Chapter 62

Collaboration Between Researchers and Academic Library:
Road to Research Data Country–Wide Consortium and Innovation in Library Services

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ABSTRACT

Even though many academic libraries are offering various types of data management services (RDM) and infrastructure, many universities struggle with convincing researchers to publish their data. Collaboration in data management services between libraries, researchers, universities and government is the only way to make research data available and accessible. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how initiative from researchers led to wider collaboration between researchers and an academic library and resulted in the development of data management services in the library as well as a country-wide research data management consortium in Estonia. The country-wide research data management system was a requirement of the funding agency which put the library into a new position to initiate and lead work towards research universities' consortium. The development work of RDM services has tremendously raised the library's value as a partner rather than just a service provider in the eyes of researchers.

INTRODUCTION

Twenty-first century researchers produce massive amounts of digital research data that is not included in their publications. Without proper management of this data, it will be lost for other researchers as well as the general public whose money helped collect and process the data. The scholarly community has thus far failed to provide a common definition to research data management (RDM), often also referred to as

research data curation. Research data management is considered to include various activities performed using produced and collected research data. This includes organizing, recording, describing, analyzing, and preserving data on a long-term basis in data archives, making it available for other researchers as well as rendering the data accessible for re-use.

There are a number of reasons why data as such has gained an increasingly more central role in the field of research. First, a new age of science is evolving - one driven by data for the management of which a variety of technological solutions are used. Data is becoming so large (labeled big data) that regular systems and previously existing technological tools no longer suffice in managing, analyzing, and storing it. Thus, new technological solutions and infrastructure is required. Second, as universities and researchers are all addicted to rankings and citations, studies have shown that opening up data within articles secures researchers with an increased number of citations. This has proven to be a great motivator for data release. Third, in the past years, governments and funding agents have begun to demand the preservation and publication of research data for quality reasons. Cases where research data was falsified constitute the underlying foundation of this requirement. As, currently, the open data requirement is merely recommended in most cases, it is expected that the near future will see a change in this practice by converting recommendations into obligations.

Researchers are now investigating ways to comply with these requirements. There lies an opportunity for academic libraries to adopt a leading role by offering research data related assistance. This recent challenge that academic libraries now face does not merely include updating of infrastructure, in addition entailing re-orientation of library services, librarian skills, as well as general library goals, missions and strategies.

Numerous academic and research libraries have already welcomed the role of digital research data management and have been offering related services for a number of years. Some have even taken a step further, developing a selection of training programs targeting both researchers who produce and handle data on a daily basis as well as librarians who offer different levels of support to such researchers. As academic libraries have assumed the leading role in RDM services, different case studies and research have been undertaken over the past ten years to pinpoint the best solutions and models for setting up auxiliary RDM services, developing necessary infrastructure for data publication, sharing and reuse, and improving librarian skills; the role of libraries in the life cycle of research has been examined in debates.

The University of Tartu Library faced a similar challenge when researchers began to call for required data services. The Library was placed in a unique position, uniting the main research institutions into a nation-wide data management consortium. In addition to setting up basic data identification services, following a burst of research and exchange of ideas, the Library ventured well beyond, setting up a wider support system for researchers, much like that established by a number of other academic libraries. This is indeed a step that most academic libraries should take in the next few years in order to offer the support required to ensure a full life cycle for research data. It all boils down to individual academic libraries' willingness to accept the challenge of changing their procedures and adopting an all new set of skills.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Research data is now considered the Holy Grail of research. Publishing and citing of research data has become an integral part of science. Researchers themselves have begun to notice that disclosing their data to other researchers as well as the general public can give rise to a variety of advantages, yet at the same

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