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Review

Book Review: Data Management for Researchers: Organize, Maintain and Share Your Data for Research Success

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Data Management for Researchers:

Organize, maintain and share your data for research success

by Kristin Briney,

Exeter, UK: Pelagic Publishing, 2015

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In the early days of the 21st century, university, publisher, and funder requirements for data management by researchers changed rapidly. Government open-data mandates, data management plans, and the development of institutional and disciplinary data repositories have put an end to casual storage of data on graduate assistants' laptops. In *Data Management for Researchers: Organize, maintain and share your data for research success*, Kristin Briney, a Data Services Librarian at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee with research experience in Chemistry, provides a brief introduction to data management. This practical handbook can help bring new researchers quickly up-to-speed on the topic, as well as serve as a reference to meet specific data management needs they encounter throughout the data life cycle.

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The publisher, Pelagic Publishing, is a small UK company which features works on Botany, Zoology, Ecology, etc. *Data Management for Researchers* is the latest entry in its new Research Skill series, which currently has four titles due out in 2016 covering areas from Excel to specific research techniques for wildlife photography. Despite the UK origin, the work is written from a US-centric perspective, explaining US mandates and resources, although it also includes materials related to UK funders.

The content provides an overview of the full range of data management topics with short, well-organized sections on: data lifecycle, data management planning, documenting and organizing data, preparing data for analysis, handling data security and sensitive data, backing up, storing, preserving data, and finally data sharing and reuse. Each chapter is well summarized at the end.

The tone of this book is encouraging, with various best practices presented in a positive light for the researcher, rather than just as mandated drudgery and useless paperwork. It has a conversational style and engaging examples. Briney makes data management seem very manageable. She takes complex topics which may not have been part of a researcher's educational background, for instance, encrypting sensitive data via encryption algorithms and encryption keys, and explains them clearly and briefly. The text is broken up frequently by figures and bulleted lists. There is a strong emphasis on the importance of thinking through data management at the outset of a project, whether a data management plan is required or not; the author goes so far as to share a plan she created for the development of the book as a case study.

One potential use for this book would be to serve as a textbook to support the credit-bearing data management courses which are cropping up in graduate programs. While much of the information covered in this work is freely available on the internet, a print book may appeal to some learning styles, and the author's work in compiling the information into a single readable, and well-organized format make it a valuable resource. *Managing and Sharing Research Data: A Guide to Good Practice* by Louise Conti et al. (Sage 2014) is very similar in coverage and purpose, but written in a more formal style. *Managing Research Data*, Magdalena Getler, ed. (Facet Publishing 2012) focuses more on the underlying premises and less on the nuts and bolts aspects of data management, an area where Briney's work excels. Data management is an evolving field, with rapidly changing technologies and government policies; so while the general concepts will remain valid, and the content is current at the time of publication, the details and examples Briney gives may become obsolete in a matter of a few years.

Although the scope defined in the title suggests this is solely a work for those actively engaged in managing their own research, *Data Management for Researchers* will potentially be useful in bringing new (or newly re-assigned) librarians who need to work in liaison roles with researchers or teach instruction sessions, get up-to-speed on data management concepts and best practices quickly. *JeSLIB* readers will appreciate that Briney finds opportunities throughout the book to highlight and promote the role that academic librarians play in research data management in several sections, encouraging researchers to seek out librarians at their institutions for assistance and advice in the areas of metadata, choosing appropriate data repositories, and finding data for reuse.

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At 191 pages including an extensive bibliography, *Data Management for Researchers* can be quickly read, and at the list price of $41.99, it is a fairly good value. Hardcover and Kindle versions are also available. It is recommended for academic library collections, graduate students, faculty, and librarians.

Disclosure

The author reports no conflicts of interest.

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