebec, Canada, RC is defined as “research activities or approaches that foster the creation or interpretation/performance of literary or artistic works of all types”
- Research-Creators – who are at the same time researchers and practising artists, musicians, or designers – may be faced with very different issues or challenges from colleagues in the rest of academia.**

- How do researcher-creators reconcile their dual obligations to creation and to research?
- Are the usual research ethics guidelines (e.g., TCPS2, ICH relevant and how do they apply?)
- How do the creative/artistic dimensions of research affect evaluations by grant committees and REBs?

To better understand how RCR issues are articulated in the very heterogeneous RC community, we combine here results from a literature review and an international survey on RCR in RC.

General research objectives

- (1) explore RCR challenges – common and distinct – that arise in RC
- (2) document perceptions of researcher-creators about these issues and the application of RCR principles/frameworks
- (3) identify needs and gaps in existing policies (institutional, national) and develop awareness and management tools for RC

Literature review objectives

- Map key challenges to determine scope and nature of RC-specific issues
- Synthesize data
- Identify specific determinants of RCR issues in RC

Survey objectives

- Document perceptions of researcher-creators about RCR issues and application of RCR principles/frameworks
- Identify needs of RC community and gaps in existing institutional and national policies

Methods

1) *Scoping review* of academic literature dealing with RCR in RC; n = **2,523** papers

- Analysis of titles and abstracts resulted reduced sample to **181** papers, which were then read in detail and coded using QDA miner software.
- This literature review was the first step in a two-year project to build tools which will raise awareness and support RCR in RC.

Two research strategies on 10 databases from humanities (ex. Scopus) to biosciences (ex. EBSCO):

- **R1** “CRR keywords” AND “RC keys words”
- **R2** “RC” keywords only

Thematic/category analysis; sample representativeness according to 14 variables attesting to the relevance of the selected texts.

2) *International online survey* (using Typeform) to explore researcher-creator perspectives on issues emerging from the scoping review.

- Approx. 100 questions developed from results of scoping study
 - Questions organized in a tree structure based on participant profile (RC, artist or regulator/commentator of RC)
 - Majority of questions in the form of multiple choice, Likert scales
 - All questions were mandatory, except for some open-ended questions
- N = **759** participants

Survey (n=759 participants)		Literature review (n=181 papers)	
Country	%	Country	%
Canada	37.6%	Canada	34.3%
United States	9.5%	United States	11.6%
United Kingdom	8.9%	France	13.3%
Australia	6.4%	United Kingdom	12.2%
France	4.4%	Australia	11%
Discipline		Discipline	
Humanities	10%	General and/or not specified	35.4%
Music	7.9%	Music/Audio	8.3%
Visual arts	6.6%	Poetry/Creative writing /spoken word (fiction)	6%
Literature	6.6%	Cinema/Film/Screenwriting	3.9%

QUALITY (29%)

With regard to Bioart and RC projects involving animals, there appears to be a mismatch between current RCR guidelines and their specificities, which can inhibit/impair the emergence of relevant projects. Concerning the involvement of humans, two major “tensions” specific to RC were identified:

- **Tension 1:** preserve participant integrity without harming artistic process during all stages of the project.
- **Tension 2:** Ensure free and informed consent while respecting nature of creative approach that cannot be fully determined upstream.

These tensions depend upon:

- disciplines and art forms (e.g., creations involving visual representations like photo and video) but also archiving (audio) and secondary use;
- type of research, use of creation/art, e.g., “art-based-therapy” and “art-based education”, where art is a means of intervention, do not have same repercussions as projects where creation is the purpose.

The survey showed that for a majority of the researchers, ethical requirements do not interfere with artistic work (65%) or with research (74%).

As for the necessity of obtaining ethical approval for projects involving human participants, the researcher community seems divided: 23% disagree, 41% agree and 36% do not know.

As for projects involving the personal history of others, 38% of researchers agree with the necessity of obtaining an ethics approval but still a majority (43%) do not seem to have an opinion on the subject or prefer not to position themselves.

CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS AND COMMITMENTS (2%)

Conflicts emerge from different roles of artist-researchers, different interests, and different actors:

- **aesthetics and integrity** of research;
- **students’ interests** and those of the institution;
- **multiple affiliations** (e.g.: industry, academy, art);
- **participants and artist-researchers’** approaches;
- **authenticity and bureaucratic** requirements;
- **rigor** and audience seduction;
- **multiple stakeholders**;
- **research approach** and institution hosting the project.

In the survey, the majority of creative researchers (62%) considered that they had a good understanding of conflicts of interest.

- Few claimed to have been in conflicts of interest
- But many reported witnessing conflicts of interest in RC within their institution (artists **50%**, masters students **39%**, PhD students **35%** and professors **29%**)

The main conflicts of interest identified by researchers and creators are personal, financial, professional, institutional and ideological.

- Few students and professors in RC (about **20%**) felt they were confronted to conflicts between their research and creative work; it was artists (**42%**) who were most subject to this type of conflict.

AUTHORSHIP AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER (KT) (10%)

Identified issues related to:

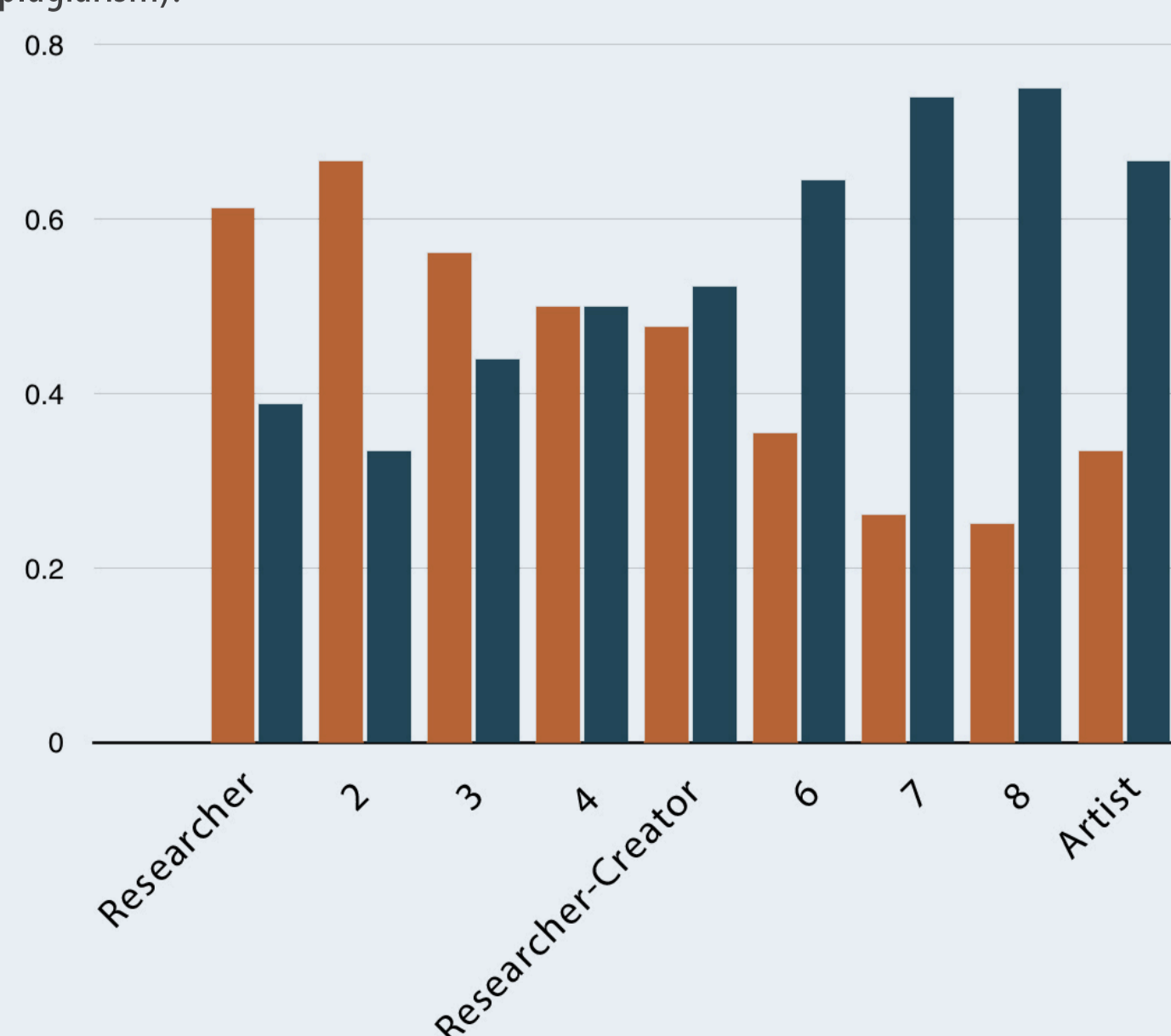
- **representation / objectivity:** researcher difficulty remaining neutral in the representation of participants within creative works;
- **new (creative) medium:** (sometimes “alternative”) challenges traditional academic KT and may be more difficult to protect/archive;
- **taking the audience into account:** power over the form of KT, desire to reach audience yet ensure no misinterpretation;
- **authorship/co-authorship/contributorship:** issues of recognition for all actors in co-production of RC works (i.e., research participants);
- **free access and wide dissemination:** censorship vs artistic freedom, need to depart from usual modes of scientific communication to increase accessibility;
- **publications containing creative components:** (definition of peer review, constraints of traditional academic mediums, devaluing of artistic production);

Recognized that research and creation are **complementary** in KT:

- research brings credibility
- creation as KT overcomes limitations of traditional KT modes for both research and creation

- survey shows that while researchers have no difficulty disseminating their work through a variety of media, the majority do not use RC-specific means, focusing on scientific articles
- collaborative model very frequent, collaborators of researchers-creators are mainly researchers

No discussion in the literature review of plagiarism as issue; so in the survey we investigated the issue in RC (witnessed plagiarism):



RESULTS

Issues by code family (proportion of results)

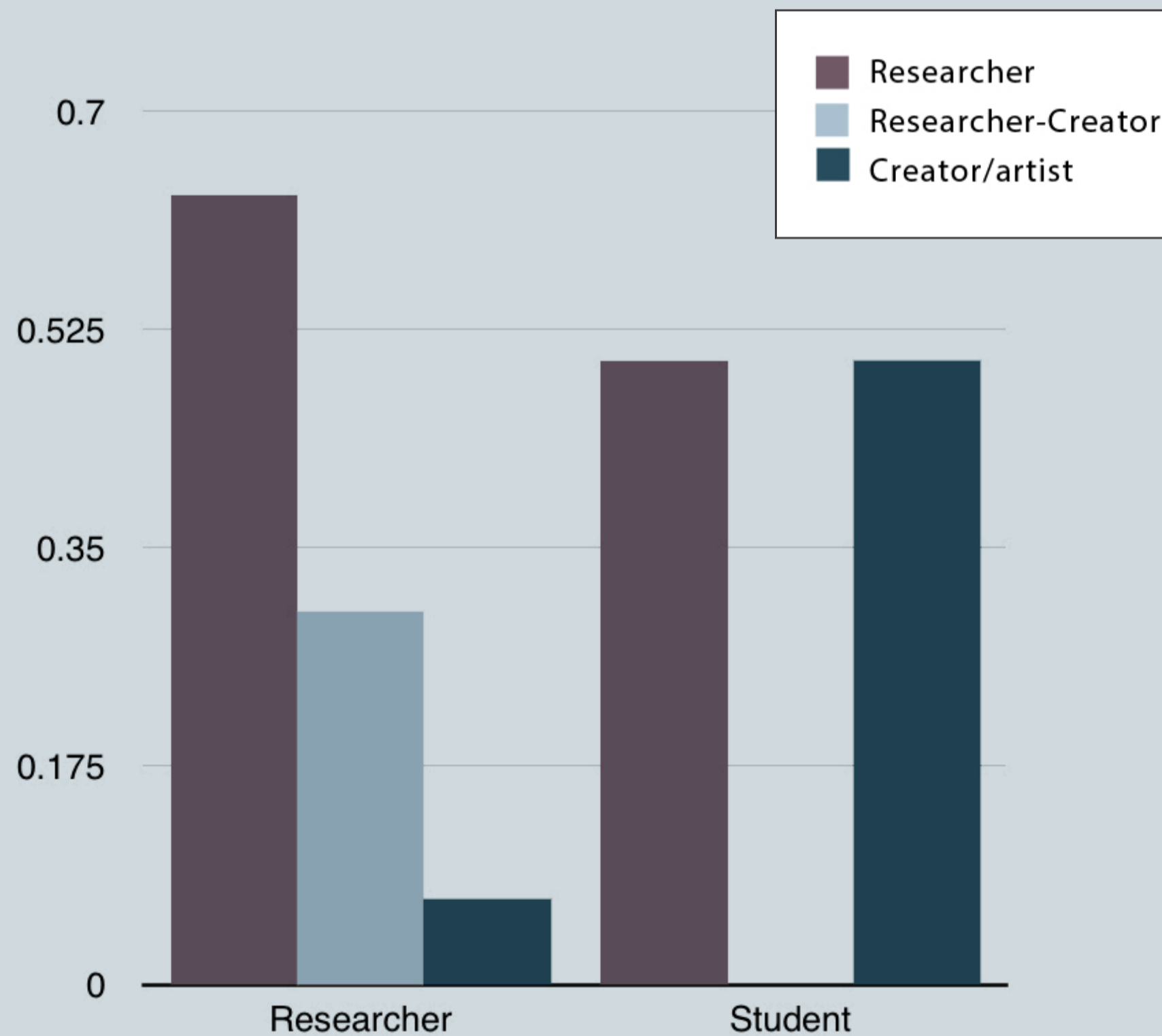
POSITION (18%)

Identified issues related to:

- **Collaborative work** often central to RC; multiplication of research milieus questioned, as are relations of power that emerge, and ways to frame multi-centric approaches;
- **Dual expertise** common among artist-researchers, which requires dual training, reflexivity and new expectations of excellence;
- Survey respondents tends towards an ideal of research-creation where research and creation cohabit in an egalitarian way and offer a contribution as much to science as to art;
- **Intention:** questions concerning participatory research that engages communities in political projects to develop new discursive and ethical spaces; questions about identity as artist, researcher or artist-researcher;
- RC research may also place participants and artist-researchers in positions of **vulnerability**;

It seems the RC community is divided on the real contribution of their work: shared between a purely scientific contribution and a contribution to art as much as to science.

Surprisingly, RC profile respondents did not identify themselves as researcher-creators :



DEFINITION (19%)

No consensual definition of RC = one determinant of different RCR issues in RC.

- No agreement on what constitutes “real” RC
- Influences debates about what should be financed, who should evaluate it, the nature of training, content, etc.
- But survey results show that even if the definitions are not consensual, a majority of researchers and the RC community “mostly” agree with the definitions of the RC as formulated by the two major granting agencies, i.e., FRQ and SSHRC

ACADEMIC TRAINING (13%)

Identified issues related to:

- **Place of ethics** in academic curricula and project evaluations
- although research-creators have training in research ethics, there are gaps in training about ethical conduct specific to artistic practice;
- lack of training adapted to RC and lack of guidelines seems to affect students (**40%**) more than researchers (**30%**).
- **Complex and contested integration of RC** within the academy, still embryonic nature of RC education, and assessment standards, and future career prospects for students;
- **Difficult recognition of hybrid projects** for which the form is still uncertain in terms of financing, evaluation and support by the institution;
- **Nature of appropriate support** that supervisors should offer.

FUNDING (9%)

Identified issues related to:

- **Private funding:** risks related to a loss of autonomy and a utilitarian vision of art;
- **Eligibility criteria** (academic and ethical): may undermine artistic merit and specificity of RC, potential for abusive use of “RC” label to access research funds (distributive justice, research credibility);
- **Evaluation:** difficulty establishing clear and objective criteria; risk of identity loss and impeding creation in academy; problem defining who has expertise to evaluate RC projects (e.g., for funding);
- **Deliverables:** outcomes become a priority with traditional academic production at the top (may undermine RC quality), equivalences between different modes of production, “project culture” leads to promises that are difficult to formulate in RC;
- **Productivity:** very high demands (tight deadlines, competition, “publish or perish”, unrealistic expectations from funders) lead to increased pressure = quantity over quality.

While the majority of professors (**70%**) receive funding for their RC projects, the reality of graduate students seems more difficult (only **50%** receive funding).

No consensus on what may be prevalent/problematic in evaluation practices (artistic vs scientific value) although acknowledged that both should be recognised in a global vision.

- general feeling that funding favours research on RC and artistic projects
- **40%** of artists sometimes decided not to apply for funding for reasons of eligibility; but also students (**38%**) and researchers (**36%**)
- traditional funding and evaluation models are insufficient; need to adapt/rethink funding and eligibility criteria;
- define who can evaluate RC, and promote more flexible approach
- need a more equitable distribution, valuing both research and creation

The majority of participants considered that evaluation of RCR project should be carried out by researcher-creators.

Discussion and conclusion

More than just having the potential to deal with sensitive subjects, creation encompasses flexible, subjective and even “narrative” approaches capable of generating a high degree of emotional involvement. And this raises important RCR issues:

- (1) participatory nature means power relations, so risks regarding recognition, interpretation and use of contributions;
- (2) reflection on anonymity, authorization (participant and audience), dissemination, and secondary use of artistic productions (which risk “romanticizing” data) or academic productions (which risk of “psychologizing” data);
- (3) tension between need to ensure free and informed consent and iterative and inductive nature (or even unpredictability) of creative approach makes it difficult to use conventional approaches and traditional RCR tools (e.g., consent forms).

Since traditional RCR challenges (related to KT and authorship, funding and conflicts of interests and commitment) were less reported in the literature review, the survey allowed us to investigate these themes more specifically. Interestingly, many participants did not consider that they had specific RCR challenges:

- (1) Majority of respondents consider that researchers and creators recognize the ethical issues raised by their projects, except regulators (only around 30%) and that they are sufficiently well equipped to deal with the ethical issues that arise.
- (2) Only a minority of RC practitioners have experienced problematic situations resulting from a lack of ethical guidelines (20% of researchers and ~30% of students).
- (3) Despite these affirmations, there was an expressed need for training on ethical conduct specific to RC, more precisely on its artistic component.

Addressing conflicts of interest and plagiarism in the RC community will be an important topic in subsequent phases of our project as we move to develop RC-adapted RCR training tools and guidance. By highlighting the specificities of RC in evaluation and research funding, and by focusing on a more global vision of the nature of RC projects, we hope to participate in a renewed ethical of practice and evaluation of RC.