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Special Issue: 2021 Research Data Access and Preservation Summit

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Et al.

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Editorial

**Special Issue: 2021 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 fourth year to publish selected conference proceedings.

The fully-virtual 2021 Research Data Access and Preservation (RDAP) Summit focused on the theme of Radical Change and Data. This editorial introduces the 2021 RDAP Special Issue of the Journal of eScience Librarianship.

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The fully-virtual [2021 Research Data Access and Preservation \(RDAP\) Summit](#) focused on the theme of *Radical Change and Data*. The call for proposals asked conference participants to consider how they are adapting to change in their work, and especially to consider how data intersects with major forces for societal change.

Dr. Tonia Sutherland, Assistant Professor in the Department of Information and Computer Sciences at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, kicked off RDAP21 with a powerful and thought-provoking keynote. Dr. Sutherland reframed refusal as a critical practice in which individuals reclaim agency from technology and those who benefit from the data, money, and resources accrued within those systems. She used compelling stories to help the largely white audience gain a better understanding of the problems and harms caused by the way in which much of the technology available is developed—overwhelmingly, by white men—and used to gather data about people. She introduced two valuable resources: the [Feminist Data Manifest-No](#) and the [Consentful Tech Project](#). Just as in the physical world, women of color are disproportionately at risk of harm in digital space. By applying the [FRIES model of consent](#) to our digital bodies, designers, developers, and managers of such spaces are challenged to consider how systems may be created and used so that they do not harm some users more than others. The [Feminist Data Manifest-No](#) urges us to recognize and consider the potential harms of massive, widespread data collection, particularly when the data are decontextualized and dehumanized or “are not being used in service to the people about whom they were created.” As data professionals and members of institutions which both collect and use data, Dr. Sutherland’s insights invite us to reconsider how we make decisions related to consent and access, retention, and appraisal of research data about people.

We highly recommend checking out Dr. Sutherland’s IMLS-funded work on the [Archiving the Black Web project](#). Recorded presentations from the April 2021 Archiving the Black Web conference are available at: <https://archivingtheblackweb.org/schedule>.

Many of the articles in this year’s RDAP 2021 special issue consider how data librarians can support a more just society, examining library theory and practice as they relate to the theme of *Radical Change and Data*.

Several articles in the special issue discuss building and adapting services, presenting practical skills and knowledge that can serve as a model to other data librarians. In the commentary “[Data Management for Systematic Reviews: Guidance is Needed](#),” Heather Ganshorn and Zahra Premji outline how the rise of data sharing mandates has highlighted data management challenges for systematic reviews. They describe how they addressed these challenges by developing a Data Management Plan Template for systematic reviews and a companion LibGuide that gives detailed examples and to serve as a living document for updates and new guidance. In their commentary, “[Preparing a Data Archive or Repository for Changing Research Data and Materials Retention Policies](#),” Jonathan Bohan and Lynda Kellam describe the implementation of a

Results Reproduction Service (R-Squared) at Cornell Center for Social Sciences, and provide guidance for other repositories looking to support changing requirements for data and code archiving. In their article "[Reflections from Transitioning Carpentries Workshops Online](#)," Ben B. Chiewphasa and Anna K. Moeller discuss how they rapidly adapted Carpentries workshops—not only tailoring the workshops to fit their local context, but also quickly shifting the workshops online when the Covid-19 pandemic hit. In "[Data Consultations, Racism, and Critiquing Colonialism in Demographic Datasheets](#)," Nina Exner, Erin Carrillo, and Sam Leif suggest that the practice of using Census categories to structure demographic questions about race can be harmful to research participants and can perpetuate colonialism and racism in published articles and datasets. The authors consider strategies that data librarians can use to respond to changing ideas in the field, encouraging antiracist action in consultations and workshops.

In addition to describing current activities, RDAP 2021 also created opportunities for data professionals to share the ideas and movements that will shape their future work. From implementing novel methods of understanding needs and opportunities, to questioning the ontologies and data structures that reinforce systemic oppression to grappling with the practical and ethical implications of working with emerging data types, data professionals are working to better understand the current moment while creating an improved future.

In "[Using Customer Journey Mapping and Design Thinking to Understand the Library's Role in Supporting the Research Data Lifecycle](#)," Kay Bjornen and Cinthya Ippoliti describe their attempts to implement methodologies from user experience studies to better understand the needs and challenges of researchers, and explore the possibilities for using design thinking in generating long-term institutional solutions to data-related research problems. Sara Mannheimer's paper on "[Data Curation Implications of Qualitative Data Reuse and Big Social Data](#)" extends the conversation around challenges with research data to address social media and qualitative data. Describing six key challenges (context, data quality, data comparability, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, and intellectual property and data ownership), Mannheimer tackles the practical and ethical complexities associated with qualitative data, including both structured and unstructured data, as well as direct observations and existing materials, as well as those associated with digital self-representation, social media metadata, and online social interactions and relationships. The need for clear documentation, trusted repositories, metadata standards, appropriate access mechanisms, and education and outreach for IRBs and researchers are reinforced throughout the text.

While data professionals often consider how we respond to the radical changes we see in the research and data landscape, some advocate for radical change in order to address systemic oppression. Ari Gofman, Sam A. Leif, Hannah Gunderman and Nina Exner provide a critical examination of the representation of non-binary persons in datasets in "[Do I Have To Be An 'Other' To Be Myself? Exploring Gender Diversity in Taxonomy, Data Collection, and Through the Research Data Lifecycle](#)."

The authors provide actionable strategies to move from what they describe as “current practice” to “inclusive practice” throughout the research lifecycle, calling attention to data structures that reinforce gender binaries and normative gender representations that position nonbinary individuals as “other.” Beyond inclusive practices for data collection, the authors propose best practices for the processing, mapping and transformation of data to ensure that, while the privacy of nonbinary individuals is protected, the existence and experiences of those individuals is represented in the dataset.

Both the 2021 RDAP Summit and this special issue demonstrate how our community of research data professionals is responding to a period of radical change. We are joining together to continue to examine how to reduce data-related harms and engage productively with data to support a more just, inclusive, and transparent society. We look forward to the [2022 RDAP Summit](#), with a theme of *Envisioning an Inclusive Data Future*, to be held online March 15-17, 2022. Next year’s theme will allow conference presenters and attendees to continue to build in this direction.

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