

Scientific data repositories issue call for change on funding models for data archives

19 September 2013

Representatives of 25 organizations that archive scientific data have released a Call for Action urging the creation of sustainable funding streams for domain repositories—data archives with close ties to scientific communities.

The document was developed after a June meeting of data repositories across the social and [natural sciences](#) in Ann Arbor. The meeting was organized by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan and supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to discuss challenges facing domain repositories, particularly in light of the February 2013 memorandum from the U.S. Government's Office of Science and Technology Policy requiring [public access](#) to federally funded data.

Domain repositories in the natural and social sciences are built upon [close relationships](#) to the scientific communities they serve. By leveraging in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, domain repositories add value to the stored data beyond merely preserving the bits. As a result, repositories contribute to [scientific discovery](#) while ensuring that data curation methods keep pace as science evolves.

"However, the systems currently in place for funding repositories in the U.S. are inadequate for these tasks," according to the document.

The Call for Action argues that "domain repositories must be funded as the essential piece of the U.S. [research infrastructure](#) that they are," emphasizing the importance of:

- Ensuring funding streams that are long-term, uninterrupted and flexible
- Creating systems that promote good scientific practice
- Assuring equity in participation and access

The document expresses concerns regarding

current and future funding models in consideration of the OSTP rules: "The push toward [open access](#), while creating more equity of access for the community of users, creates more of a burden for domain repositories because it narrows their funding possibilities."

"We are memory institutions," said ICPSR Director George Alter. "One of our missions is to ensure data will be available for a long time, yet we're being funded by short-term grants. There is a mismatch between our mission and the way we are funded. Widening access to data is a good thing. Everyone agrees on that. But it has to be done in a way that provides sustainable funding to the organizations that preserve and distribute the data."

Repositories may require varied funding models, based on their scientific domain, the document states: "But in every case, creating sustainable funding streams will require the coordinated response of multiple stakeholders in the scientific, archival, academic, [funding](#) and policy communities."

The statement is endorsed by 30 domain repository representatives. It can be viewed on the ICPSR's website at tinyurl.com/domainrepositories

Provided by University of Michigan

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