

RDA: Who? What? Where?

Introducing the Research Data Alliance and its Opportunities for the Social Sciences

Ricarda Braukmann

Data Archiving and Networked Services (DANS)

National Node: RDA in the Netherlands

May 2021



The work described in this document has been conducted within the project RDA Europe 4.0. This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 (H2020) research and innovation programme under the Grant Agreement no 777388. This document does not represent the opinion of the European Union, and the European Union is not responsible for any use that might be made of its content.

Table of Contents

1	Aim of this report	3
2	What is the RDA?.....	4
3	RDA and the Social Sciences.....	6
3.1	Categorization of the RDA groups and outputs	6
3.2	Interest Groups	8
3.2.1	General topics.....	8
3.2.2	Specific topics	11
3.3	Working Groups	12
3.3.1	General topics.....	12
3.3.2	Specific topics	14
3.4	Recommendations and Outputs	15
3.4.1	Outputs relevant for social sciences.....	16
4	Conclusion	17
5	Glossary	17
6	Appendix	18

1 Aim of this report

This report aims to provide an introduction to the Research Data Alliance (RDA) for social science scholars. It summarizes the outcomes of an analysis of the RDA groups and their relevance for professionals within the domain of social sciences. This report is based on a previous report published in November 2019 which is available on Zenodo¹. The previous work was executed as part of the RDA Europe 4.0 project² in which Data Archiving and Networked Services (DANS)³ acted as a national RDA node in the Netherlands and as an ambassador for the social sciences.

In this report, a brief introduction of the RDA is given, followed by an outline of the current RDA Interest and Working Groups (status May 2021). Groups were analyzed with respect to their relevance for social science researchers and the work considered most important for this target audience is highlighted. We also summarize selected RDA recommendations and outcomes relevant for the social science community.

Social sciences in this context should be understood as the broad field of research that is concerned with “society and the relationships among individuals within a society”⁴. This definition includes, but is not limited to, the field of sociology, anthropology, communication sciences, psychology, educational sciences, pedagogics and economics.

This report should be seen as a starting point for researchers and other professionals working within this domain to get acquainted with the RDA and identify work that would be interesting for them. This analysis can, in addition, be used by research supporters as basis to provide information to scientists at events or conferences specifically addressing the social science community.

1 <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3580674>

2 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/rda-europe>

3 <https://dans.knaw.nl/en/>

4 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_science



2 What is the RDA?

The Research Data Alliance, short RDA, is a community-driven organization that was launched in 2013 by the European Commission, the United States Government's National Science Foundation and National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the Australian Government's Department of Innovation. The goal of the RDA is to build the social and technical infrastructure that is needed to enable open sharing of data. The organization envisions "researchers and innovators openly sharing data across technologies, disciplines, and countries to address the grand challenges of society"⁵. Since 2013, the EU has supported RDA activities within Europe, by funding Europe-specific projects such as RDA Europe 4.0.

In April 2021, the RDA counted over 11.500 members from 145 different countries and from various backgrounds, including data professionals researchers, librarians and policy developers. Individual membership to the RDA is free for anyone who supports the RDA mission and its guiding principles (see Figure 1).

- **Openness** – Membership is open to all interested individuals who subscribe to the RDA's Guiding Principles. RDA community meetings and processes are open, and the deliverables of RDA Working Groups will be publicly disseminated.
- **Consensus** – The RDA moves forward by achieving consensus among its membership. RDA processes and procedures include appropriate mechanisms to resolve conflicts.
- **Inclusive** – The RDA seeks to promote broad, balanced and inclusive representation of its membership and stakeholder communities.
- **Harmonization** – The RDA works to achieve harmonization across data standards, policies, technologies, infrastructure, and communities.
- **Community-driven** – The RDA is a public, community-driven body constituted of volunteer members and organizations, supported by the RDA Secretariat.
- **Non-profit and technology-neutral** - The RDA does not promote, endorse, or sell commercial products, technologies, or services and the development of open and re-usable recommendations and outputs within the RDA is mandatory.

Figure 1. The RDA Guiding principles. Taken from <https://www.rd-alliance.org/get-involved.html>

⁵ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/about-rda>



RDA members can join **Interest Groups (IGs)** and **Working Groups (WGs)** focused on various topics related to data sharing and innovation. Both IGs and WGs undergo a review process before they are established and endorsed by the RDA.

IGs consists of experts from the community and serve as a platform for exchange. IGs produce outputs such as surveys, recommendations, reports, and can initiate new WGs. While IGs can be active over longer periods of time, WGs have a fixed period of 12 to 18 months during which members work on concrete outputs. WG outputs can include, for instance, technical specifications, conceptual models or frameworks, or implemented policies.

An important event at which members of the RDA come together are the **RDA Plenaries**. Plenaries are held every six months in different places around the world (or online during the COVID-19 pandemic) and serve as an important point of contact where the communities are brought together and where WGs and IGs present and discuss their work.

Find information about	
RDA in general	www.rd-alliance.org
Interest Groups	www.rd-alliance.org/groups/interest-groups
Working Groups	www.rd-alliance.org/groups/working-groups
Recommendations & Outputs	www.rd-alliance.org/recommendations-and-outputs/all-recommendations-and-outputs
RDA on Twitter	@resdatall @RDA_Europe @RDA_US
RDA on LinkedIn	www.linkedin.com/in/researchdataalliance/
RDA Contact	www.rd-alliance.org/contact
RDA and the Social Sciences	www.rd-alliance.org/rda-disciplines/rda-and-social-sciences

Table 1. This table gives an overview of where to find information about the RDA online. All weblinks where accessed 10-05-2021.

3 RDA and the Social Sciences

The following part of this report provides an overview of the RDA IGs, WGS and Outputs which are of particular interest for scholars working within the field of social sciences.

To establish an overview of the RDA work, a list of the current IGs and WGs was taken from the RDA website in May 2021^{6,7}. The IGs and WGs were then classified into broader categories (see 3.1) to structure the presentation and give a quick overview of the different aspects that are addressed by the RDA. Finally, the relevance of the IGs, WGs and Outputs for the social sciences was evaluated and the results of this evaluation are summarized in section 3.2 to 3.3 below.

3.1 Categorization of the RDA groups and outputs

The described analysis was performed in May 2021 when 57 Interest groups (IGs) and 37 Working Groups (WGs) were listed on the RDA website^{5,6}.

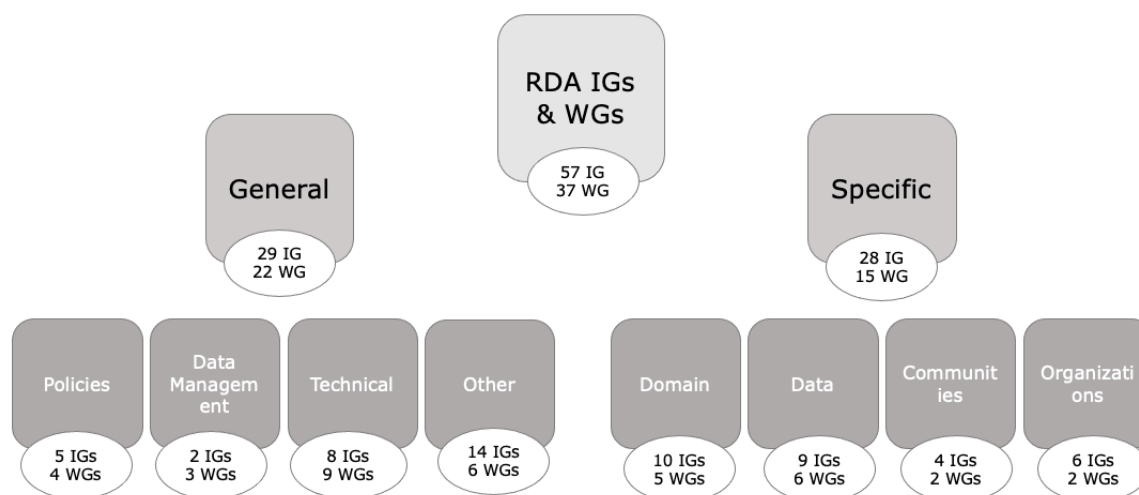


Figure 2. This Figure illustrates the classification that was adopted to group the Interest Groups (IGs) and Working Groups (WGs) into logical larger units to provide an overview of the work that is performed within the RDA.

⁶ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/interest-groups>

⁷ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/working-groups>



In order to establish a manageable overview of the different aspects that are addressed by the RDA, the IGs and WGs as well as their corresponding outputs were grouped into larger units by classifying the groups into different categories according to the topics they are dealing with. The same classification was used as in the previous reports⁸ and it was chosen to create logical sub-groups suitable for this analysis focused on social sciences scholars. It should be noted that for other purposes and audiences, other classifications may be more appropriate. In addition, the RDA has since the publication of the first version of this report in August 2018 worked on a classification scheme for IG and WGs. This scheme classifies groups according to “Main Focus” and “Domain/Field of Expertise”. Anyone interested in the RDA can now search for groups and outputs using these criteria (see Table 2).⁹ In addition, dedicated pages for different disciplines on the RDA website¹⁰, including the social sciences¹¹ have also been created based on these efforts. The social science domain page is a good starting point for social scientists to get to know the RDA and WGs and IGs relevant to this field.

Main Focus	Domain/Field of Expertise
Data Management	Social Sciences
Data Collection	Natural Sciences
Data Description	Engineering and Technology
Identity, Store, and Preserve	Medical and Health Sciences
Disseminate, Link, and Find	Agricultural Sciences
Policy, Legal Compliance, and Capacity	Humanities
Not applicable	Domain Agnostic

Table 2. Search criteria established by the RDA along which groups and outputs can be searched for on the RDA website¹².

The classification that was applied for this report had two levels and a schematic overview is given in Figure 2. In a first step, groups were divided into General vs. Specific topics: Groups covering domain-

⁸ <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3580674>

⁹ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/rda-for-you>

¹⁰ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/rda-disciplines>

¹¹ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/rda-disciplines/rda-and-social-sciences>

¹² <https://www.rd-alliance.org/rda-for-you>



general topics, such as data management or infrastructure development, were classified as *general*, whereas groups dealing with specific data, domains or communities were classified as *specific*.

In a second step, the general groups were divided into four categories: Policies and guidelines, data management, technical and infrastructure, and other (i.e. groups concerning domain-general topics that did not fit any of the prior three categories). The specific groups were also sub-divided into four categories: Domains, data, communities, and organizations.

Consecutively, for all IGs and WGs the description on the RDA website was studied in order to establish their relevance for social sciences researchers. Three categories were used: Groups were considered *highly relevant* if they covered topics that should be of interest for social sciences researchers in general. These topics, for instance, include dealing with privacy-sensitive data or RDA work on research data management. Groups that may be interesting for social sciences researchers depending on their exact field of research or particular interest were labeled as *moderately relevant*. This category includes, for instance, groups working on big data or within the field of linguistics. RDA groups that did not fit into these prior categories were labeled as being *low in relevance*. It should be noted that our analysis aims to give a broad perspective on relevance for social sciences, and that groups or outcomes classified as low relevance may still be interesting for a particular social sciences researcher interested in specific topics. Our analysis should be seen as a starting point for social science researchers that are new to the RDA and wish to receive some guidance through the large amount of work and topics covered by the RDA.

Below the results of the group and outcome assessment are presented, following the structure of the categorization described above. An overview of the results can be seen in the Appendix and the dataset has also been published on Zenodo (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1308775>).

3.2 Interest Groups

In the following, an overview is given of the Interest Groups (IGs) that can be considered highly or moderately relevant for social sciences researchers. An overview of all IGs is given in the Appendix.

3.2.1 General topics

3.2.1.1 Policies and guidelines

All of the IGs in this category were classified as either highly or moderately relevant to social science researchers as these groups are engaged in creating policies and guidelines for general issues related to (open) research data. One group is considered highly relevant for social sciences researchers, namely the Ethics and Social Aspects of Data IG¹³ which is concerned with ethical and social issues with respect to data archiving, sharing, and reuse. Given that most social sciences researchers deal with sensitive data that impose ethical issues, this IG is considered highly relevant for the community. The four other IGs in this category may also be interesting for social sciences researchers, but their relevance is more dependent on the interest and specific field of the particular researcher. The groups deal with basic concepts and framework models (Data Foundations and Terminology IG¹⁴), legal interoperability (RDA/CODATA Legal Interoperability IG¹⁵), and data policies that support publication of research (Data policy standardization and implementation IG¹⁶). A group that has been established since the last report is the Preservation Tools, Techniques, and Policies IG¹⁷ which discusses preservation issues and policies.

3.2.1.2 Data Management

As with policies and recommendations, all groups within the Data Management category can be considered highly or moderately relevant for social sciences researchers. In particular, the Education and Training on handling of research data IG¹⁸ is seen as highly relevant as it fosters the exchange of information about developments and initiatives for trainings on how to manage research data throughout the data lifecycle. The other IG may be relevant for social sciences researchers interested in Data Management Plans (Active Data Management Plans IG¹⁹).

3.2.1.3 Technical and infrastructure

Although associated outputs of IGs and related WGs dealing with technical aspects and infrastructure developments such as persistent identifiers, data provenance, or virtual research environments can

¹³ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/ethics-and-social-aspects-data.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-foundations-and-terminology-ig.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rdacodata-legal-interoperability-ig.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-policy-standardisation-and-implementation>

¹⁷ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/preservation-tools-techniques-and-policies>

¹⁸ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/education-and-training-handling-research-data.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/active-data-management-plans.html>

be of interest for the social sciences, the IGs in this category were overall considered less relevant for social science researchers than the other categories. One IG that may be interesting for social science researchers, however, is the Virtual Research Environment IG²⁰. This IG is exploring all aspects of existing and planned future Virtual Research Environments with the aim of moving towards common policies and best practices.

3.2.1.4 Other general topics

There are four additional IGs that can be considered highly relevant for social sciences researchers. Firstly, the Disciplinary Collaboration Framework IG²¹ aims to bring together different research disciplines to discuss disciplinary-specific use cases of RDA outputs and provide room for exchange and harmonization across disciplines. Such an IG is considered relevant for social sciences researchers as they can learn from use cases by other disciplines and represent the social sciences perspective. Secondly, the Data Discovery Paradigms IG²² aims to improve the discovery of research data and may hence be highly relevant for social sciences researchers interested in finding and reusing data or making their own data findable. A group that has been added since the last report in 2019 is the Engaging Researchers with Data IG²³. This group discusses how researchers can be engaged in data management and is considered highly relevant as the importance of data management is ever growing across all disciplines. Lastly, the Sharing Rewards and Credit (SHARC) IG²⁴ is seeking to understand and improve the crediting and rewarding mechanisms in the data and resources sharing process. It currently covers several disciplines but lacks social sciences representatives despite being a general topic that is of interest to all communities and hence also to social science researchers.

Besides these highly relevant groups, nine groups can be considered moderately relevant, depending on the specific interest of the social sciences researcher. Two groups have been initiated since the last report in 2019, the Science communication for research data IG²⁵ is under pending submission, and the Professionalising Data Stewardship IG²⁶ has been established. The other groups in this category deal with data commons (Global Open Research Commons²⁷ (previously called Coordinating the

²⁰ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/vre-ig.html>

²¹ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/disciplinary-collaboration-framework-ig>

²² <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-discovery-paradigms-ig>

²³ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/engaging-researchers-data-ig>

²⁴ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/sharing-rewards-and-credit-sharc-ig>

²⁵ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/science-communication-research-data>

²⁶ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/professionalising-data-stewardship-ig>

²⁷ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/global-open-research-commons-ig>



Global Open Research Commons IG), rescue of data ([Data Conservation IG²⁸](#)), the implementation of the FAIR principles ([GO FAIR IG²⁹](#)), the development of a survey on Open Science Practices ([IG for Surveying Open Data Practices³⁰](#)), Social challenges of data interoperability ([Social Dynamics of Data Interoperability IG³¹](#)), vocabulary services ([Vocabulary Services IG³²](#)), and last but not least metadata ([Metadata IG³³](#)).

3.2.2 Specific topics

3.2.2.1 Domain

The most important RDA group for the social sciences is the [Social Science Research Data IG³⁴](#). This group aims to foster exchange between various professionals on issues particular to data originating from the social sciences and humanities. In addition, there are a couple of domain-specific groups that may be interesting for social scientists. Whether or not a domain-specific group is relevant of course highly depends on the specific field of research, therefore groups covering specific topics received the label moderately relevant. The following three domain-specific groups may be considered relevant for social sciences researcher: [Digital Practices in History and Ethnography IG³⁵](#), [Linguistics Data IG³⁶](#) and the [ELIXIR Bridging Force IG³⁷](#) working within the field of life sciences.

3.2.2.2 Data

Similar to domain-specific groups, data-specific groups may or may not be interesting for a social science researcher depending on their exact field of research. Taking a broad perspective on social sciences, we would consider four data-specific IGs as (potentially) relevant. The [RDA/NISO Privacy Implications of Research Data Sets IG³⁸](#) should be of interest to most social scientists as it discusses issues regarding data containing human subject information. Moreover, an IG that is just starting and

28 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-conservation-ig>

29 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/go-fair-ig>

30 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/ig-surveying-open-data-practices>

31 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/social-dynamics-data-interoperability-ig>

32 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/vocabulary-services-interest-group.html>

33 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/metadata-ig.html>

34 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/social-science-research-data-ig>

35 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/digital-practices-history-and-ethnography-ig.html>

36 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/linguistics-data-ig>

37 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/elixir-bridging-force-ig.html>

38 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rdaniso-privacy-implications-research-data-sets-wg.html>



currently in the phase of in-group revisions is the Sensitive Data Interest Group³⁹ which should be highly relevant for social science researchers. Besides these two, IGs concerning developmental studies (Data for Development IG⁴⁰), and health data (Health Data IG⁴¹) may also be considered relevant for researchers in the social sciences.

3.2.2.3 Communities and organizations

The last two classes of specific IGs concern specific communities or organizations (such as libraries, universities and research institutions). Most IGs within these two categories seem not directly relevant to social science researchers. Two IGs that may be considered relevant, however, are the RDA for the Sustainable Development Goals IG⁴² which is related to the Data for Development IG, and the Early Career and Engagement IG⁴³. The latter IG is established for early career researchers and RDA newcomers and helps its members to get a better understanding of the RDA and its working procedures. It is hence an interesting group for social sciences researchers who are new to the RDA and who would like some support in finding their way within the RDA.

3.3 Working Groups

In the following, an overview is given of the RDA Working Groups (WGs) that can be considered highly or moderately relevant for social sciences researchers. Since there are fewer WGs than IGs and as WGs deal with specific topics or use cases, overall fewer groups were classified as highly or moderately relevant for social sciences researchers.

3.3.1 General topics

Out of all 22 working groups dealing with general topics, three WGs were classified as highly relevant and eight WGs were classified as moderately relevant for social science researchers.

39 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/sensitive-data-interest-group>

40 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-development.html>

41 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/health-data.html>

42 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/rda-sustainable-development-goals>

43 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/early-career-and-engagement-ig>

Firstly, the Exposing Data Management Plans WG⁴⁴ was considered relevant as it aims to take a user perspective on Data Management Plans (DMPs) as well as addressing current problems concerning the lack of standards for DMPs. It is a valuable WG for social science researchers who would like to discuss and be involved in recent and upcoming developments concerning data management. A newly established group that was classified as relevant was the Discipline-specific Guidance for Data Management Plans WG⁴⁵ which focuses on the researchers needs and discipline-specific adaptations for DMP templates. The third group that was classified as highly relevant is the RDA/WDS Publishing Data Workflows WG⁴⁶. This WG is concerned with data publishing and is working on an analysis of existing and emerging workflows and standards for data publishing within different disciplines. As data sharing becomes increasingly relevant for researchers of all fields, this WG may provide a useful overview of the current state for social sciences researchers.

General WGs that may further be interesting for social science researchers cover three WGs that were established since the last report, concerning FAIR research software (FAIR for Research Software (FAIR4RS) WG⁴⁷), curation practices supporting computational reproducibility and FAIR (CURE-FAIR WG⁴⁸), and a group concerned with data granularity practice (Data Granularity WG⁴⁹). Furthermore, groups that may be of interest are the WGs working on FAIR data maturity (FAIR Data Maturity Model WG⁵⁰), data usage metrics (Data Usage Metrics WG⁵¹), the creation of a catalogue of metadata standards (Metadata Standards Catalog WG⁵²), and work related to metadata for physical objects (RDA / TDWG Metadata Standards for attribution of physical and digital collections stewardship⁵³). In addition, the Preserving Scientific Annotation WG⁵⁴ concerned with methodologies on annotation of digital resources across domains may be of interest to social science researchers as well.

44 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/exposing-data-management-plans-wg>

45 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/discipline-specific-guidance-data-management-plans-wg>

46 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rdawds-publishing-data-workflows-wg.html>

47 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/fair-research-software-fair4rs-wg>

48 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/cure-fair-wg>

49 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-granularity-wg>

50 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/fair-data-maturity-model-wg>

51 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-usage-metrics-wg>

52 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/metadata-standards-catalog-working-group.html>

53 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/metadata-standards-attribution-physical-and-digital-collections-stewardship.html>

54 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/preserving-scientific-annotation-wg>



3.3.2 Specific topics

Since the last report, a few new WGs dealing with specific topics relevant for social sciences have been established. Out of the 15 WGs in this category, two were labeled as highly relevant and three were labeled as moderately relevant. A relevant new group that has been established is the RDA COVID-19⁵⁵ WG. Importantly, this group is divided into specific sub-group dealing with different aspects of COVID-19 including a dedicated group for Social Science related research in COVID-19 (RDA-COVID19-Social-Sciences⁵⁶). Another WG that has been established and is considered highly relevant is the Raising FAIRness in health data and health research performing organisations (HRPOs) WG. This WG deals with issues and challenges around confidentiality, privacy, commercial interests and sensitivities which are common in health sciences but also very relevant for social scientists who want to make their data more FAIR. Next to these two groups, the Reproducible Health Data Services WG⁵⁷ may be of interest for social scientists working in the field of health data as well. Scientists working closer to the field of humanities may find the Empirical Humanities Metadata Working Group⁵⁸ interesting for their work. Last but not least the FAIRSharing Registry: connecting data policies, standards & databases WG⁵⁹ working on a searchable registry with information about databases, content standards, and journal and funder policies in the life sciences may be of interest for social scientists working close to the life science.

55 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rda-covid-19>

56 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rda-covid19-social-sciences>

57 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/reproducible-health-data-services-wg>

58 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/group/empirical-humanities-metadata-working-group.html>

59 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/group/fairsharing-registry-connecting-data-policies-standards-databases.html>

3.4 Recommendations and Outputs

The various working and interest groups produce a lot of recommendations and outputs that others can reuse. When the last version of this report was published at the end of 2019, the RDA website listed 33 Outputs while at the time of writing 53 recommendations and outputs were listed⁶⁰. As it would be quite time consuming to list and review all the new outputs in this overview, and since outputs are being added so rapidly, it was decided not to follow the same structure as in the last report. Rather, this report summarizes the outputs marked as relevant for the Social Sciences and does not provide a comprehensive overview of everything that is available. Importantly, however, the RDA has established a search interface which shows all outputs, including a classification that allows searching per topic and primary domain. The reader is encouraged to browse this catalogue⁶¹ themselves, and discover the RDA outputs that may be relevant to their specific situation.

The RDA uses three classifications for the outputs: RDA Recommendations, Supporting Outputs, and Other Outputs⁶². *RDA Recommendations* have undergone formal phases of discussion, comment and decision making and are “produced by RDA Working Groups and are the official, endorsed results of RDA and considered our ‘flagship’ Outputs”. *Supporting Outputs* have undergone community review and “are useful solutions from our RDA Working and Interest Groups, but may not be as clearly adoptable by organizations as our RDA Recommendations”. Lastly, *Other Outputs* describe resources requested by a Working Group or Interest Group to be published on the RDA website, but have received no level of endorsement.

60 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/recommendations-and-outputs/catalogue>

61 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/recommendations-and-outputs/catalogue>

62 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/recommendations-outputs>

3.4.1 Outputs relevant for social sciences

From the 53 Outputs listed on the RDA website, three outputs were classified specifically with the domain tag social sciences. The FAIRsharing Registry and Recommendations: Interlinking Standards, Databases and Data Policies⁶³ describes the outputs of a joint RDA-Force11 FAIRsharing WG including guidelines for how various stakeholder groups can reduce the knowledge gap around the resources. The final version of the RDA COVID-19 Recommendations and Guidelines for Data Sharing, published 30 June 2020⁶⁴ consists of an overview of the COVID-19 WGs discussing how data from multiple disciplines can inform response to a pandemic. In particular guidelines and recommendations on data sharing under the COVID-19 circumstances have been established as a key result of this WG. The third output listed in the catalogue is the Tromsø recommendations for citation of research data in linguistics⁶⁵ addresses the challenge of linguistic datasets often not being cited due to confusion about how to properly cite them. The output proposes components of data citation for referencing language data for the use of researchers and scholars in this field of science.

It should be noted that while these three outputs were classified as relevant to social sciences by the RDA groups producing them, other outputs may also be of interest for social science researchers, depending on their exact field of work and scientific interest. For instance, in our past report⁶⁶ we had identified two outputs that we classified as covering general topics that were considered highly relevant for social sciences researchers.

The Metadata Standards Directory⁶⁷ output provides access to a directory of metadata standards for documenting research data, regardless of academic discipline. It features information for metadata in the social sciences and can therefore be seen as a useful tool for social sciences researchers.

The output on Eleven Quick Tips for Finding Research Data⁶⁸ provides eleven practical tips for data discovery which can be useful for social sciences researcher to effectively discover the data that meet their specific needs.

63 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/group/fairsharing-registry-connecting-data-policies-standards-databases-wg/outcomes/fairsharing>

64 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/group/rda-covid19-rda-covid19-omics-rda-covid-19-epidemiology-rda-covid19-clinical-rda-covid19-0>

65 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/group/linguistics-data-ig/outcomes/troms%C3%B8-recommendations-citation-research-data-linguistics>

66 <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3580674>

67 rd-alliance.github.io/metadata-directory/

68 <http://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.1006038>

4 Conclusion

This report presented the results of an analysis of RDA Interest, Working Groups and Outputs relevant for social science researchers. A brief introduction to the RDA was given to provide basic knowledge of the organization, its structure and way of working. In the following, a comprehensive analysis of all current RDA work has been presented and was evaluated with respect to its relevance for researchers working within the social sciences.

Nine IGs, five WGs and were classified as particularly relevant to the social science community, covering the established Social Science Research Data IG, as well as topics like sensitive data, COVID-19, training and data management planning, data discovery and standards for discipline-specific metadata (see Appendix for an overview of all groups and outcomes). We highlighted five RDA outcomes that may be interesting for social science researchers and encourage people to explore the recently established the RDA outcomes and recommendation catalogue.

This report can be used as an initial guidance, pointing social scientists towards potentially interesting work of the RDA that they can use within their own field of research. It provides a starting point for finding a way through the large number of diverse groups that operate within the RDA. Identifying topics most relevant to the social sciences community should enhance the visibility of the RDA within this specific domain, encouraging social science researchers to engage (more) with the RDA in the future.

5 Glossary

Abbreviation	Full term
RDA	Research Data Alliance
IG	Interest Group
WG	Working Group
DMP	Data Management Plan

6 Appendix

Overview of the analysis of the RDA IGs [A], WGs [B] and their relevance for the social sciences. This dataset has also been published on Zenodo (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1308775>). Note that IGs which were added since the last report in November 2019 are highlighted grey

A

Interest Groups	Classification	Sub-Classification	Topic	Relevance
Ethics and Social Aspects of Data IG	[1] General	[1] Policies and Guidelines	Ethics	high
Data Foundations and Terminology IG	[1] General	[1] Policies and Guidelines	Vocabulary agreements	moderate
RDA/CODATA Legal Interoperability IG	[1] General	[1] Policies and Guidelines	Legal interoperability	moderate
Preservation Tools, Techniques, and Policies	[1] General	[1] Policies and Guidelines	Discussing preservation, policies and tools	moderate
Data policy standardisation and implementation	[1] General	[1] Policies and Guidelines	Supporting publication of research	moderate
Education and Training on handling of research data IG	[1] General	[2] Data Management	Education and Training	high
Active Data Management Plans IG	[1] General	[2] Data Management	Data Management Plans	moderate
Virtual Research Environment IG (VRE-IG)	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Virtual Research Environment	moderate
Data Fabric IG	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Data creation and consumption	low
Federated Identity Management	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Federated Identity Management	low
Open Science Graphs for FAIR Data IG	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Connecting research data	low
PID IG	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	PID	low
RDA/CODATA Materials Data, Infrastructure & Interoperability IG	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Infrastructure and Interoperability	low
Repository Platforms for Research Data IG	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Repository platforms	low
Software Source Code IG	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Software source code	low
Disciplinary Collaboration Framework IG	[1] General	[4] Other	Bringing disciplines together	high
Data Discovery Paradigms IG	[1] General	[4] Other	Data Discovery	high
Engaging Researchers with Data IG	[1] General	[4] Other	Engagement of researcher in data management.	high
Sharing Rewards and Credit (SHARC) IG	[1] General	[4] Other	Crediting and reward mechanisms in data sharing	high
Global Open Research Commons IG	[1] General	[4] Other	Data commons	moderate
Data Conservation IG	[1] General	[4] Other	Data Rescue	moderate
GO FAIR IG	[1] General	[4] Other	Implementing the FAIR principles	moderate
IG for Surveying Open Data Practices	[1] General	[4] Other	Survey	moderate
Social Dynamics of Data Interoperability IG	[1] General	[4] Other	Social challenges of data interoperability	moderate
Vocabulary Services Interest Group	[1] General	[4] Other	Vocabulary services	moderate
Science communication for research data (pending submission)	[1] General	[4] Other	Science communication	moderate
Professionalising Data Stewardship IG	[1] General	[4] Other	Dats stewardship role and profession	moderate
Metadata IG	[1] General	[4] Other	Metadata	moderate



RESEARCH DATA ALLIANCE

Data Economics IG	[1] General	[4] Other	Data as economic good	low
Social Science Research Data IG	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Social Sciences and Humanities	high
Digital Practices in History and Ethnography IG	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	History and Ethnography	moderate
Linguistics Data IG	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Linguistics	moderate
ELIXIR Bridging Force IG	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Life Sciences	moderate
Research Data Management in Engineering IG	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Engineering	low
Agricultural Data Interest Group (IGAD)	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Agriculture	low
ESIP/RDA Earth, Space, and Environmental Sciences IG	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Earth, Space and Environmental Sciences	low
Geospatial IG	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Geospatial data	low
Global Water Information IG	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Water Information stakeholders	low
Research data needs of the Photon and Neutron Science community IG	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Photon and Neutron Science	low
RDA/NISO Privacy Implications of Research Data Sets IG	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Data containing human subject information	high
Sensitive Data Interest Group (in group revisions)	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Sensitive data	high
Data for Development IG	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Development Studies	moderate
Health Data Interest Group	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Health Data	moderate
Biodiversity Data Integration IG	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Biodiversity	low
Chemistry Research Data IG	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Chemistry	low
International Indigenous Data Sovereignty IG	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Indigenous Data	low
Physical Samples and Collections in the Research Data Ecosystem IG	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Physical samples	low
Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems' Data IG	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems	low
RDA for the Sustainable Development Goals	[2] Specific	[3] Community	Developing world	moderate
Early Career and Engagement IG	[2] Specific	[3] Community	Early and Mid-Career Researchers	moderate
CODATA/RDA Research Data Science Schools for Low and Middle Income Countries	[2] Specific	[3] Community	Low and Middle Income Countries	low
Libraries for Research Data IG	[2] Specific	[3] Community	Librarians	low
Research Funders and Stakeholders on Open Research and Data Management Policies and Practices IG	[2] Specific	[4] Organisations	Funders	low
Archives and Records Professionals for Research Data IG	[2] Specific	[4] Organisations	Repositories	low
Domain Repositories Interest Group	[2] Specific	[4] Organisations	Domain repositories	low
RDA/WDS Certification of Digital Repositories IG	[2] Specific	[4] Organisations	Certification of repositories	low
Research Data Architectures in Research Institutions IG	[2] Specific	[4] Organisations	Research institutions	low

B

Working Group	Classification	Sub-classification	Topic	Relevance
Data Usage Metrics WG	[1] General	[1] Policies and guidelines	Data usage metrics	moderate
FAIR Data Maturity Model WG	[1] General	[1] Policies and Guidelines	FAIR data	moderate
Global Open Research Commons International Benchmarking WG	[1] General	[1] Policies and Guidelines	Roadmap global alignment, benchmarks	low
Data Citation WG	[1] General	[1] Policies and guidelines	Data citation	low
Exposing Data Management Plans WG	[1] General	[2] Data Management	Data Management Plans	high
Discipline-specific Guidance for Data Management Plans WG	[1] General	[2] Data Management	Needs of researchers for DMPs	high
DMP Common Standards WG	[1] General	[2] Data Management	Machine-actionable DMPs	low
Preserving Scientific Annotation WG	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Scientific Annotations	moderate
FAIR for Research Software (FAIR4RS) WG	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Adapatation FAIR in software	moderate
Interoperable Descriptions of Observable Property Terminology WG (I-ADOPT WG)	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Interoperability	low
Brokering Framework Working Group	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Brokering	low
Data Description Registry Interoperability (DDRI) WG	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Data description	low
Data Versioning WG	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Versioning	low
Persistent Identification of Instruments	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	PIDs	low
RDA/WDS Scholarly Link Exchange (Scholix) WG	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	Links between scholarly literature and data	low
Research Data Collections WG	[1] General	[3] Technical and Infrastructure	PIDs	low
RDA/WDS Publishing Data Workflows WG	[1] General	[4] Other	Standards and Workflows for Data publishing	high
Metadata Standards Catalog WG	[1] General	[4] Other	Catalogue of metadata standards	moderate
RDA / TDWG Metadata Standards for attribution of physical and digital collections stewardship	[1] General	[4] Other	Metadata of physical collections	moderate
CURE-FAIR WG	[1] General	[4] Other	Curation practices supporting computational reproducibility/FAIR	moderate
Data Granularity WG	[1] General	[4] Other	Needs and landscape for data granularity practice	moderate
Data Type Registries WG & #2	[1] General	[4] Other	Data type registries	low
Empirical Humanities Metadata Working Group	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Humanities Metadata	moderate
Agrisemantics WG	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Agriculture	low
Capacity Development for Agriculture Data WG	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Agriculture	low
International Materials Resource Registries WG	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Materials Science and Engineering	low
Rice Data Interoperability WG	[2] Specific	[1] Domain	Rice	low
Raising FAIRness in health data and health research performing organisations (HRPOs) WG	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Health data	high
RDA COVID-19	[2] Specific	[2] Data	COVID data, in particular the social science sub-group	high
Reproducible Health Data Services WG	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Health data	moderate
Blockchain Applications in Health WG	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Health Science Data	low



RESEARCH DATA ALLIANCE

RDA/FORCE11 Software Source Code Identification WG	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Software code	low
Wheat Data Interoperability WG	[2] Specific	[2] Data	Wheat Data	low
FAIRSharing Registry: connecting data policies, standards & databases WG	[2] Specific	[3] Community	Life Sciences (was BioSharing Registry)	moderate
RDA/CODATA Summer Schools in Data Science and Cloud Computing in the Developing World WG	[2] Specific	[3] Community	Developing World	low
Research Data Repository Interoperability WG	[2] Specific	[4] Organisations	Repositories	low
Research Metadata Schemas WG	[2] Specific	[4] Other	Metadata	low