

A Charge for a Working Group to Support Public Access to Research Data at the University of Michigan

From

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Background & Purpose

Increasingly, research data are seen not just as an output of the research process, but as an asset that has value beyond the purpose for which it was originally generated. Making research data openly accessible can help people better understand and trust research findings, increase the impact of the research, raise the profile of the researchers, and can potentially support the advancement of innovation by enabling data to be reused by others. Funding agencies, publishers, scholarly societies and others have recognized these benefits and are now instituting requirements that researchers make their data publicly accessible.

As a world-renowned public research institution with \$1.5 billion in annual research expenditures, the University of Michigan (U-M) recognizes its responsibility to make the data its researchers generate available to the world. Multiple units across the University provide services and resources that enable U-M researchers to do their work, including in connection with securing funding, conducting research, and complying with regulatory and ethical practices. Many of these units provide direct or indirect support to researchers in managing, sharing or preserving research data.

However, despite these investments, U-M lacks a cohesive plan for ensuring access to data. Furthermore, the units or roles tasked to support access to research data may not naturally coordinate with each other, making it difficult for researchers to get the help they need when they need it. Providing access to research data is a new expectation in many fields and researchers may not have a complete understanding of what is expected of them or how to respond.

If U-M does not take action to identify and address the needs of researchers with a holistic approach, we risk further complicating an already challenging environment for researchers and the university. This could easily lead to situations in which U-M researchers fall out of compliance, jeopardizing research funding and making U-M less competitive relative to our peers.

Following U-M's participation in a 2018 AAU-APLU workshop [Accelerating Public Access to Research Data](#), we are calling for the establishment of an internal U-M working group focused on this topic. This working group will work to enable U-M to provide more intentional and coordinated support for researchers in making their data publicly accessible in ways that both meet requirements and directly benefit the researchers themselves. Requirements and benefits to U-M, as an institution, will also be considered.

Charge

The focus of the working group will be to craft a set of recommendations for supporting U-M researchers in making their data publicly accessible. These recommendations should specifically address how U-M could improve compliance, reduce the burden to researchers in sharing their data, and make the process as seamless as possible in a financially responsible manner.

This charge will be accomplished through:

- Developing a shared understanding of expectations, opportunities, and challenges around making research data produced at U-M publicly accessible.
- Defining U-M's roles and responsibilities in making research data publicly accessible and in providing support to researchers for doing so.
- Identifying the units and stakeholders at U-M that provide relevant services and support to researchers in managing, storing, sharing and preserving research data and articulating how they do or should connect and coordinate with each other.
- Working to bring these units together to build a network where they can readily share needed information, connect with expertise, make referrals or handoffs, and easily work together across unit boundaries.
- Connecting with faculty and other researchers to identify needs, provide use cases, prioritize next steps, and socialize ideas.
- Analyzing where gaps in current service provision may exist or where investments could be made to improve efficiencies or outcomes.

Deliverable

Within six months the working group will deliver a report describing its findings with respect to the elements of the charge and detailing its recommendations about next steps that U-M should take in providing needed support for ensuring public access to research data.

Proposed Members

- Jake Carlson, Director of Deep Blue Repositories and Research Data Services, jakecar@umich.edu (chair)
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