Why Does Research Data Management Need Radical Collaboration?

Judy Ruttenberg, Program Director for Strategic Initiatives, Association of Research Libraries

Elizabeth A. Waraksa, Program Director for Research and Strategic Initiatives, Association of Research Libraries

With this issue of *Research Library Issues* (*RLI*), the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) (re)turns its collective attention to research data management (RDM), a topic consistently identified as a top priority by ARL library directors, and a topic of several recent ARL publications—see for example SPEC Kit 334 on *Research Data Management Services* (2013)[1] and SPEC Kit 354 on *Data Curation* (2017).[2] Here, however, the focus is not so much the data itself as the human labor that goes into curating, preserving, and making data accessible and reusable—those fruitful collaborations across domains that allow "organizations and individuals...to identify and solve problems together, to achieve more together than we could separately," in the words of **Nancy McGovern**.[3] The thesis offered here is that not only is RDM an ideal scenario for exploring radical collaboration, but that this kind of collaboration has already resulted in demonstrable success in the RDM arena and thus ought to be considered as a model for both nascent and future data management efforts.

Research data management is challenging, and many voices are needed to tackle this evolving effort—most crucially, the combined voices of archivists, librarians, and the data creators themselves. In opening this issue of *RLI*, **Nancy McGovern** offers definitions and guiding principles for bringing these diverse voices to the table and sustaining radical collaboration, while **Amy Nurnberger**, in a companion piece, describes this practice in action with the Research Data Alliance.

Research data management is a team effort by virtue of its nature; it has never been a solo or siloed endeavor. Purdue University, one of

the pioneer institutions in this regard, recognized the importance of archival theory and practice to the emerging practice of RDM. **Carly Dearborn**, in her history of the Purdue University Research Repository (PURR) and Purdue's continuing efforts to engage archivists and data librarians in data management coursework, highlights many of the ways in which archival expertise can be leveraged in collaborative data management efforts. **Lisa Johnston** offers lessons learned from the early stages of the Data Curation Network, an initiative that brings together the perspectives of research data librarians, academic library administrators, and domain subject experts from academic libraries and

> "...not only is RDM an ideal scenario for exploring radical collaboration, but...this kind of collaboration has already resulted in demonstrable success...."

general-purpose or disciplinary data repositories—the "human layer" in the technology stack, in Johnston's words—to share data curation expertise at the network level. Furthering the point about effective teaming is **Megan Potterbusch**, who offers two case studies of radical collaboration in support of open science: the development of Software Citation Principles, and the preservation of informal communication and gray literature in the astronomy community.

What therefore emerges in this issue, and within McGovern's frame of radical collaboration specifically, is a picture of the communities of practice that have developed in recent years to tackle so many of the thorny issues around RDM. In this vein, **Heather Soyka** shares her experience with DataONE as a means to consider the sustainability of these communities, above and beyond the sustainability of data itself. Additionally, **Nancy McGovern** offers inspiration for a new community of practice in archives, libraries, and team science utilizing the radical collaborative approach.

So why this issue, why now? This is a pivotal moment for the global research enterprise, in which researchers, institutions, and funders are

wrestling with data management and curation in a variety of contexts. Libraries and archives will be vital partners within their institutions, and within the research enterprise, in implementing best practices for research data management by leveraging archival workflows for managing, curating, and preserving ever-evolving forms of content. This issue of *RLI* is an important step in the process of building community across library and archival domains in support of this essential work.

Endnotes

1. David Fearon Jr., Betsy Gunia, Sherry Lake, Barbara E. Pralle, and Andrew L. Sallans, *Research Data Management Services*, SPEC Kit 334 (Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, July 2013), https://doi.org/10.29242/spec.334.

2. Cynthia Hudson-Vitale, Heidi Imker, Lisa R. Johnston, Jake Carlson, Wendy Kozlowski, Robert Olendorf, and Claire Stewart, *Data Curation*, SPEC Kit 354 (Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, May 2017) https://doi.org/10.29242/spec.354.

3. Nancy Y. McGovern, "Radical Collaboration and Research Data Management: An Introduction," *Research Library Issues*, no. 296 (2018): 6–22, https://doi.org/10.29242/rli.296.2.

To cite this article: Judy Ruttenberg and Elizabeth A. Waraksa. "Why Does Research Data Management Need Radical Collaboration?" *Research Library Issues*, no. 296 (2018): 3–5. https://doi.org/10.29242/rli.296.1.