

Chapter 6

Academic Library Collaborations to Strengthen Open Government Data and Expand Librarianship

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ABSTRACT

In academic libraries, the area of data librarianship has introduced several new functions and skills into the librarian toolbox. These include statistical and software support, research data management, data curation, and data and statistical literacy. Fostering data-related collaborations enables librarians to enhance library services, collections, and outreach. In this chapter, we will focus on academic library collaborations with government agencies as case in point. Under the umbrella of open access, local and national governments have started making available the raw data that they collect, in the course of providing public services, for users to conduct their own analysis. This chapter will 1) describe data librarianship in academic libraries; 2) review open government data repositories; 3) outline concerns with open government data, such as metadata and data literacy; and 4) describe collaborative efforts between an academic library and New York City government agencies to address concerns with open government data.

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INTRODUCTION

In academic libraries, the area of data librarianship has expanded the librarian's role into statistical and software support, research data management, data curation, and data and statistical literacy. As part of data librarianship, librarians provide services related to data analysis and management. Fostering data-related collaborations enables librarians to create an authoritative place for themselves, one that is apart from faculty and other resources. These collaborations are essential for successful library services, collections, and outreach. In this chapter, we will focus on academic library collaborations with government agencies as an illustration.

The trend in data librarianship has dovetailed with a trend in open government data. Under the umbrella of open access, local and national governments have started making available the raw data that they collect, in the course of providing public services, for users to conduct their own analysis. With the majority of government information now in electronic format, including open government data, several concerns arise. Most notably, library government information collections have moved towards pointing to web links and away from collecting publications. Yet, governments, their websites, and individual webpages can shut down, which makes this move to "pointing" for government collections fraught with risk for libraries, on whom people rely for information. Despite the electronic nature of government information,

Libraries should still be selecting, acquiring, organizing, and preserving information for their user-communities, and providing access to and services for those collections. Libraries do no one a long-term service by simply pointing to resources over which they have no control and which someone else can simply make unavailable literally at the flick of a switch. (Free Government Information, 2013)

In this chapter, these issues in government information will be melded with data librarianship in considering how librarians can improve open government data via collaboration.

In situating library-government collaboration on data within a broader context, this chapter will

1. Describe data librarianship in academic libraries;
2. Review open government data repositories;
3. Outline concerns with open government data, such as metadata and data literacy; and

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