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The Data Librarian's Handbook by Robin Rice and John Southall (review)

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Reviews

Comptes-rendus de lecture

Rice, Robin, and John Southall. *The Data Librarian's Handbook*. London: Facet Publishing, 2016, 192 pages. £54.95.

Research data management (RDM) and the development of data management plans (DMP), especially for disciplines such as economics, social sciences, and the allied fields, are a quickly expanding service area in library science. Data librarians are increasingly finding a niche for employment opportunities in what Lyotard (1979) characterizes as the postmodern condition of the information revolution. Data librarians must acquire the skills of how to use, preserve, and curate data. *The Data Librarian's Handbook* answers the question: "why it is becoming more important for researchers to cite the data they use in their work?" The authors argue that librarianship may be at risk if librarians do not help researchers answer this question. They argue that librarians need to be at the forefront of offering, explaining, preparing, and evaluating DMPs so that they can influence how research decisions, such as funding allocations, are made. The book offers suggestions on how data librarianship can help academic librarians reposition themselves with respect to research support and provides insights into how to improve RDM practices in academic libraries.

As well as practical guidance on how to acquire, gather, collect, use, preserve, and curate data, this book offers guidance on how to crunch data for research. The *Handbook* offers contemporary case studies from a wide range of institutions and disciplines as models for best practice as well as tips, study aids, and links to key resources. It also includes a preface, references, and index and is organized in the following ten chapters: (1) "Data Librarianship: Responding to Research Innovation"; (2) "What Is Different about Data?"; (3) "Supporting Data Literacy"; (4) "Building a Data Collection"; (5) "Research Data Management Service and Policy: Working across Your Institution"; (6) "Data Management Plans as a Calling Card"; (7) "Essentials of Data Repositories"; (8) "Dealing with Sensitive Data"; (9) "Data Sharing in the Disciplines"; and (10) "Supporting Open Scholarship and Open Science."

The reviewer of this book found Chapter 8 to be the most engaging and pressing with numerous correlations to C.L. Givens' (2015) *Information Privacy Fundamentals for Librarians and Information Professionals*. The *Handbook* raises very important questions with regard to privacy legislation such as the Canadian Health Information Privacy Act and the American Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Some questions worth thinking about in the chapter include:

are there categories of data that will always be too confidential or sensitive to be preserved; what mechanisms and information might be developed to help researchers assess concerns in this area; will the data be degraded or distorted if sensitive content is removed; and what repositories or other options are currently available for preserving sensitive research data?

The audience for the book includes library and information studies students and professional librarians, particularly data management librarians. Lessons derived from the book include strategies to make researchers aware of data management services and mechanisms to facilitate data citations. This *Handbook* may also be of interest to scholars in the humanities who wish to include quantitative data in their research. It is recommended.

David B Levy, Chief Librarian at Touro Lander College for Women

References

- Givens, Cherie L. 2015. *Information Privacy Fundamentals for Librarians and Information Professionals*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. 1979. *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*. Paris: Les éditions de minuit.