Developing a Data Management Curriculum for Graduate Students in the Natural Resources

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Repository Citation
Objective
What skills do graduate students need to be successful in managing, working with and curating their research data? This poster reports on work at Albert R. Mann Library to address these needs in collaboration with faculty in the Department of Natural Resources.

Response
NTRES 6940 Special Topics Course: Managing data to facilitate your research
Six session mini-course:
- Intro to Data Management
- Data Organization
- Data Analysis & Visualization
- Data Sharing
- Data Quality & Documentation
- Wrap-up

Context
- Long-term studies tracking longitudinal changes in fish species occurrence, population abundance, growth, and diet

Data types
- Spreadsheets (MS Excel),
- Relational databases (MS Access),
- Scripted analyses in R (open source statistical software)

Educational Priorities
Acquiring the data management and organization skills necessary to work with databases and data formats, document data, and handle accurate data entry is described as essential, otherwise, “it’s as if the data set doesn’t exist.”
- Data management
- Data organization
- Data quality and documentation
- Data analysis and visualization
- Metadata

Assessment Methods
- In-class active and collaborative learning
  Evaluating Dataset Documentation
  Multi-file terrestrial ecology data set:
  NASA readme file:
  ftp://disc1.gsfc.nasa.gov/data/toms/README.TOMSL2
  (http://1.usa.gov/W8hS7G)
- Post class one-minute reflections
  “Learning about relational databases was very useful. Efficient organization of spreadsheets was also helpful. I would like to learn more about how to organize metadata, but I think this is an upcoming class discussion. Also, I am still lacking clear reasons why Access is preferable to Excel. What does Access offer that Excel does not? What are the features that make Access particularly useful?”
- Final survey

How would you rate your knowledge/skills/ability in the following areas?

Creating a data management plan
Documenting your data
*Evaluating data repositories
Visualizing data and creating graphs
Following best practices in structuring relational databases
Recognizing necessary components of a data management plan...
Describing your research and data collection process
Describing the importance of data management

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