

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

Johnston LR. **Curating research data, volume one: practical strategies for your digital repository.** Chicago, Illinois: Association of College and Research Libraries; 2017. Softcover: 285p. ISBN 9780838988589. Price: USD \$65.00. Available from: <https://www.alastore.ala.org/content/curating-research-data-volume-one-practical-strategies-your-digital-repository>

Data curation, the management of data from its inception through its entire life cycle, is a crucial issue in research institutions throughout the world. There is a growing awareness of the responsibility to collect, describe, store and make accessible, the results of research studies. It is not enough to simply analyze research data and report on it in publications. It is becoming increasingly common to have obligations to journals, funding agencies and the public to publish the research data that supports published results. There is a plethora of articles, books and reports on the state of data curation in the academic world. These publications range from beginner to extremely advanced and sometimes it is difficult to choose where to focus one's energies, when so much information exists.

Curating Research Data, Volume One: Practical Strategies for Your Digital Repository is an introduction to data curation that is aimed at librarians, information specialists, and data custodians who are interested in the field of data management and who want a good background understanding of the principles of data curation. These principles are illustrated by numerous examples of well curated data repositories in various fields and arenas, with the focus being on academic research institutions. The book and its companion volume aim to “present those tasked with long-term data stewardship of digital research data a blueprint for how to curate data for eventual reuse.” (p. 1) The editor, Lisa Johnston, is well qualified to provide this blueprint, as she currently holds the position of Research Data Management/Curation Lead at the University of

Minnesota Libraries. She is also the Co-Director of the University Digital Conservancy, which is the University of Minnesota's institutional repository. Ms. Johnston serves also as principal investigator of the Data Curation Network, a multi-institutional collaboration of data curation experts. Ms Johnston has compiled an admirable group of librarians, information scientists, and data scientists to collaborate on this work. Amongst the authors are 5 Canadian librarians who are leaders in the field in our country.

The book is divided into 3 parts that flow nicely from one to the next. The first part, “Setting the Stage for Data Curation” provides a picture of the culture of data in various disciplines and geographical regions. It starts by discussing the changing nature of data curation, then moves on to paint a picture of the landscape of institutional, funding agency, and journal data policies. Once the broad picture is developed, the book moves on to discuss the collaborative nature of data curation services in Canada as well as the differences across disciplinary data practices and how those differences shape repositories and curation services. I was happy to see the inclusion of the Canadian collaboration in this book and, while I recognize this is an American publication, I would have liked to see more examples from Canada interspersed throughout the book. Part one concludes with a discussion on the importance of librarians and data custodians working with scientists to develop and implement good data practices, rather than just preaching to researchers about the importance and hoping they will comply.

Part 2, “Data Curation Services in Action” discusses the development of data services, mainly at academic institutions, focusing on the importance of policy development and professional development to ensure that data services can continue to mature and adjust to changing requirements and practices. It stresses the importance of working collaboratively with all groups with an interest in data management, groups such as the library, IT services and the Office of Research. Various funding models are discussed,

outlining advantages and disadvantages of each. The book moves on to provide some excellent examples of successful outreach and promotional strategies.

Finally, part 3, “Preparing Data for the Future: Ethical and Appropriate Reuse of Data” discusses data at the end of life. It provides advice on when and how to end the life of a dataset, a discussion on meta repositories for data as well as data rescue and how to best prepare repositories to be able to handle situations where data rescue may be needed.

This is a useful book for those interested in gaining a better understanding of data curation, those new to the field, and those wanting to start a data repository in their own institutions. It is aimed mostly at librarians and data managers, but stresses the importance of including all major stakeholders in data curation decisions. I thought it extremely appropriate that it stresses the importance of involving researchers in data curation decisions. I recently attended the National Data Services Framework Summit in Ottawa, ON, where the importance of researcher involvement was stressed as something that is essential to the success of data curation efforts.

The book provides a good overview of the current landscape, though it may become outdated fairly quickly as this is a rapidly evolving field. For example, the chapter “Collaborative Research Data Curation

Services: A View from Canada” does an excellent job of describing the state of data services in Canada in 2016, however, there have been many advances since. In addition, there will be many changes to funding agency policies over the next few years.

For those looking for advice on how to develop data curation services, there are some excellent examples of data repositories. In chapter 4, Ixchel Faniel and Elizabeth Yakel do an exemplary job of describing 3 disciplinary repositories, from the fields of social science, zoology, and anthropology, the different views that each discipline holds with respect to sharing and reusing data, and the implications that these differences have on the infrastructure of the repositories and the associated documentation.

Overall, this book is well written, with some chapters being more interesting than others. It is a useful book to have if you are just starting down the data curation path and need a good basic understanding of how to get services and resources started in your institution. The same could be accomplished with reading a variety of articles, but due to the abundance of information surrounding this topic, it is nice to have a concise collection readily available. I look forward to reading *Curating Research Data, Volume Two: A Handbook of Current Practice*.

Statement of Competing Interests

No competing interests declared.

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