

Supporting Data Management Across Disciplines

Katherine McNeill

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

IASSIST Annual Conference 2010

MIT Libraries Overview

- Public Services
- Five divisional libraries:
 - Architecture and urban planning
 - Humanities
 - Engineering
 - Science
 - Management and social sciences
- Role of public service librarians

Data Services/Initiatives

- Formal data services with dedicated staff:
 - Social Science Data Services
 - GIS Services
- Interest groups on data:
 - Engineering and Science Data Initiatives Group (ESL-DIG)
 - Data Group

Developing a Data Management Service

- New initiatives to support MIT faculty as information producers, not just consumers
- Faculty as data producers
- Built a set of web pages on archiving and disseminating your data
- Then...

Doing Outreach

- Identified potential faculty:
 - Web sites
 - News stories
 - Word of mouth
 - Requests
- Initiated contact via:
 - Email
 - Spontaneous encounters

Initial Meetings with Faculty/Staff

- Preparation
- Conversation topics
 - Story of their data (collection, methodology, file formats, storage, documentation, rights, etc.)
 - Potential for secondary analysis
 - Guidance on data management
 - Options for archiving/disseminating data
 - Description of my support and available services
- Sometimes met with research staff

See also: *Conducting a Data Interview*, Witt and Carlson,
http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/lib_research/81/

Support Provided

- Facilitate deposit of data in an archive or repository
- Results: 3 faculty members with data in an archive, 2 in process
- Advised on data documentation
- Referrals to other services/training
- Other needs that arise: e.g., data conversion
- Ongoing support

Building an Interdisciplinary Partnership

- Data Group: Forum to exchange information
- Members of ESL-DIG interested in developing data management guidelines for faculty
- Potential overlap=opportunity for collaboration
- Web guide:
<http://libraries.mit.edu/data-management>
- Workshop: Managing Research Data 101

Working Together

- Similarity of issues across disciplines
- Learning from each other
- Mutual benefit
- Joint professional presentations
- But still informal collaboration

Reorganization

- No longer discipline-based library units, but rather functional groups (as of July 1st)
- Specialized Content and Services: numeric data, bioinformatics, CAD, GIS, images, maps, music, science and engineering data, & video.
- My focus: numeric data
- Collective planning for data management

Open Questions

- How much will we integrate services in our new department? What makes sense?
- What services should be structured around format vs. discipline?
- What is the role of the librarian subject specialist regarding data management?

Conclusion

- Data management issues cross disciplines
- Reach out to your colleagues in other disciplines
- Seek out areas of overlap or similar work
- Be mindful of differences
- Establish informal connections where no formal organizational structure exists
- Take initiative