OCLC-LIBER Open Science Discussion Series

1 OCTOBER 2020

FAIR data

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FAIR Data: OCLC-LIBER Small Group Discussion 1 October 2020

Subject Matter Expert Input

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Three discussion topic suggestions

- SCALABILITY
- MACHINES VS. HUMANS
- CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

SCALABILITY

- FAIR is **not a 1/0 concept**. We should rather speak about **degrees of FAIRness**. So far, I haven't seen data that are 100% FAIR.
- In most cases it's **unrealistic** to reach **complete FAIRness** when you start establishing research data management (RDM) support services. More realistic is to **scale your services** as demand for support increases and you build competence.
- Publishing/Sharing a dataset that is 30-40% FAIR is still more FAIR than leaving these data unfindable in "a drawer". (It is possible to publish new versions!)
- **FAIR readiness** varies between research areas.
- Different levels of ambition for **legacy data** vs. **current and future data**?

MACHINES VS. HUMANS

- **Machine**-actionable vs. **human**-actionable FAIRness. The ultimate goal is to achieve both (100%?).
- All data should achieve a **minimum of machine-actionable FAIRness**, e.g. be **findable** through persistent identifiers and metadata such as author, title, description, keywords. Usually, you can achieve this by **selecting a trustworthy repository**.
- In some (most?) areas of the **long tail of research** it is probably still more efficient to **focus on human-actionable FAIRness**.
- This means that good, **human-readable documentation** is important, e.g. in a README file.

CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Challenge: Researchers do not have enough time to prepare and document their data. They are **afraid to reuse methods sections** from publications.
  Possible solutions:
  - See Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines on text recycling:
    “[I]t may be entirely appropriate to have overlap in a methods section of a research article (referring to a previously used method) with citation of the original article.”

CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS (2)

- Challenge: (Research support staff at) **smaller organizations may feel overwhelmed** by requirements and recommendations. Cf. the LIBER Open Science Roadmap:
  “Not all libraries will have the resources to do as much as they might like with Open Science but all libraries can do something and any step — no matter how small — is a step in the right direction. It is no longer a question of if but how.” Possible solutions:
  - **Develop your services gradually** (see scalability above). Start with easy cases; examples:
    - Focus on data that can be made openly available without problems.
    - Focus on researchers who are motivated.

CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS (3)

- You are not alone: **make use of existing resources** and networks. Some examples:
  - Resources: guidelines, training materials, software, services (e.g. repositories)
  - Networks: LIBER, OCLC, RDA, national networks, …
- **Align your FAIR support services with your available resources.** For example:
  - Point to existing resources
  - Team up with other units at your organization, e.g. the IT department
  - Seek alliances with other organizations / build consortia
  - Increase support by prioritizing tasks at the library / adjusting task areas of existing library staff

IN SUM

- I’m not sure whether the concept of “a/the **ideal future state**” is fruitful in our discussion with research support staff and scholarly communities. Rather, I’d focus small, gradual, and operationalizable steps towards more FAIRness.

References

Ayris, Paul, Bernal, Isabel, Cavalli, Valentino, Dorch, Bertil, Frey, Jeannette, Hallik, Martin, … Horstmann, Wolfram. (2018, July 2). LIBER Open Science Roadmap. Zenodo. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1303002