

Research Data Strategy Working Group: Opening new pathways to Canadian research data

Growing pressure to safeguard Canadian research data

Over the last several years, pressure has been mounting to preserve and archive Canada's research data to ensure long-term access. A number of drivers have precipitated this including the risk of losing valuable collections of data, and the underutilization of data resulting from large investments in research.

The Research Data Strategy Working Group

[The Research Data Strategy Working Group](#) is a collaborative effort to address the challenges and issues surrounding the access and preservation of data arising from Canadian research. The Working Group was formed in January 2008, and has representatives from a cross-sector of Canadian research organizations including university libraries and CIOs, federal research institutions, national libraries and associations, federal funding agencies, and individual researchers.

Collaborating for progress

The collaborative nature of this effort is essential to its success. The issues of data stewardship must be addressed collectively from a national perspective with the participation of all parts of the research community, including the researchers who create and use this data. Each member of the Working Group recognizes that their sector has a role to play in the eventual solutions.

As a first step, a Gap Analysis was undertaken by researcher Kathleen Shearer (the report is available at www.data-donnees.gc.ca). Using the data lifecycle as a framework, the report analyzes the current state of research data stewardship versus the 'ideal state', as defined by the Working Group. The analysis found large gaps across all ten indicators studied: policies, funding, roles and responsibilities, standards, data repositories, skills and training, rewards and recognition systems, research & development, access, and preservation. The gaps between current and ideal state must be narrowed if we are to improve the state of research data stewardship in Canada.

Given the scope of the challenge, it's clear that the issues cannot be solved by any single organization. Furthermore, many of the issues must be tackled concurrently. To this end, the Working Group has established three task groups to address pressing issues:

- Task Group 1: Policies, Funding and Research
- Task Group 2: Infrastructure and Services
- Task Group 3: Capacity (Skills, Training, Rewards System)

In the coming months, each task group will work to develop practical strategies that address the gaps in their assigned areas.

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