

White paper urges new approaches to assure access to scientific data

December 19 2013, by Mark Thompson-Kolar

A newly released white paper calls for new approaches for preserving scientific data and sustainable funding of domain repositories—data archives with ties to specific scientific communities.

"Sustaining Domain Repositories for Digital Data: A White Paper" is the result of a meeting last summer that brought together representatives of 22 data repositories serving the social, natural and physical sciences. The meeting at the University of Michigan was organized by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, part of the U-M Institute for Social Research.

Domain repositories accelerate intellectual discovery by facilitating data reuse and reproducibility. They leverage indepth subject knowledge as well as expertise in data curation to make data accessible and meaningful to specific scientific communities.

However, domain repositories face an uncertain financial future in the United States, as funding remains unpredictable and inadequate, says ICPSR Director George Alter. Unlike our European competitors who support data archiving as necessary scientific infrastructure, the US does not assure the long-term viability of data archives, he says

"This white paper aims to start a conversation with [funding agencies](#) about how secure and sustainable funding can be provided for domain repositories," Alter said. "We're suggesting ways that modifications in U.S. funding agencies' policies can help domain repositories to achieve

their mission."

Five recommendations are offered to encourage data stewardship and support sustainable repositories:

- Commit to sustaining institutions that assure the long-term preservation and viability of research data
- Promote cooperation among funding agencies, universities, domain repositories, journals and other stakeholders
- Support the human and organizational infrastructure for data stewardship as well as the hardware
- Establish review criteria appropriate for data repositories
- Provide incentives to principal investigators to archive data

"What's really remarkable about this effort—the meeting and the resulting [white paper](#)—has been the consensus across disciplines from astronomy to archaeology to proteomics," Alter said. "More than two dozen domain repositories from so many disciplines are saying the same thing: Data sharing can produce more science, but data stewards must know the needs of their scientific communities."

More information: Read the white paper:
datacommunity.icpsr.umich.edu/

Provided by University of Michigan

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