Findings from the DIL Interviews: Data Preservation

Skills in this competency may include:

- Recognizes the benefits and costs of data preservation.
- Understands the technology, resources, and organizational components of preserving data.
- Utilizes best practices in preparing data for its eventual preservation during its active lifecycle.
- Articulates the potential long term value of his/her data for him/herself or others and is able to determine an appropriate preservation timeframe.
- Understands the need to develop preservation policies and is able to identify the core elements of such policies.

Average Ranking of Importance (5=essential): Faculty=3.57, Students = 3.75

Faculty responses:

In considering this competency, faculty noted a lack of student knowledge or interest in this area. Many faculty reported that students are not thinking much about this topic at all. One faculty mentioned a need for more resources to tell students what current best practices are in this area.

Depending on context, this competency was either “essential” or not a major concern for faculty. Faculty whose work included sustainability in some fashion tended to view preservation of their data as more of a priority. Other faculty saw the importance of preservation in more abstract terms, but did not necessarily see the need to take action to preserve their data.

Some faculty reported that they don’t have strong knowledge in this area either. One faculty ranked this competency as both “important” and “I don’t know”, as he felt he did not fully understand data preservation.

One faculty member reported that since technology changed so quickly some of their data would become obsolete quickly. The same faculty member reported that their project data was stored on a network maintained by the IT unit of his college and they took care of the long-term management.

Student responses:

Overall students believed that data preservation was being seen to elsewhere, either by the PI, others in the lab, or a data repository.

Determining the value of long-term access to data differed from discipline. For example, students in one of the labs recognized the unique quality of their research and its role in supporting long term research. Within single research groups inconsistency occurred about how long a dataset’s value would last.

Many of the students were unsure of a long-term use for their data.