Special Issue: 2020 Research Data Access and Preservation Summit

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Et al.

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Editorial

Special Issue: 2020 Research Data Access and Preservation Summit

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Focus

The Journal of eScience Librarianship has partnered with the Research Data Access and Preservation (RDAP) Association for a third year to publish selected conference proceedings. This issue highlights the research presented at the RDAP 2020 Summit and the community it has fostered.

Disclosures: The authors report no conflict of interest.

Throughout 2020, we have all witnessed changes unprecedented in recent memory. Between the 2020 RDAP Summit theme, *Connecting Through Data*, and our upcoming 2021 Summit theme, *Radical Change and Data*, it feels like we can almost blur these themes into *Connecting through Change* in order to summarize the positives that have taken place within our professional organization over the past year.

The 2020 Research Data Access and Preservation Summit—scheduled from March 11-13, 2020 in Santa Fe, New Mexico—convened just as COVID-19 travel restrictions began to be established in the United States. The planning committee leapt into action to create a livestream for virtual attendance, including in-person moderators for each session who provided technical support and monitored questions and comments from virtual attendees via chat. As one of the first conferences to be affected by the pandemic, it was apt that the conference theme this year was *Connecting Through Data*. RDAP members and leadership rose to these new challenges by quickly implementing and responding to structures that allowed us to connect as a community during this time of crisis.

This RDAP 2020 special issue includes articles that further explore the theme of *Connecting Through Data*. The special issue showcases a cross-section of the topics that were covered at the conference, expanding upon conference presentations and exploring the experience of this year's unique blended format. The issue also showcases the strength of the RDAP community in connecting with each other through our work, and connecting with our research communities through data services and partnerships. Research data access and preservation are even more vital during a global pandemic. During the COVID-19 crisis, scientists and data professionals have rushed to share data to help the scientific community understand the virus and develop vaccines. This crisis has been an all-too-real demonstration of how data sharing can literally save lives. Our work as data professionals will continue to strengthen the creation and dissemination of science in the coming years, and the articles and commentaries in this special issue provide a glimpse into some of the newest projects and ideas circulating in the RDAP community.

Jennifer Chaput's commentary, "Virtual Connections and Virtual Futures," provides an in-depth view of her experience attending RDAP virtually. She discusses virtual participation by using chat and following the #RDAP20 Twitter hashtag (and its cuter counterpart, #petsofRDAP). Chaput suggests strategies for future virtual conferences, including supporting virtual poster sessions and for providing more virtual networking opportunities. She also discusses how the lessons learned from the virtual RDAP Summit could translate to more inclusive practices to help us connect as a community during future conferences. Virtual attendance options could support participation in future Summits for those with financial hardships, scheduling conflicts, disabilities, or other factors that could prevent in-person attendance.

In the commentary "Two Years in the Making: Library Resources for Transgender Topics," Marsolek et al. discuss their experience—inspired a talk that Reid Boehm

gave at the 2018 RDAP Summit—compiling library resources on transgender topics into a centralized LibGuide. The authors asked themselves, "How could we … encourage sharing, exploration, and discovery of data about transgender people?" (p. 2). Marsolek et al.'s process especially demonstrates how a team of librarians can build connections with community stakeholders and incorporate user feedback at all stages in the process. The team engaged stakeholder communities at key points in the process, and they established an ongoing feedback mechanism to ensure that the LibGuide will continue to reflect evolving terminology and identities, and continue to be relevant and useful to the community.

In "Dataset Search: A lightweight, community-built tool to support research data discovery," Mannheimer et al. describe the process of developing and launching an open source tool that supports findability for research datasets created at their institution. The tool is an example of how data professionals can help connect users with research datasets, and add value through tools like analytics dashboards to show how published datasets fit into a broader scholarly conversation. The authors also partnered with the Montana State University Center for American Indian and Rural Health Equity to produce metadata records for restricted datasets that may be accessed by contacting the Center—thus supporting research transparency and connecting the Center's community stakeholders with relevant data, while protecting the privacy and confidentiality of research subjects.

In "Finding Connections in Policies Covering Electronic Laboratory Notebook Retention and Transferal," Grynoch outlines the results of a textual analysis of electronic lab notebook retention policies. Grynoch discusses the value of electronic lab notebooks as key to facilitating and documenting research—helping researchers organize and track experiments, supporting patents, providing evidence of regulatory compliance, protecting against allegations of scientific misconduct, integrating with laboratory equipment and software, and enabling long-distance collaboration. Her analysis suggests that institutions may need to revisit lab notebook retention policies in order to include specific guidelines for electronic lab notebooks.

The RDAP community was challenged by the events of 2020, and we will no doubt continue to be challenged in 2021 and beyond. The 2020 RDAP Summit was an opportunity for us to bid farewell to in-person gatherings (for the time being), while demonstrating how a community can join together to advance important conversations, even in times of adversity. We look forward to the 2021 RDAP Summit, with a theme of *Radical Change and Data*, to be held virtually March 10-12, 2021. Our community will no doubt be eager to discuss the changes we've seen over the past year, and to continue building connections that support scientific advancement and positive change.

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