

Planning Coordinated Data Curation Services

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The National Science Foundation implemented its requirement that all grant proposals include a two page data management plan in January, 2011. At research institutions across the U.S., individuals from multiple, diverse departments realized that they would need to collaborate with other institutional groups to support this mandate. At Georgia Tech, the library has emerged as a focal point for these various campus groups. We were well positioned for this role due to a strong track record of developing effective, collegial relationships with other GT units. Two programs in particular supported us in this capacity: 1) prior outreach regarding data management (including an institute-wide research data assessment); and 2) a well-developed suite of scholarly communication services built upon SMARTech, our institutional repository. In this poster, we will discuss institute-wide organizational issues surrounding the development of coordinated research data curation services.

The library has a history of building strong campus relationships around scholarly communication services. We have been running the university's DSpace-based institutional repository, SMARTech (Scholarly Materials and Research at Tech), since 2004. Initial results from our research data assessment revealed that many faculty members are creating data sets that exist in accessible formats, are relatively small in size, and can be made publicly available for an indefinite amount of time. These criteria fit our collecting policies for SMARTech, and we have developed recommendations and policies for the data sets we are able to accept at this time.

Despite prior promotional efforts, the NSF data management plan requirement confounded many researchers. Among other elements, the plan asks that researchers detail metadata standards and determine methods for data sharing and preservation. It became obvious from both the data assessment results and responses from faculty to the NSF requirement that coordinated data curation services were needed on campus.

We soon began working with colleagues from the Office of Sponsored Programs, Office of Information Technology, and IT directors from the individual colleges and research centers. Campus advocates for the library's assuming a central role in the development of research data services quickly emerged, including an Associate Dean from the College of Engineering and the IT directors from a number of colleges. Faculty members with previous experience working with SMARTech were also essential in sharing information about current repository services for published reports of research data. The library has been asked to supply campus decision makers with a white paper outlining our recommendations for coordinated data curation services, including policies, technical infrastructure and services. While still in the early stages of this partnership, we can discuss the organizational setting which brought us to this point, and our initial recommendations.