

## *Research Data Management: Practical Strategies for Information Professionals* edited by Joyce M. Ray

Karl Nilsen

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Nilsen, K. (2014). *Research Data Management: Practical Strategies for Information Professionals* edited by Joyce M. Ray. *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication* 2(2):eP1136. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/2162-3309.1136>

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JLSC is a quarterly journal sponsored and published by Pacific University Library | ISSN 2162-3309 | <http://jlsc-pub.org>

# *Research Data Management: Practical Strategies for Information Professionals*

edited by Joyce M. Ray

2014 | Purdue University Press | 448 pages | ISBN-13 : 978-1-55753-664-8  
\$29.95 (softcover) | \$14.99 (PDF/EPUB)

This volume provides a comprehensive survey of research data management services, infrastructure, and related issues. The editor has organized nineteen contributions into seven themes: (1) policy and governance, (2) service design and planning, (3) intellectual property, metadata, and citation, (4) repository practices and processes, (5) evaluation and assessment, (6) a set of four case studies, chiefly based on research libraries, and (7) a concluding commentary on future challenges.

Each chapter provides a thorough yet manageable introduction to its topic, and the overall result is a well-balanced survey of the opportunities and challenges that information professionals will encounter as they manage, curate, publish, and preserve research data.

If a central theme emerges from the contributions, it is that no organization can take a one-size-fits-all approach to data management or a unilateral approach to service design and infrastructure development. The complexity, heterogeneity, and interconnectedness of data-intensive research is simply too great. Carlson, for example, shows how data lifecycle models can help information professionals map services to stages in the research process, yet warns readers about the dangers of oversimplification. Lyle, Alter, and Green make clear the specialized problems of social science data management and the importance of discipline-specific knowledge to the curatorial process. Riley illustrates that traditional metadata description is ill-suited to the idiosyncratic products of research projects. Levine situates intellectual property issues in the broader context of policy, governance, and provenance, demonstrating that copyright and related legal matters should never be construed as simple or straightforward. Walters uses the term *ecosystem* to describe the complex, dynamic technology environment emerging to support data-intensive research. Steinhart and, in a separate contribution, Westra parse the diverse interests

overlapping on university campuses, demonstrating that institutional support for data management requires networks of collaborators rather than isolated jurisdictions.

In response to the challenges associated with research data management, information professionals are working hard to understand the processes and lifecycles that shape, and are shaped by, distinct communities of practice. For example, Sallans and Lake describe DMVitals, an assessment tool that produces personalized data management recommendations for individual researchers. Henry demonstrates that close collaboration with scholars is essential to transforming unstructured humanities data into useful resources for knowledge production. Finally, Allard outlines a strategy for integrating disparate stakeholders into assessment and evaluation from the early stages of a complex project.

This volume will be especially helpful to librarians, archivists, and data curators who are new to research data management, yet each contribution contains insights that will prove useful to experts. Several contributions contain ideas that may be productively applied in contexts other than research data management, notably those contributions on lifecycle models, copyright, and evaluation and assessment.

There is not a weak contribution in the volume, but readers may find themselves wishing for a chapter or two that would describe research data management from a researcher's point of view. Most of the contributors provide a supply-side perspective on research data management, and readers would undoubtedly benefit from exposure to researchers' interpretations of the same issues.

**Karl Nilsen** *University of Maryland-College Park*



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