

## Ongoing Challenges for Data Curation Support:

### A Program Assessment of the Early CLIR/DLF Postdoctoral Fellowships in Data Curation for the Sciences and Social Sciences, 2012–2016

Lori M. Jahnke, Emory University  
[ljahnke@emory.edu](mailto:ljahnke@emory.edu)

Andrew Asher, Indiana University Bloomington  
[asherand@indiana.edu](mailto:asherand@indiana.edu)

#### Introduction

In 2011, we undertook a study of data curation practices among scholars at several higher education institutions. In this study, we set out to document workflows related to the creation, management, and preservation of research data, with the ancillary goal of identifying unmet researcher needs. That study was published in the CLIR report *The Problem of Data* (Jahnke et al. 2012). Following this initial phase of research, CLIR implemented the CLIR/DLF Postdoctoral Fellowship Program in Data Curation for the Sciences and Social Sciences. Both the research and the program were supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

This report is a follow up to our 2011–2012 study. Here we focus on the 2012, 2013, and 2014 cohorts of CLIR/DLF postdoctoral fellows, their work, and the host institutions. Following a qualitative interviewing methodology similar to the one we employed for *The Problem of Data*, we interviewed fellows, their coworkers and team members, supervisors, and researchers, and in some cases we visited host institutions. Employing this contextual approach to both studies enabled us not only to assess the impact of the initial cohorts of the CLIR/DLF postdoctoral program, but also to further characterize ongoing needs and challenges for data curation in the university environment and to compare the experience of fellows and the fellowship community with that of the researchers whose practices and workflows had helped shape the CLIR/DLF program. In this second study, we set out to answer the following questions:

1. In what types of projects and research teams have CLIR/DLF fellows participated during their fellowships? What effect have the fellows had on the data practices of these research teams?

2. What skills, training, or other factors have contributed to the perceived success or failure of individual CLIR/DLF fellows and their collaborative efforts in the domain of research data curation? What roles do institutional contexts play in these outcomes?
3. What are the component processes and workflows in the creation, management, and preservation of scholarly research data?
4. How do these processes and workflows compare with those observed in the 2011–2012 study, *The Problem of Data*?
5. What are the unmet researcher needs within these processes?

Our approach included a series of semi-structured interviews with more than 30 individuals from 13 of the host institutions, as well as site visits and information gleaned from exit interviews conducted with each of the fellows. Upon completion of their fellowship, either a CLIR staff member or an external consultant conducted an exit interview with each fellow to gather information about work undertaken during the fellowship with particular attention to the challenges encountered. We (the authors) developed the exit interview protocol in collaboration with members of the CLIR staff to ensure that the data obtained would be compatible with this study, as well as with the needs of long-term program assessment.

### **Researcher Priorities and Research Data Curation**

Although the open data movement has evolved rapidly since our 2011–2012 study (Allard et al. 2016), researchers, institutions, and fellows continue to confront many of the same challenges. In our initial study, several research faculty spoke candidly of difficulties they faced in trying to balance the demands of high expectations for publication output while meeting their professional and ethical obligations of data stewardship and intellectual transparency. In this environment, producing publications often took priority over other activities. The decision to prioritize publications is unsurprising given the influence a researcher's publication record has on a number of career- and life-altering decisions such as hiring, promotion, funding, tenure, and salary (Nosek et al. 2010; Ostriker et al. 2009).

Our 2011–2012 study participants are not alone in expressing concern over the ever-increasing expectations for research productivity and the detrimental effects of this pressure on the quality of research (Fischer, Ritchie and Hanspach 2012a; Ioannidis 2014; Nosek, Spies and Motyl 2012; Sarewitz 2016; Sills 2016; Smaldino and McElreath 2016).

Scrupulous research on difficult problems may require years of intense work before yielding coherent, publishable results. If shallower work generating more publications is favored, then researchers interested in pursuing complex

questions may find themselves without jobs, perhaps to the detriment of the scientific community more broadly. (Smaldino and McElreath 2016:29)

The trend of increasing competition for jobs<sup>1</sup>, funding, and other resources in the research sector may have greater consequences than a poor employment outlook for young researchers. There is a growing concern that the enormous pressure to produce consistently novel and positive findings<sup>2</sup> promotes bias in research design and statistical analysis that increases the chances of false-positives (Eisner 2018; Simmons, Nelson and Simonsohn 2011). Among scientific publications, multiple authors have commented on the increasing rate of article retractions (Brembs, Button and Munafo 2013; Cokol et al. 2007; Fang and Casadevall 2011), and some authors have found further evidence that the rate of retractions as a result of misconduct, rather than error, is increasing even more rapidly (Fang, Steen and Casadevall 2012; Steen 2011). The likelihood that an article will be retracted is also strongly correlated with the journal impact factor (Brembs, Button and Munafo 2013; Cokol et al. 2007; Fang and Casadevall 2011; Fang, Steen and Casadevall 2012). Although Cokol et al. (2007) attribute this correlation to the greater visibility enjoyed by high-impact journals, Brembs, Button and Munafo (2013:5) find that the relationship cannot be attributed to visibility alone, but it is also the result of intense social pressure to publish in the best-known, most frequently cited, and highest-impact factor journals, which increases unreliability of the submissions.

In a recent analysis covering 60 years of publications in the behavioral sciences, Smaldino and McElreath (2016) showed how the emphasis on high publication output inevitably leads to poorer methods and increasing rates of false-positives. In their analysis, the methodological deterioration does not require any strategizing or conscious misbehavior on the part of individuals or labs. It is simply that quantity of publication is so strongly rewarded that the penalty of failed replication studies and retractions is not sufficient to overcome this benefit (see also Eisner 2018). In other words, the volume of publications and their appearance in high-impact journals is so highly incentivized that researchers gravitate, consciously or unconsciously, toward strategies that support high volume rather than quality. While replication studies do help identify false positives and slow the progress of methodological degradation, Smaldino and McElreath (2016:26–28) note that all studies would need to be replicated multiple times in order to detect researchers that cut corners, a scenario that is unrealistic.

---

<sup>1</sup> In an analysis of 56 “junior” evolutionary biologists, Brischox and Angelier (2015) found that to get hired into tenure track positions young biologists needed to have published twice as many articles and have approximately three years more experience in 2013 than in 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Publication bias, also referred to as the “file drawer problem,” is a well-known phenomenon in which surprising or novel results are more likely to be published than studies showing no effect. For discussion and examples of this phenomenon, see Fanelli (2010); Lane et al. (2016); Schooler (2011); van Dongen (2011); Young, Ioannidis and Al-Ubaydli (2008).

In the context of data curation, we must ask the bigger question of how open data fits into aligning the incentive and reward structures of scholarship with the values of scrupulous research. The final research publication is only the narrowest representation of the scholarship, and in most cases the publication does not include the methodological detail needed to adequately evaluate the work<sup>3</sup>. While the benefits of publishing research data have been widely discussed (e.g., Voytek 2016), these arguments rarely account for the costs to the individual researcher in terms of the time spent on activities that are unrewarded professionally. Slowing the publication cycle may be an additional unrealized benefit of data curation for improving the health of the current research system (Fischer, Ritchie and Hanspach 2012a, 2012b; Halme, Komonen and Huitu 2012; Ioannidis 2014), but the incentive structure must also change to reward researchers for their efforts in promoting intellectual transparency. In other words, change must also come from the administrative, institutional, and national policy levels (Fischer, Ritchie and Hanspach 2012b; Halme, Komonen and Huitu 2012; Ioannidis 2014).

While researchers have more options than ever for depositing and publishing their data, such as data repositories<sup>4</sup>, data journals<sup>5</sup>, and several hybrid journals that accept and encourage the submission of datasets along with the research article (e.g., Nature, Wiley journals, PLoS), we have barely scratched the surface of the deeper issues related to supporting intellectual transparency in the research process and building a durable record of knowledge. In our 2012 report we highlighted the opportunities for fostering intellectual transparency along with the challenges of balancing access with privacy and confidentiality issues and supporting the ethical responsibilities of researchers (Jahnke et al. 2012:5). Although there has been more dialogue around these issues (e.g., RDA/NISO Privacy Implications of Research Data Sets IG<sup>6</sup>), this is one area where there is still much work to be done.

## Summary of the Fellows' Projects

The 2012–2014 cohorts consisted of 23 fellows who were hosted at 20 institutions. We conducted interviews with individuals from 11 of these institutions and did site visits at

---

<sup>3</sup> Donoho et al. (2009:9) and Stodden (2011) paraphrase Stanford professor Jon Claerbout in describing the research article as merely the advertisement of scholarship rather than the work itself.

<sup>4</sup> A few field general options include Dataverse Network Project <http://dataverse.org>, Dryad <https://datadryad.org>, Qualitative Data Repository <https://qdr.syr.edu>, and Figshare <https://figshare.com>. In the social sciences, options include Archaeology Data Service <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk>, OpenICPSR <https://www.openicpsr.org/openicpsr>, Open Science Framework <https://osf.io>, and UK Data Service <https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk>. For a list of recommended repositories, see PLoS <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/s/data-availability#loc-recommended-repositories>, or refer to the Registry of Research Data Repositories for an extensive list <http://www.re3data.org>.

<sup>5</sup> Candela et al. (2015) discuss the growth of operational data journals in recent decades.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rdaniso-privacy-implications-research-data-sets-wg.html>

two additional institutions from the 2015 cohort. According to information gathered during their exit interviews, fellows engaged in approximately 30 projects across the host institutions, ranging from assessment and planning activities to education and training to infrastructure development and implementation (Appendix A).

Most fellows participated in multiple projects simultaneously, and a few individuals worked on as many as four projects during their tenure. In some cases, this reflects the fellow's diverse interests, but in other instances it also reflects the institutional environment and the level of experimentation surrounding data curation and related services. To understand the nature of the fellows' work, we classified the projects into six types according to the primary activities or goals described during the exit interview: assessment and planning, education and training, software/tools development, infrastructure, collections, and outreach (table 1). Many projects included elements from several project types so these categories are not mutually exclusive.

Most of the projects fit into the assessment and planning category. These projects typically focused on needs assessment, requirements gathering, and other planning activities rather than program assessment. Projects in this area included grant writing, research around various aspects of data curation (e.g., infrastructure, publishing, restricted data services), compiling user profiles, and assessing needs at the university and disciplinary level. The abundance of assessment and planning activity is perhaps another reflection of the very early stage of development around data curation services and infrastructure at many of the host institutions. Implementing data curation support requires understanding one's institutional environment in new ways and many institutions are still undergoing a process of self-discovery.

Education and training projects included activities such as developing curricula and educational frameworks, managing working groups, providing consultation services, and developing peer mentoring or networking groups. Much less common were projects focusing on infrastructure, collections, or software development, although there were a few examples of each. Interestingly, fellows rarely described their work as outreach explicitly, but a key activity of nearly all projects included interacting with previously isolated departments, divisions, or programs. This was also an activity that nearly all study participants, including the fellows themselves, regarded as very successful.

Regardless of project type, fellows typically undertook multiple responsibilities, such as project management, research and development, and bringing their scholarly or disciplinary perspective to the work (table 2). In the following section, we discuss how the fellows' roles relate to organizational placement in more detail.

**Table 1.** *Types of projects reported during exit interviews listed by host institution (N = the number of projects reported by fellows per institution, not the number of fellows per institution). Some host institutions are missing due to incomplete reporting.<sup>7</sup>*

|  | <b>N</b>  | <b>Assessment<br/>and Planning</b> | <b>Collections</b> | <b>Education<br/>and Training</b> | <b>Infrastructure</b> | <b>Outreach</b> | <b>Software/tools<br/>development</b> |
|--|-----------|------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Arizona State University   | 2         | 0                                  | 2                  | 0                                 | 0                     | 0               | 0                                     |
| California Digital Library                                       | 3         | 2                                  | 0                  | 0                                 | 1                     | 0               | 0                                     |
| Indiana University-Bloomington                                   | 2         | 1                                  | 0                  | 0                                 | 1                     | 0               | 0                                     |
| Lehigh University  | 1         | 0                                  | 0                  | 0                                 | 1                     | 0               | 0                                     |
| Pennsylvania State University                                    | 2         | 1                                  | 0                  | 1                                 | 0                     | 0               | 0                                     |
| Purdue University  | 3         | 1                                  | 0                  | 2                                 | 0                     | 0               | 0                                     |
| University of Alberta  | 2         | 2                                  | 0                  | 0                                 | 0                     | 0               | 0                                     |
| University of California Davis                                   | 2         | 2                                  | 0                  | 0                                 | 0                     | 0               | 0                                     |
| University of California Los Angeles                             | 3         | 0                                  | 0                  | 2                                 | 0                     | 0               | 1                                     |
| University of Colorado-Boulder/National Snow and Ice Data Center | 2         | 1                                  | 0                  | 0                                 | 1                     | 0               | 0                                     |
| University of Michigan   | 3         | 1                                  | 0                  | 2                                 | 0                     | 0               | 0                                     |
| University of Minnesota  | 2         | 1                                  | 0                  | 0                                 | 0                     | 1               | 0                                     |
| University of New Mexico   | 1         | 1                                  | 0                  | 0                                 | 0                     | 0               | 0                                     |
| University of Notre Dame   | 2         | 0                                  | 0                  | 1                                 | 0                     | 0               | 1                                     |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>30</b> | <b>13</b>                          | <b>2</b>           | <b>8</b>                          | <b>4</b>              | <b>1</b>        | <b>2</b>                              |

<sup>7</sup> CLIR staff were unable to schedule exit interviews with two of the fellows initially targeted for this study.

**Table 2.** *Roles occupied by fellows according to project type (N = the number of projects).*

| <b>Project Type</b>        | <b>N</b>  | <b>Project Management</b> | <b>Needs Assessment</b> | <b>Research and Development</b> | <b>Implementing IT Tools</b> | <b>Scholarly Perspective</b> | <b>Other</b> |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| Assessment and Planning    | 13        | 11                        | 9                       | 11                              | 4                            | 9                            | 3            |
| Collections                | 2         | 2                         | 1                       | 2                               | 0                            | 1                            | 1            |
| Education/Training         | 8         | 3                         | 3                       | 4                               | 2                            | 3                            | 2            |
| Infrastructure             | 4         | 2                         | 2                       | 3                               | 3                            | 2                            | 1            |
| Outreach                   | 1         | 1                         | 1                       | 0                               | 0                            | 1                            | 0            |
| Software/tools development | 2         | 0                         | 1                       | 2                               | 1                            | 1                            | 0            |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>30</b> | <b>19</b>                 | <b>17</b>               | <b>22</b>                       | <b>10</b>                    | <b>17</b>                    | <b>7</b>     |

### ***Role of the CLIR/DLF Fellow***

The majority of the CLIR/DLF fellows were housed in a university library. This placement was reflected in the fellows' responsibilities, which focused largely on environmental scans, needs assessment associated with research data management (RDM), and library support services for research data. As noted earlier, many fellows were tasked specifically with assessing faculty needs for RDM services and support in specific disciplines, often in relation to the NSF's data management plan requirements.

This emphasis on the assessment and planning phase of RDM support services suggests that many host institutions were in the formative stages of RDM programming and may have seen CLIR/ DLF fellows as a way to initiate these services. Researcher needs assessment and the development of institutional structures and services is valuable and important work, but from the programmatic standpoint of the postdoctoral fellowship it risks not fully utilizing fellows' disciplinary expertise and duplicating research efforts and outcomes between institutions. However, as the RDM field continues to mature, we expect this type of work to diminish for future cohorts.

Very few fellows were placed within disciplinary teams that were actively collecting research data. Instead, fellows who worked with primary datasets typically worked retroactively to curate already-collected sources, often via digitization initiatives. One project collaborator underscored the importance of embedding disciplinary expertise on active research teams while describing difficulties in working with historical archeological data and trying to determine after the fact which files were important and should be retained, explaining, "The people who do the actual archeological project are the ones who should be deciding, 'this [output] is really important work product and this is something that we just did as a note that we turned into this other file so you don't need to keep it.' That kind of cleaning out should really be happening when the project is active. And so one of our biggest problems was trying to sort out after a project was already done, 'how much of this stuff do we actually need to keep?' because the default position for a lot of people was just to keep everything. For us to go back retroactively not knowing why a file existed to figure out if it was worth keeping or not that's a problem."

Within their institutions, fellows often provided a type of connective tissue between functional areas, which assisted in filling gaps in responsibilities for data management services and provided new paths of communication between libraries and academic departments. Many fellows' supervisors and collaborators characterized one key aspect of fellows' work as acting as translator or interpreter between librarians and disciplinary faculty. For example, one project collaborator in archeology explained: "[the fellow] had

all that library and digital knowledge, but she also understood enough about archeology that we could talk like normal people and I wasn't like 'I don't understand what you mean by all this IT stuff.' And I think she fundamentally understood why we keep the records we keep, which I think really varies by discipline."

As one supervisor noted, the nature of many of the problems associated with data management, curation, and preservation are sociological as much as technical, and require a process of building trust between researchers in different disciplines. Another supervisor echoed this observation, commenting that within the realm of RDM, libraries must demonstrate themselves to be credible and trustworthy partners so that researchers can be confident that the library can handle the ethical and legal requirements required for long-term data management and curation of data. CLIR/DLF Fellows are perhaps uniquely suited for helping to establish and maintain this type of trust by helping to broker relationships between and among researchers and libraries.

Nevertheless, the experience of working simultaneously in a discipline and a library can be a source of tension for some fellows. One fellow remarked, "It's important to recognize the distinctions between 'library work' and 'research work' and for fellows to clearly articulate what it is they want, and for hosts/supervisors to articulate what they need." Another fellow responded to this tension by identifying explicitly as a data curation specialist and not as a librarian.

A number of fellows observed that they felt their librarian colleagues did not understand the value of their research activities, or in some cases resented time and resources provided for this work. These instances of identity politics can have significant negative effects on fellows' experience of the CLIR/DLF program, their successful integration within their institutional management structures, and their future career decisions with regard to continuing in data management fields.

### ***Characteristics of Successful Fellows***

Fellows, supervisors, and project team members almost universally cited communication, collaboration, and project management skills as vital to the success of a CLIR/DLF fellow, as well as flexibility and a facility for learning new tools and approaches to problems. Skills for negotiating the complex social organization of academic libraries and universities were also regularly mentioned, such as the ability to identify effective partners and recognize gatekeepers among librarians and faculty who often operate outside of formal reporting structures, and to understand the multifaceted relationships among and between disciplinary faculty members and librarians.

In particular, fellows were often asked to manage and respond to institutional change. For example, when asked about the skills a fellow needed to be successful, one

supervisor responded: “Working in team environments and [knowing] how to negotiate unpopular change well. . . . [Fellows] are being plunked down into a world in which they are not familiar and expected to do change management with a group of people that they have no experience with. . . . It’s a very different skill set to be successful as an academic than it is to be a leader of people and a change manager.” Another collaborator noted the importance of fellows exhibiting empathy for (especially librarian) colleagues who may be experiencing and negotiating significant structural changes in their work roles, and who may view fellows as instruments of these changes.

While these institutional contexts are out of fellows’ control, they can nevertheless have profound effects on the success of the postdoctoral fellowship for both parties. As one supervisor observed, fellows need the ability to recognize where their organizations are located on a broader spectrum of technological and cultural change within academic libraries and higher education, as well as the skills to cope with changes. This is an area that CLIR can emphasize or expand in its orientation for fellows and ongoing support programming.

Project team members said that fellows contributed valuable knowledge of the ethical norms and research practices of disciplinary scholars, and they particularly appreciated fellows who combined subject-area depth of understanding with technical abilities. Both project team members and supervisors observed that fellows’ knowledge of disciplinary norms, processes, and practices was extremely useful in bridging communication gaps between faculty members and librarians. Given the wide variation in disciplinary RDM needs in areas such as confidentiality and security, these skills are especially beneficial for project teams.

For example, at the University of Alberta one project team processed and curated images donated by the family of Otto Schaefer, a physician who worked with Inuit peoples in northern Canada and elsewhere in the 1950s and 1960s. While these images were digitized to enable greater access and use, the collection contained culturally sensitive images, such as photographs of ceremonies, as well as clinical images of medical conditions in which individuals were readily identifiable, especially to members of the community where the photographs were taken. Further complicating matters, it was not always clear which photographs were taken as part of Schaefer’s clinical practice, which were part of his research interest in anthropological matters, and which were taken as someone who lived in the community. Working according to the principle that the community should have input, and sometimes the final say, in who should be able to access these images and for what purpose, the CLIR/DLF fellow worked with the university archivist and privacy officer to develop a methodology for evaluating images’ subject matter and obtaining community review of images flagged for potential sensitivity. Other types of RDM projects that required fellows to help implement levels of

access control included projects centered on health data, which is subject to complex ethical and legal disclosure and use requirements, and projects dealing with archeological data, which collect information about site locations and artifact inventories that must be kept confidential in order to protect against looting and theft.

Finally, project team members often noted the usefulness of fellows' methodological skills in areas such as survey analysis, statistics, and research design—expertise that is often in demand within libraries.

### ***Challenges and Obstacles***

Fellows reported institutional and organizational structures as some of the most significant challenges that they faced during their fellowships. Fellows described difficulties including conflicting goals between fellows and supervisors, a lack of support from library and institutional administrators, and insufficient institutional understanding of the fellow's role. The time horizon of a two-year fellowship within institutions that often change very slowly also presented difficulties for some fellows. The success of fellowship depends on managing expectations about what can be accomplished within these constraints. Fellows, supervisors, and project team members all reported the need for short-term, attainable goals during the fellowship, since unrealistic goals and “mission-creep” can significantly limit the fellow's effectiveness. As one supervisor noted, postdoctoral fellows are in a fairly weak structural and political position within their institutions, and require substantial administrative support to be fully effective.

Fellows typically reported a fairly steep learning curve acclimating to institutional culture, resulting in a slower work pace during the first year and a significantly accelerated work pace during the second year. Building networks quickly and learning the internal politics and cultural norms of complex institutions was demanding and time consuming for many new fellows, especially for those with no experience working in libraries. Despite these difficulties, one supervisor observed that from an organizational management perspective, a two-year postdoctoral appointment can sometimes serve as a useful bridge to creating a permanent position since those years can provide time to plan and secure funding.

Structural and organizational change also presented significant obstacles for some fellows, especially those who arrived at their host institutions when libraries or other divisions were reorganizing. Unfortunately, fellows were sometimes regarded as symptoms or agents of these changes, particularly when the newly implemented structures were viewed negatively by library faculty and staff with longer institutional experience. Postdoctoral fellows were often used to institute new programs or initiatives which, when managed well, had significant positive impacts; nevertheless, fellows in these positions were occasionally perceived by colleagues as threats to other library

staff. When paired with other adversarial management tactics, fellowships can be misused to force particular agendas for institutional change.

Some librarians found fellows' close disciplinary relationships with faculty members challenging to their own institutional authority. When not addressed, these situations could lead to conflict among fellows and librarian colleagues. Fellows sometimes felt isolated by simply working in areas outside their colleagues' usual day-to-day activities. As one supervisor noted, "[the fellow] was working on a research project but she was in a unit where what she was working on wasn't necessarily the things that other people kind of right next to her in her physical space were working on a regular basis, and so I think from time to time she may have felt a little bit, sort of, isolated in that sense." Nevertheless, another supervisor observed that this outsider perspective was useful and productive for the host institution, arguing that it is important for fellows to remind host organizations that they are there to think about the bigger picture—"to learn, to produce, and to be willing to push back [since] many libraries don't have this perspective."

At times, fellows' enthusiasm for new approaches was perceived as counterproductive by library colleagues and collaborators. Fellows were not always aware of the institutional history, constraints, or politics experienced by longer-tenured colleagues. This could sometimes lead to friction as fellows working with short time horizons advocated for identifying and addressing issues immediately while librarians preferred to carefully plan and document new strategies for the long term.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, time and funding constraints were commonly named as significant obstacles for CLIR/DLF fellows. Within the two-year time constraint of a fellowship, it is often very difficult to obtain funds not already set aside for a particular project, and the process of planning, applying for, and obtaining larger grant funding is often impossible during a fellow's tenure. In one case, grant funding was depleted before a data repository could be created, putting at risk the research data intended for storage in the repository. Such constraints are often difficult for a fellow to address within the context of a fellowship.

Infrastructure needs should therefore be addressed prior to the start of a fellowship whenever possible. A number of fellows and project team members noted that projects met unexpected infrastructure difficulties, such as competition for resources among internal IT groups, a lack of access to servers, or repositories that were not set up to store specialized data. These types of barriers often had the potential to seriously delay or even halt data curation work. As RDM repository infrastructure, norms, and workflows and procedures continue to be developed and tailored to local institutional requirements, these problems could diminish for future fellows.

Finally, several fellows reported a need for additional software development and technical skills or a greater level of support in these areas. Institutions planning for fellows should consider devoting resources to fellows' skills development or partnering fellows with software development specialists. CLIR and DLF could also secure additional resources for broadening the array of technical training opportunities available to participants in the program.

## **Recommendations**

A successful CLIR/DLF fellowship requires a foundation of planning and administrative support at the host institution both from the upper-level leadership and within the division or department where the fellow will conduct their day-to-day work. Host institutions and administrators should consider in advance the financial as well as human resources required for a successful fellowship. These include such items as infrastructure and computing needs, appropriately staffed project teams, and the resources to partner with software development specialists. Difficulties and delays in these areas can hinder fellows working on relatively short time horizons and can potentially derail projects entirely.

Whenever possible, project grants should be obtained before the fellowship, unless one of the explicit goals of the fellowship is grant development. Unfunded projects, or projects requiring the first year of the fellowship to be devoted to securing grant funding, often fail to fully utilize fellows' disciplinary skills and limit their ability to implement data management and curation initiatives.

Host institutions and supervisors should work with newly appointed fellows early in their tenure to identify and develop explicitly stated goals that are realistically attainable during the relatively short fellowship term. "Mission-creep" and implicit expectations often conspire to limit fellows' effectiveness in addressing the core goals of their fellowships. Moreover, host institutions and administrators should also work with their staffs to prepare their expectations for the incoming fellow, especially if the fellow will undertake work in areas that are not always among a "traditional" librarian's responsibilities (for example, conducting original research or working on faculty research teams). Setting these expectations in advance helps significantly in minimizing friction between fellows and their colleagues. Additionally, since many fellows reported spending significant amounts of time conducting outreach with faculty and other constituencies, setting expectations for how this work will be supported by colleagues and administrators during the fellowship and sustained beyond the fellowship is important for maximizing the long-term impact of fellows' contributions.

Succession planning for projects that will continue after a fellowship is completed should be addressed as early as possible during a fellow's term. Fellows often reported

difficulty in ensuring that projects would be maintained, continued, or completed once their fellowship ended. When the long-term continuation of a fellowship project was not possible, some fellows emphasized the importance of making efforts to develop collaborations both within and outside the host institution, so that their project work could be portable to a new institution if necessary. In either case, given the short time of the fellowship transition, planning is critical to maximizing the impact of fellows' work.

To support host institutions in creating appropriate and effective CLIR/DLF fellowship positions, CLIR should continue to develop and refine its criteria and guidelines for host institutions and create a set of best practices for administrators and supervisors to use in preparing for and managing the fellow's work. In particular, CLIR should discourage using fellowship positions instrumentally to pursue organizational change goals. Positions placed in the midst of broader organizational change efforts often produce work environments that do not support fellows and their work, severely limiting the fellowship's potential for positive impact on both the fellow and the host institution.

There was near-universal agreement among fellows, project collaborators, and supervisors interviewed for this study that successful fellows exhibit skills in communication, collaboration and project management, as well as flexibility and a facility for quickly learning new tools and approaches to problems. These observations suggest that CLIR should continue to emphasize these "soft skills" in its development and training programs for fellows. In particular, CLIR should expose fellows to current approaches to managing organizational change, and to the organizational and bureaucratic aspects of working within universities, such as governance and financial structures. While fellows have usually spent a great deal of time as students or teaching assistants at universities, they are often relative novices in understanding the administrative functions of their institutions. Developing this understanding is critical when they are required to immediately work within these structures as part of their fellowship responsibilities.

Finally, host institutions should make every effort to embed fellows in active research teams and to support the fellows in building partnerships with researchers. Contrary to our expectations following the 2011–2012 study, few of the fellows in these cohorts worked directly with research data and almost none worked with data as it was being collected. Overreliance on fellows to shepherd programmatic or administrative changes risks underutilizing the fellows' disciplinary expertise, which may be better applied to developing the trust and close relationships with faculty that data curation services require. Considerable work is still needed to develop a system of data curation that supports the preservation and access of research data while allowing researchers to fulfill their ethical and professional obligations, and an improved understanding of research processes and their variation among disciplines is critical to this work.

Supporting fellows in becoming trusted partners in the research community could be a path to bridging the communication gap between libraries, IT, and the research community.

**APPENDIX A:  
PROJECTS INVOLVING CLIR/DLF FELLOWS IN DATA CURATION, 2012–2014**

**List of Fellows' Projects**

Aiding & assisting with the development of UC Davis-specific research data services  
 Biomedical Library partnership to develop an electronic lab notebook tool  
 Building South Bend (Historic Urban Environments Lab)\*  
 Carlos Montezuma's Wassaja Newsletter: Digitization, Access, and Context\*  
 College of Engineering Needs Assessment and Outreach Pilot Project  
 Creating effective system to manage data from Arctic social sciences at the National Snow & Ice Data Center\*  
 DASH Digital Arts Sciences + Humanities  
 Data Curation Profiles  
 Data Education Working Group  
 Data Forward Marketing Channel  
 Development of a university-wide research data management (RDM) policy and service infrastructure  
 E-Science Research Peer Networking and Mentoring Group (ERPN-MG)  
 EarthCube\*  
 Educational Data Curation Framework (ECDF)  
 Environmental data scan for social sciences faculty  
 Evaluating a Cooperative Approach to Managing Digital Archaeological Resources (ECAMDAR)\*  
 General research regarding data curation & management  
 GIS consulting  
 GIS Day  
 Groundwork for the creation of restricted data services in the Penn State Libraries and throughout campus  
 Investigated the research data management needs & desires of UC Davis community (year 1 of fellowship)  
 Making Data Count  
 North Atlantic Biocultural Organization (NABO) and Global Human Ecodynamics Alliance (GHEA)  
 Cyberinfrastructure project  
 Outreach to and work with liaisons regarding data management  
 Research Data Alliance  
 Research Data Working Group (RDWG)  
 Researching to understand the data publication landscape  
 SEAD DataNet\*  
 Serving as "research informationist" and teacher/curriculum developer  
 Supporting proof of concept projects through collaborative grant writing

\*Projects containing significant work with primary research data

## References

- Allard, Suzie, Christopher Lee, Nancy Y. McGovern, and Alice Bishop. 2016. *The Open Data Imperative: How the Cultural Heritage Community Can Address the Federal Mandate*. Washington, DC: Council on Library and Information Resources. Available at <https://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub171/>
- Brembs, Bjorn, Katherine Button, and Marcus Munafo. 2013. Deep Impact: Unintended Consequences of Journal Rank. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 7: 1–12.
- Brischoux, François, and Frédéric Angelier. 2015. Academia's Never-ending Selection for Productivity. *Scientometrics* 103(1): 333–336.
- Candela, Leonardo, Donatella Castelli, Paolo Manghi, and Alice Tani. 2015. Data Journals: A Survey. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 66(9): 1747–1762.
- Cokol, Murat, Ivan Iossifov, Raul Rodriguez-Esteban, and Andrey Rzhetsky. 2007. How Many Scientific Papers Should Be Retracted? *EMBO Reports* 8(5): 422–423.
- Donoho, David L., Arian Maleki, Inam Ur Rahman, Morteza Shahram, and Victoria Stodden. 2009. Reproducible Research in Computational Harmonic Analysis. *Computing in Science & Engineering* 11(1): 8–18.
- Eisner, D. A. 2018. Reproducibility of Science: Fraud, Impact Factors and Carelessness. *Journal of Molecular and Cellular Cardiology* 114: 364–368.
- Fanelli, Daniele. 2010. Do Pressures to Publish Increase Scientists' Bias? An Empirical Support from US States Data. *PloS One* 5(4): e10271.
- Fang, Ferric C., and Arturo Casadevall. 2011. Retracted Science and the Retraction Index. *Infection and Immunity* 79(10): 3855–3859.
- Fang, Ferric C., R. Grant Steen, and Arturo Casadevall. 2012. Misconduct Accounts for the Majority of Retracted Scientific Publications. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 109(42): 17028–17033.
- Fischer, Joern, Euan G. Ritchie, and Jan Hanspach. 2012a. Academia's Obsession with Quantity. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 27(9):473–474.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2012b. An Academia Beyond Quantity: A Reply to Loyola et al. and Halme et al. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 27(11):587–588.

Halme, Panu, Atte Komonen, and Otso Huitu. 2012. Solutions to Replace Quantity with Quality in Science. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 27(11): 586; author reply 587-8, accessed October 10, 2016.

Ioannidis, John P.A. 2014. How to Make More Published Research True. *PLoS Medicine* 11(10): e1001747.

Jahnke, Lori, Andrew D. Asher, Spencer D. C. Keralis, and Charles Henry. 2012. *The Problem of Data*. Washington, DC: Council on Library and Information Resources.

Lane, A., O. Luminet, G. Nave, and M. Mikolajczak. 2016. Is there a Publication Bias in Behavioural Intranasal Oxytocin Research on Humans? Opening the File Drawer of One Laboratory. *Journal of Neuroendocrinology* 28(4).

Nosek, Brian A., Jesse Graham, Nicole M. Lindner, Selin Kesebir, Carlee Beth Hawkins, Cheryl Hahn, Kathleen Schmidt, Matt Motyl, Jennifer Joy-Gaba, Rebecca Frazier, and Elizabeth R. Tenney. 2010. Cumulative and Career-Stage Citation Impact of Social-Personality Psychology Programs and their Members. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin* 36(10): 1283–1300. Available at <http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~jessegra/papers/NGLKHHSMJFT2010.pdf>; accessed October 20, 2016.

Nosek, Brian A., Jeffrey R. Spies, and Matt Motyl. 2012. Scientific Utopia: II. Restructuring Incentives and Practices to Promote Truth Over Publishability. *Perspectives on Psychological Science : A Journal of the Association for Psychological Science* 7(6): 615–631.

Ostriker, Jeremiah P., Paul W. Holland, Charlotte V. Kuh, and James A. Voytuk. 2009. *A Guide to the Methodology of the National Research Council Assessment of Doctorate Programs*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press.

Sarewitz, Daniel. 2016. The Pressure to Publish Pushes Down Quality. *Nature* 533(7602): 147.

Schooler, Jonathan. 2011. Unpublished Results Hide the Decline Effect. *Nature* 470(7335): 437.

Sills, Jennifer. 2016. Measures of Success. *Science* 352(6281): 28–30.

Simmons, Joseph P., Leif D. Nelson, and Uri Simonsohn. 2011. False-Positive Psychology: Undisclosed Flexibility in Data Collection and Analysis Allows Presenting Anything as Significant. *Psychological Science* 22(11): 1359–1366.

Smaldino, Paul E. and Richard McElreath. 2016. The Natural Selection of Bad Science. *Royal Society Open Science* 3(9).

Steen, R. Grant. 2011. Retractions in the Scientific Literature: Is the Incidence of Research Fraud Increasing? *Journal of Medical Ethics* 37(4):249–253.

Stodden, Victoria. 2011. Trust Your Science? Open Your Data and Code. *Amstat News* (July 1). Available at <http://magazine.amstat.org/blog/2011/07/01/trust-your-science/>.

van Dongen, Stefan. 2011. Associations Between Asymmetry and Human Attractiveness: Possible Direct Effects of Asymmetry and Signatures of Publication Bias. *Annals of Human Biology* 38(3):317–323.

Voytek, Bradley. 2016. The Virtuous Cycle of a Data Ecosystem. *PLoS Computational Biology* 12(8): e1005037.

Young, Neal S., John P. A. Ioannidis, and Omar Al-Ubaydli. 2008. Why Current Publication Practices May Distort Science. *PLoS Medicine* 5(10): e201.