Supporting Data Management Across Disciplines

Katherine McNeill
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

IASSIST Annual Conference 2010
MIT Libraries Overview

• Public Services
• Five divisional libraries:
  – Architecture and urban planning
  – Humanities
  – Engineering
  – Science
  – Management and social sciences
• Role of public service librarians
Data Services/Initiatives

• Formal data services with dedicated staff:
  – Social Science Data Services
  – GIS Services

• Interest groups on data:
  – Engineering and Science Data Initiatives Group (ESL-DIG)
  – Data Group
Developing a Data Management Service

- New initiatives to support MIT faculty as information producers, not just consumers
- Faculty as data producers
- Built a set of web pages on archiving and disseminating your data
- Then...
Doing Outreach

• Identified potential faculty:
  – Web sites
  – News stories
  – Word of mouth
  – Requests

• Initiated contact via:
  – Email
  – Spontaneous encounters
Initial Meetings with Faculty/Staff

• Preparation

• Conversation topics
  – Story of their data (collection, methodology, file formats, storage, documentation, rights, etc.)
  – Potential for secondary analysis
  – Guidance on data management
  – Options for archiving/disseminating data
  – Description of my support and available services

• Sometimes met with research staff

See also: Conducting a Data Interview, Witt and Carlson, http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/lib_research/81/
Support Provided

- Facilitate deposit of data in an archive or repository
- Results: 3 faculty members with data in an archive, 2 in process
- Advised on data documentation
- Referrals to other services/training
- Other needs that arise: e.g., data conversion
- Ongoing support
Building an Interdisciplinary Partnership

• Data Group: Forum to exchange information
• Members of ESL-DIG interested in developing data management guidelines for faculty
• Potential overlap=opportunity for collaboration
• Web guide: http://libraries.mit.edu/data-management
• Workshop: Managing Research Data 101
Working Together

• Similarity of issues across disciplines
• Learning from each other
• Mutual benefit
• Joint professional presentations
• But still informal collaboration
Reorganization

• No longer discipline-based library units, but rather functional groups (as of July 1st)
• Specialized Content and Services: numeric data, bioinformatics, CAD, GIS, images, maps, music, science and engineering data, & video.
• My focus: numeric data
• Collective planning for data management
Open Questions

• How much will we integrate services in our new department? What makes sense?
• What services should be structured around format vs. discipline?
• What is the role of the librarian subject specialist regarding data management?
Conclusion

• Data management issues cross disciplines
• Reach out to your colleagues in other disciplines
• Seek out areas of overlap or similar work
• Be mindful of differences
• Establish informal connections where no formal organizational structure exists
• Take initiative