

Pilot Project Offers Insights into Data Management and Sharing Plans

As part of a goal to promote open access to data, research infrastructure and reproducibility, data management and sharing plans (DMSPs) are being implemented at academic institutions across the country. Primarily used to fulfil federal grant requirements, DMSPs have the potential to achieve more than simple compliance.

A DMSP provides a specific roadmap for overseeing the data that result from a project. From identifying and organizing data to storing and sharing data, creating a DMSP helps researchers think through responsible and collaborative data stewardship. Going a step further, a machine actionable DMSP (maDMSP) is a version of the traditional DMSP that can be read by a computer system. An maDMSP improves university ecosystems by transforming a static plan into structured data that can be automatically incorporated into research workflows.

To consider various ways of implementing maDMSPs at academic institutions, the [Machine Actionable Plans \(MAP\) Pilot Project](#) was launched by the California Digital Library (CDL) and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) with support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Northwestern University was one of five MAP awardees, contributing to workflow assessments and testing the feasibility of projects that may improve research services.

Case studies from the pilot were shared in the recent paper, [Strengthening Data Management Systems: Insights from the Machine Actionable Plans \(MAP\) Project's Institutional Pilots](#), published in the Journal of eScience Librarianship. Sara Gonzales, MS, MLIS, senior data librarian at Galter Health Sciences Library, says, "Through a detailed landscape analysis and in-depth interviews and conversations, we were able to identify researcher, administrator and support staff wants and needs, and avenues to explore to increase synergies."

Aligning with Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) program goals, Northwestern University is already a hub of responsible data sharing. NUCATS prioritizes the creation of infrastructure that reduces burden for investigators while improving computational workflows that make it easier to share data.

Matthew Carson, PhD, head of Data Management & Technology at Galter, says, "The MAP Pilot Project supported efforts to create a more complete picture of the research data management services landscape at Northwestern." New avenues of collaboration and data integration were identified while demonstrating the value of integrating maDMSPs into research processes on campus. The team plans to continue building on their work and cultivating the relationships developed during the project to continue advancing these and other emerging initiatives in the Northwestern data ecosystem.

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