Building as We Climb: The Data Working Group at the University of Massachusetts Amherst

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Abstract: The University of Massachusetts Amherst claims 82 centers and institutes that are conducting research on some level, bringing in over $140 million in externally sponsored research each year, including 10 federally-funded research centers that "reflect national priorities and provide opportunities for breakthrough research, educational innovation, and technology transfer." This research environment has earned the campus classification as a Research University with Very High research activity (RU/Very High Research Activity) by the Carnegie Foundation. (www.umass.edu/research.php) As a key partner in teaching, learning, and research, the University of Massachusetts Libraries have begun extending services to include data management support. Specifically, the Libraries established the Data Working Group in early 2010 to explore the issues and on-campus needs around data management and to articulate the role that the Libraries will play in this arena. The Libraries’ Data Working Group is actively engaged in several parallel activities—such as faculty interviews, focus groups, and a web audit—to build meaningful services for faculty and graduate students with respect to their various data management needs, concerns, and infrastructure support scenarios. In addition, the Data Working Group has assisted the Libraries in communicating this commitment to data management support via a letter outlining services in support of the NSF mandate in December 2010.

Data Management Website
The Data Working Group is building a Libraries website that will serve as a resource to the UMass community. The website is available here: www.library.umass.edu/services/services-for-faculty/data-management

Open Access Week Focus Group
The Data Working Group facilitated a data management focus group for graduate students during Open Access Week 2010. Current practices, concerns, strengths, and needs were identified.

Web Audit
Peer and model institution library websites were reviewed to identify approaches to support data management. Areas of evaluation included infrastructure, services, organizational structure, and marketing.

Joint Letter on NSF Mandate
In a partnership with the Office of Research, the University Libraries released a letter to all faculty outlining the NSF data management plan requirement. The Libraries presented services currently supported:

* Guidance in the identification of appropriate data repositories for the archiving of large-scale data sets and associated research outputs, such as the ICPSR or Dryad, and assistance with material deposition.

* Consultation on metadata and standards for format and content of data, policies for data sharing and accessibility, and plans for long-term access and preservation of data sets.

* Provision of a globally accessible and widely indexed online location for faculty’s research outputs, including persistent URLs and searchable metadata, through ScholarWorks, the University’s Institutional Repository. ScholarWorks accounts are available to faculty at no charge and with minimal size limitations.

The full letter is available here: www.umass.edu/research/policy-procedure/nsf-data-management-plan

Faculty Interview
The Data Working Group conducted one-on-one data interviews with a number of faculty members. The interviews helped us to better understand local and broader data management practices and concerns.