Research Data Management for Oxford Researchers

Research data management is an umbrella term, covering both **dealing with data on a day-to-day basis** during a research project and **longer term issues** such as preservation and sharing.

While it includes working with structured data (the sort that might be stored in a table or database), it certainly isn't limited to that – it also covers textual sources, images, recordings, and much more.

Good data management is about making the research process as efficient as possible:

- In the short term, making sure you can **find the information you need** when you want it

- In the longer term, ensuring the information collected **remains useful**

Start early and think ahead

A key principle of good data management is **forward planning** – the earlier you start, the easier it tends to be. (On the other hand, it's never too late to make some improvements.)

- Have you considered making a **data management plan**?

    o A tool such as DMPonline can help with this

    o Many funders now require a data management plan as part of funding bids

- Do you have good systems in place for **organizing your material**? Are there changes you could make to make life easier for yourself?

- Are you using the most appropriate **software or other tools** for the job?

    o There's a lot of choice out there: the Research Skills Toolkit provides an overview

    o Colleagues may also have useful recommendations

- Are you recording all the **contextual information** needed to ensure your data remains intelligible?

- What are your **long term plans** for your data? What do you need to do now to facilitate these?

    o Many funders now require researchers to make their data publicly available at the end of the project – does this apply to you?

Help and advice

- The **Research Data Oxford** website is a central source of guidance and further information

    o Book a Data Health Check for personalized advice

- The IT Services Research Support team can provide technical advice, including help with funding bids

- The Bodleian Data Library provides advice on finding and using data in research, plus support for data archiving and sharing

    o Subject librarians can also provide help

Storage and backing up

We all know that it's important to **store things safely**, and to make sure they're properly **backed up**. It's worth keeping copies of your data in two or three different places – in case of fire or theft, for example.

- You may be entitled to space on a departmental server – this is often a good option

- IT Services' HFS back-up service is available free of charge to University staff and postgraduates

- For sensitive data, it's important to ensure that appropriate security is in place – visit the Information Security website for advice

Data sharing and curation

Data is a valuable resource. A lot of effort goes into producing a dataset, and it can often be useful beyond the lifetime of the project that created it.

- Consider ultimately **preserving and sharing** your data by depositing it in a **repository or archive**

  - As well as being useful to other researchers, people using and citing your data can help boost your academic reputation

- Many archives exist, many of them specializing in data from a particular discipline – see Re3Data.org for a catalogue

- ORA-Data is Oxford's own institutional data archive

  - It also acts as a catalogue for Oxford research data deposited elsewhere, thereby facilitating discoverability and citation

- The Digital Curation Centre's website is another useful source of information

Although data sharing is usually done towards the end of a project, it pays to plan for it from the beginning.

- Shared data needs to be **consistently presented** and **properly documented** – that is, accompanied by any auxiliary information needed to interpret it properly

- If you're working with human subjects (conducting interviews, for example), you'll need to get appropriate consent

It's a lot easier to think about this sort of thing when you first collect or compile the data, rather than having to go back and fill in the gaps later.

Training

- The Data Training Calendar lists upcoming University of Oxford courses, including those provided by IT Services and the Bodleian Libraries

- The Skills Hub offers details of further University training provision

This document is available online at http://researchdata.ox.ac.uk/induction.