

# **Journals and their Policies on Research Data Sharing**

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# The principle of sharing

- The principle that research data supporting published articles should be shared is accepted by:
  - Funding bodies,
  - Researchers,
  - Publishers,
  - Librarians and other stakeholders.
- They accept the principle for reasons of
  - Research transparency, and
  - The potential for re-use of data.

# Sharing in practice

- At the same time the principle seems to be ignored or rejected in practice, to varying degrees, by all of the stakeholders.
- Everyone professes to believe in sharing research data, but it does not happen.
- The JoRD Project, funded by UK JISC at Nottingham University investigated sharing through
  - A survey of journal data-sharing policies
  - A stakeholder consultation.

# The research

- The JoRD team examined nearly 400 journals, to find their policies on sharing.
- Policies when found were analysed for content.
- The details were entered into a matrix for statistical comparison.
- Additionally, a wide range of stakeholders were consulted using various qualitative methods.
- The stakeholder data was open-coded so that patterns could be identified and views compared.

# Findings from the survey

- Scarcely half of the journals had a data sharing policy.
- Of the policies only a quarter (24%) could be called strong.
- Few policies clearly specified:
  - What data to deposit
  - When in the lifecycle it should be deposited
  - Where data should be deposited
  - What access should be permitted, and
  - Only one policy discussed metadata.
- Only 10% of policies provided for sanctions in the event of non-compliance.

# Findings from the consultation

- The interviews, focus groups and online consultations across the stakeholder groups revealed:
- Low levels of mutual understanding.
  - Researchers avoided sharing if they could,
  - Publishers doubted the capacity of the digital infrastructure,
  - Both groups felt that data needed to be refined before sharing.
- The team concluded that a need for policies mandating sharing was strongly indicated.

# Developing a model policy

- We chose to build a model policy emphasising stakeholder views (rather than cumulating ideas from existing policies).
- Messages that constrained policy included:
  - It was often impractical to share all data,
  - Researchers were often ignorant of where to upload data,
  - There was not a common time at which data should be shared.
- A policy should concentrate on the questions What? Where? and When? whilst also addressing Intellectual Property issues.
- The our model policy is outlined in an article accepted for publication in JASIST during 2015.
- We regard the model as a kind of Policy Engine which can be used by journals to generate new and improved policies.

# Aspects of a policy

- Some essential elements of a journal research data sharing policy:
  - Should specify whether only primary data or also analysed data, and supplemental materials
  - Should be specific on metadata requirements
  - Should identify appropriate forms of deposit (repositories, websites, etc) or specific named locations
  - Should make it clear at what stage deposit is required and what restrictions the researchers might apply
  - Should mandate compliance
  - Should have a compliance monitoring mechanism built into the process.



# Concluding remarks

- The case for sharing research data is unanswerable.
- The means for effective sharing are lacking.
- The crucial intervention needs to be in the form of journal policies.
- Once journals each have a strong, clear policy then further actions to create a sharing environment are feasible.