



The tale of the Informatics Lab: how we started a multidisciplinary research group in the public sector

Niall Robinson and Alberto Arribas

Met Office, Informatics Lab, Exeter, United Kingdom (niall.robinson@informaticslab.co.uk)

The Met Office Informatics Lab is a multidisciplinary research group tasked with finding new ways to make our data useful. It comprises scientists, software engineers, and designers who balance the freedom to play and experiment with the responsibility to be useful to the organisation. Our projects have roamed between 3D WebGL data visualisation, novel data compression, powerful cloud computing data analysis platforms, Alexa weather apps, and machine learning for field downscaling, to name a few. The Informatics Lab is explicitly given relatively free rein to take risks to tackle old problems anew. We believe that for science to progress, we must use technology more effectively. This is especially true in many areas of geoscience, where data volume and complexity is fast outstripping tooling. We also believe that, in order to gain insight into big problems, we need diverse teams who can take a step back from perceived wisdom to resolve multifaceted problems and design effective solutions.

This presentation will cover:

- * Why we think groups like the Informatics Lab are valuable (and more importantly, how we communicate that to our funders), and related to this, how we envisage career progression in jobs spanning traditional science and technology.
- * The advantages and challenges of working with such a diverse team, and ways we have found to perform effectively together.
- * How we have tried to make our ideas sustainable but exporting knowledge to the organisation and to the wider geoscience community.