

ANU LIBRARY'S SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT

Research data has emerged as an area that libraries can make a significant contribution assisting researchers described, store and managed data. The Australian Government funded Australian National Data Service (ANDS) to support the vision: "More Australian researchers reusing research data more often". ANDS is building the Australian Research Data Commons: a cohesive collection of research resources from all research institutions, to make better use of Australia's research data outputs.

Understanding needs

In 2011/2012, the ANU received funding from ANDS for the ANU Seeding the Commons Project. The ANU Library played a vital role in this project. Key goals included:

- conducting an audit of major research data collections owned by the ANU
- depositing at least 20 collection records and associated records for ANU research data into the Research Data Australia (RDA) database
- encouraging the development of a culture of good research data management practices.

The first two goals were finite and completed as part of the project. The third goal is ongoing.

In order to develop a culture of good research data management, it is essential to understand current research data management practices. A study of social science and humanities researchers based on 25 interviews with academics, PhD, and honours students was conducted by a library staff member on secondment as data librarian to the project. The report was co-authored by the Data Librarian and the University Librarian and is currently an internal ANU document that is being examined by the ANU eResearch Committee.

What did we find? In social science and the humanities researchers – academics and students are dealing with an average three different types of data and three different programs to analyse the data. They are working in a complex data environment.

Academics are likely to have a team to deal with data, while postgraduate and honours students are working solo.

Data is generally managed on a university-owned server by academics, but outside university servers by students. Metadata is likely to be recorded by an academic, but not a student.

Students more strongly support sharing of data, with colleagues likely to become aware of the data after the completion of a thesis, a conference paper, or journal article. Academics communicate more strongly through conferences and journals.

On the whole, students were less knowledgeable and unsure of how to manage data or where to obtain support and advice regarding how to manage their data. Most students were reliant on their supervisors and the Office of Research Integrity for advice.

Key findings and recommendations of the report covered the need to review policies, undertake further assessment of needs, and continue to support the ANU Data Commons.

Delivering training and support

Data management training is provided by the library as part of its research and information training program. The ANU Data Management Manual was published in 2008 and is licensed under a Creative Commons License. The Manual is linked to by major universities including MIT and Oxford. As part of the ANU Seeding the Commons Project, an ANU Data Management LibGuide was developed and is available at <http://libguides.anu.edu.au/datamanagement>.

More recently, the ANU Research Skills & Training Unit organised a new Research Masterclass Series, and a session on research data management will be presented by the library as part of this series.

Digital collection repository

The ANU Library is responsible for the ANU Digital Collections service and website, allowing members of the university to share research with the wider community. ANU Digital Collections accepts journal articles, conference papers, book chapters, working or technical papers, digital images of manuscripts, and photographs in university research collections, and other forms of scholarly communication.

Data repository

The ANU Data Commons is the ANU central research data repository. It securely stores data and metadata, and, as appropriate, feeds the metadata into RDA. Access to the data can be open, embargoed, or restricted.

Why should libraries care about research data management?

The ANU Library has invested a great deal of resources in supporting good research data management and will focus even more attention in this area in the future. Why? The Australian research environment increasingly values good data management as vital for the benefit of current and future researchers. Governments and other funding bodies are strengthening mandates that require good research data management, and universities must comply. Archiving and reuse of research data feature in discussions of research funding. University libraries are well placed to provide necessary training and services in this area and must be prepared to take on the challenge.

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