Data Management Strategies Hints, Tips, and Tricks

Identify your allies/mentors.

In my experience, a few forward thinking, open minded individuals in each department can become advocates for you. This has been true in the past of information literacy and this was true for the data management strategies as well. It might be most effective to starting this program in a department by approaching those advocates for a general data management discussion rather than jumping immediately into planning this program.

Enlist the influence of an authority figure.

Can you get a department head or mentor to encourage junior faculty members to speak with you? Can you get a research supervisor to start the discussion with their graduate students?

Make it practical.

Let the faculty member or graduate student lead the discussion to specific issues or experiences that they have had. Mine the Data Curation Profile Toolkit or Data Information Literacy Toolkit for questions or discussion starters that key in to specific research practices.

Focus on the positive – any situation can get better.

When you are having a discussion about things that a researcher would like to improve it can become easy to get bogged down in all of the difficulties that have emerged when trying to address that problem in the past. Help the researcher to step back and find small steps toward improvement. An example from the class I read was that a researcher was overwhelmed at the thought of going back and imposing a naming convention on past files. Instead I suggested imposing one on files for future projects and only renaming those older files that are used in those future projects. This was a much smaller, more feasible project.

Have a list of resources that you can reference (and a tablet or laptop available but not out).

Any data management topic could potentially come up during this type of free-range discussion. Having a pre-made list of resources on a variety of topics that is up to date could be a saving grace. During this discussion, I used http://guides.lib.purdue.edu/dataservices as my resource list. Since that time Purdue Libraries’ faculty have also created the following that I would use as well:

Sensitive Research Data Management http://guides.lib.purdue.edu/sensitivedata
Data Management for Graduate Researchers http://guides.lib.purdue.edu/graddata

Take notes (unobtrusively)

Make a note of attendees and specific issues that they are seeking to address as well as ideas for tools or implementations that may work well for them. Additionally, if you know of research projects that may be good exemplars for them, make a note to make an introduction between the researchers at a later time.

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