

Chapter 22

Research Data Management Services in Tertiary Institutions in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

The chapter seeks to analyze how librarians in Zimbabwe are responding to increasing librarian roles in the provision of research data services. The study sought to ascertain librarians' awareness and preparedness to offer research data management services at their institutions and determine support required by librarians to effectively deliver research data services. Participants were invited to respond to the survey, and survey monkey was used to administer the online questionnaire. The collected data was analyzed using content analysis, and it was thematically presented. Findings revealed that librarians in Zimbabwe are aware of their role in research data management, but the majority are not prepared to offer research data management services due to a lack of the required skills and resources. Challenges that were noted include lack of research data management policy at institutional levels and information technology issues such as obsolescence and security issues.

INTRODUCTION

This study is a development from the baseline studies on the state of research data management in Zimbabwe done in 2017 and 2019 (Chigwada, Chiparausha & Kasiroori 2017; Chigwada, Hwalima & Kwangwa 2019; Chiparausha & Chigwada 2019). These studies were done to evaluate how researchers were managing their research data in research institutions in Zimbabwe. The major findings indicated that research data management was a new concept in Zimbabwe and researchers were managing their own research data. The need to create awareness among all the stakeholders, train both librarians and researchers, and having enabling institutional and national policies was emphasised. Pryor (2012) stated

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that the research output in the 21st century is data which is the primary building block of all the information. He added that the data should be managed to ensure that it remains discoverable and accessible over a long time. Research Data Management was defined by (Whyte & Tedds 2011) as the organization and description of data from its entry to the research cycle through to the dissemination and archiving of valuable results. This purpose of this study is to assess the preparedness of librarians in Zimbabwe to offer research data management services since awareness had been created a number of studies had been done to provide a roadmap for stating these services (Chigwada, Chiparausha & Kasiroori 2017; Ndhlovu 2016; Ndhlovu 2018; Ndhlovu & Ngwenya 2017; Nhendodzashe & Pasipamire 2017; Chigwada, Hwalima & Kwangwa 2019; Chiparausha & Chigwada 2019). It is against this background that the study sought to meet the following objectives:

1. To ascertain librarians and researchers awareness on their role in research data management;
2. To determine the level of librarians' preparedness to offer research data management services; and,
3. To assess the challenges faced by librarians and researchers in research data management.

BACKGROUND

Research Data Management in Zimbabwe

Pryor (2012) reports that research data management has become a topical issue that has overtaken open access to scholarly publications. Nhendodzashe & Pasipamire (2017) reported that researchers have encountered increasing requests by funding agencies, institutions and publishers for the researchers to avail research data publicly. Chiware & Mathe (2015) concurred with Nhendodzashe & Pasimire by stating that research funding agencies and national governments are demanding that grant recipients preserve and share their research data. A study by Ndhlovu (2016) revealed that library staff does not have the skills required for effective data preservation in the digital environment.

In Zimbabwe, the generation of new knowledge is done by both public and private universities and other research institutions and non-governmental organisations. A study done by Chigwada, Chiparausha & Kasiroori (2017) revealed that researchers in Zimbabwe are responsible for managing their own research data since research data management is a new concept in Zimbabwe (Chigwada, Chiparausha & Kasiroori 2017; Ndhlovu & Ngwenya 2017; Nhendodzashe & Pasipamire 2017; Chigwada, Hwalima & Kwangwa 2019; Chiparausha & Chigwada 2019). Most research institutions are worried by the research output which is archived in institutional repositories and among the universities; a study done by Nhendodzashe & Pasipamire (2017) showed that the University of Zimbabwe Library was working towards the introduction of research data management services. The findings revealed that the institution has the technological infrastructure and economic resources but do not have the legal framework required in offering research data management services, and the librarians do not possess the requisite skills needed throughout the research data lifecycle. Ndhlovu & Ngwenya (2017) documented the state of preparedness of the National University of Science and Technology in offering digital curation and preservation services. It emerged that the librarians do not have the necessary skills in research data management and the information communication technology infrastructure to start the services. Librarians are currently skilling themselves to be able to offer research data services.

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