



Ready, Engage! Outreach for Library Data Services

Sara Mannheimer

This is a postprint of an article that originally appeared in *Bulletin of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, October/November 2014. <https://www.asist.org/publications/bulletin/>

Mannheimer S (October/November 2014) Ready, engage! Outreach for library data services. *ASIS&T Bulletin*; 41(1).

EDITOR'S SUMMARY

The demand for data management planning and archiving is expanding, largely prompted by funding agencies, with researchers turning to librarians for help. The Montana State University library is responding with a three-part strategy to promote data management services, focusing on partnerships, social media use and simple marketing messages. The library has partnered with university stakeholders in research development, information technology and data management, clarifying roles and integrating related efforts. Overlapping goals become points of collaboration. Social media is a growing channel for building community engagement, relying on Twitter, Facebook and a blog. Streamlined and artistically designed promotional materials highlight concise bullet points with content related to researchers' career goals.

KEYWORDS

academic libraries
data curation
promotional activities
collaboration
social web

Ready, Engage! Outreach for Library Data Services

by Sara Mannheimer

You have probably experienced it too: mention that the library provides data services, and eyes light up. With data management planning and archiving now required by many funding agencies, researchers are seeking guidance in these areas. But many remain unaware of the library's growing role in data management. Montana State University (MSU) library (<http://lib.montana.edu>) launched our data services fairly recently, and we are eager to increase campus engagement. In that effort, we have identified three basic strategies: Partner Up, Be Social and Simplify.

Partner Up

ACROSS CAMPUS: There are multiple data management stakeholders at MSU, including the Research Computing Group, the IT Center and the Office of Research and Economic Development (which encompasses the Offices of Sponsored Programs, Technology Transfer and Research Compliance). By establishing partnerships with these stakeholders, we have been able to differentiate and clarify each of our roles. By working together, we hope to present a united and integrated front to researchers who need help with their data. The following are among our most productive partnerships at MSU:

Sara Mannheimer is data management librarian at Montana State University. She can be reached at sara.mannheimer@montana.edu.

- **Data Management Steering Committee:** Following the recommendation of the UK-based Digital Curation Centre [1], this committee includes representatives from each of the stakeholders mentioned above, as well as library faculty, a library administrator and research faculty. We meet each semester to discuss broad goals and strategies, including meeting campus needs, providing incentives and structuring library data services within the broader university setting.
- **Office of Research and Economic Development:** We have created an official partnership between the library and the research offices by appointing the scholarly communication librarian and the data management librarian as dual liaisons to the Office of Research and Economic Development. We have instituted regular meetings and have begun work on mutually beneficial projects. One project currently in development is a weekly, university-wide, email update on research published by MSU affiliates. This project is similar to the Faculty Bibliography Project at the NYU School of Medicine [2] and the Jisc Monitor project [3].
- **IT Center:** The library and IT Center work together to manage and store data. The library provides metadata, discovery and long-term preservation; IT Center provides storage, backup and high performance network access.

IN THE LIBRARY: Currently, I am the only librarian officially allocated to data management services on campus, and our library does not have its own marketing department. But many potential partners exist within the library whose goals align with mine. By working together, we have been able to initiate outreach efforts that would not be possible otherwise. The scholarly communication librarian has been an especially important ally – we have merged our services under the title of Publication and Data Services, we archive both data and publications in our institutional repository, and we work together on outreach. Other natural collaborators are liaison librarians in research-heavy departments, the events committee and the social media group.

Be Social

In order to achieve community buy-in, we have to establish ourselves within the community. Our library's ultimate goal is to become a trusted member of the research community at MSU. Since we recently drafted strategic social media guidelines [4] and two faculty members are conducting related research [5], social media was an obvious place for us to begin. We launched our social media presence on Twitter, with plans to expand to Facebook and a blog in the future. This summer, the scholarly communication librarian and I committed to actively tweeting from our existing twitter account, @ResearchAtMSU, with an eye towards engaging the research community at MSU. Our Twitter activity has both strategies and models:

- **Strategies:** Our focus has been on community involvement, including replying to tweets, starting conversations, monitoring key words and hashtags, retweeting and mentioning others in our tweets. We aim to tweet every weekday.

- **Inspirations:** Our data services tweets have been informed by Twitter feeds at Duke University (@duke_data), Columbia University (@DataAtCU) and University of Washington (@UWLibsData).

Although our success is still modest, we have doubled our followers using these strategies. One issue with our Twitter pilot is that few MSU faculty are active on Twitter. A recent informal survey showed that of 10 faculty respondents, two used Twitter daily, two weekly, and the rest monthly, rarely or never. This finding suggests that Twitter is only part of the researcher engagement picture. To reach a broader audience, we will need to extend the lessons we have learned while building a Twitter community into future social media campaigns. We will also need to increase our face-to-face interactions through meetings, presentations and instruction sessions.

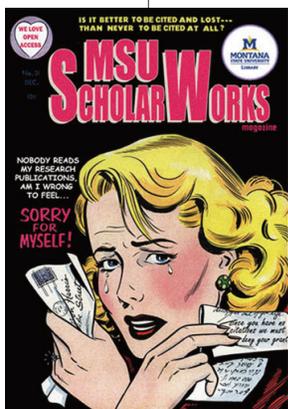
Simplify

It is in our nature as librarians to want to provide as much information as possible. But for promotional materials at MSU, we've tried to streamline our text, providing meaningful talking points and eye-catching visuals. We are looking to engage busy researchers, who may view data management as yet another time commitment. We want our materials to convey at a glance the importance of data management and to position the library as a potential helper and partner.

- **Find the right audience:** We monitor the grants received by MSU researchers using NSF and NIH search tools [6, 7] in order to gain a better understanding of the work being done at MSU and so we can reach out to principal investigators.
- **Tailored content:** Our target audience is MSU faculty and researchers. We want to warm their academic

hearts with topics like tenure and promotion, increasing citations and advancing science.

- Quick and cogent talking points: A glance at our promotional materials should convey the basics to researchers who might not read further.
- Harness creative talents: Our university archivist,



Kim Scott (<http://truearchives.blogspot.com>), altered a public-domain comic book cover to promote publication and data services, and our program coordinator, Angela Tate, helped us adapt the image into a brochure. We are always thrilled to draw upon the talents of our colleagues to enhance our outreach efforts.

These outreach activities have shown promise in increasing deposits into our institutional repository, improving participation in our data management plan consulting services and raising overall awareness of the library's involvement in data management on campus. We would love to hear about your outreach strategies for data services. Contact me at sara.mannheimer@montana.edu or @sara_mannh. ■

Resources Mentioned in the Article

- [1] Whyte, A. & Allard, S. (2014). How to discover requirements for research data management services. Retrieved from www.dcc.ac.uk/how-discover-requirements#services_needed
- [2] Vieira, D., McGowan, R., McCrillis, A., Lamb, I., Larson, C., Bakker, T., & Spore, S. (2014). The faculty bibliography project at the NYU School of Medicine. *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication* 2(3):eP1161. doi:10.7710/2162-3309.1161
- [3] Jisc Collections. (n.d.) Jisc Monitor: Project summary. Retrieved from www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/Jisc-Monitor/
- [4] Montana State University Library. (n.d.). Social media guide at Montana State University Library. Retrieved from www.lib.montana.edu/about/social-media/guide/
- [5] Young, S. & Rossmann, D. (2014). Transforming community with a strategic social media program [slides]. Presented at CNI'14: Coalition for Networked Information, St. Louis, MO. Retrieved from <http://hellolibrarian.com/talks/transforming-community-strategic-social-media/>
- [6] National Science Foundation. Awards advanced search. Retrieved from www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/advancedSearch.jsp
- [7] National Institutes of Health. (2013). Research portfolio online reporting tools (RePORT). Retrieved from <http://report.nih.gov/award/index.cfm>