A theme that ran through much of ASIS&T’s second Research Data Access and Preservation (RDAP) Summit is the need to involve those oriented toward information management and architecture in research data management projects. Though the RDAP Summit’s focus was narrow superficially, its concerns are common among organizations challenged by ineffective web content management. The concept of management applies broadly to data, infrastructure and entire information systems, highlighting the need for collaboration among those in library science, information architecture and content management. Topics of discussion ranged from the lifecycle and longevity of data to getting content contributors to tag their data, with recurring observations on the importance of involving those with specialized skills in information management early in research projects.

**KEYWORDS**
digital object preservation
information resources management
digital repositories
scientific and technical information
librarianship
information architecture
meetings

RDAP2: Need for IA and LIS Expertise a Noticeable Theme
by Melissa Weaver

This was my second year attending the RDAP Summit hosted by ASIS&T. I don’t profess to any expertise in the areas of research data access and preservation, and I apologize if I may be oversimplifying for the sake of this article. However, as an outsider to the RDAP world (I’m an information architect for small non-profits), I find many areas of crossover between issues facing those managing data repositories and all organizations’ need for better web content that’s easy to input, tag, display, re-use and archive. If you consider yourself an “RDAPer” or someone with a passion for information management, I’d like to bring some of those themes to your attention.

This year’s participatory discussions highlighted many on-the-ground issues experienced by attendees. For example, on the second day, attendees participated in a group discussion about key themes and challenges by responding to the question: “What keeps you up at night? This includes the main challenge within your institution and main challenge within your field.” The full data are reported in Table 1 in RDAP2: Session by Session by Joseph A. Hourclé in this issue; however, management was near the top of the list.

Although, management of data was a key issue, use of the term was not limited to matters of infrastructure, systems or the data itself. I was struck by the call to bring more library science, information architecture and content strategy skills and expertise into the creation and maintenance of data management systems. Although issues of infrastructure and description were important, this year I noticed that issues around people (researchers, archivists, librarians, the public) were prominent in most presentations and discussions.

Some key tensions addressed at the Summit were:
- Getting scientists to add data or use data (incentives)
connection of data and literature (tenure issues)
training and inspiring scientists (users) to use the systems/interfaces metadata, formats.

I was engrossed by the panel on data archives in federal agencies moderated by Bill Anderson, featuring Arnold Rots, Joey Comeaux, Glenn Rutledge and Dan Kowal. Rots and Kowal, in particular, discussed issues surrounding staffing and communication where I think engaging expertise from the library science and information architecture fields early on in the systems design process could bring huge benefits to RDAP communities.

Arnold Rots pointed out factors that allow data managers to “choose projects we think will be more useful for our users.” The following were among the factors he noted:

- stabilizing funding
- developing and enriching staff not just as subject experts but as metadata and data management experts
- maintaining consistent staffing levels
- highlighting curation and stewardship to prevent data loss
- treating metadata as important an asset as the data itself

Dan Kowal’s presentation centered on the question, “Who decides what data is useful?” Is it the scientists, system builders, data managers or the end users of the data? He made the argument for the community to consider the lifecycle and longevity of data. “Do we want our grandchildren to use this data?” asked Kowal. If so, we need to make sure contractors, vendors and systems builders are listening to the users and including all the necessary metadata elements. He noted that data managers must also consider that we have the capacity and human resources to carry out our data management plans. Data managers and archivists are dealing with multiple homegrown systems, created in collaboration with contractors and scientists; Kowal pointed out that the field would benefit by hiring more library scientists/data specialists in the beginning phases of projects.

How do we do that? In large group discussion, attendees spoke about how we could work together to create cross-discipline, cross-institution tools and standards with federation across domain organizations to help unify the approach. There was a call to use already developed archival and curation techniques from the social sciences. One attendee challenged the room to “think beyond the technology.” And from my experience at RDAP2, I would say they certainly are.

RDAP attendees are considering the people involved in all phases of the data and systems and making a call to bring in more information-based skill sets to complement subject-area expertise of data creators, system builders and end-users. Now is a great time for library science and information architecture communities to collaborate with those in research data management and to encourage data creators and users to learn from these disciplines.

Add your contribution to the year-round conversation at the RDAP listserv: http://mail.asis.org/mailman/listinfo/rdap

---

RDAP3: Call to Action

If you want to join the year-long conversation about research data access and preservation issues, ASIS&T is hosting an open listserv. Sign up at http://mail.asis.org/mailman/listinfo/rdap

Visit the ASIS&T RDAP website for more information: http://asist.org/Conferences/RDAP11/

Slides from presentations are available online at www.slideshare.net/asist_org/rdap11.

We are also seeking volunteers to help

- form a community around RDAP-related issues
- reach out to other organizations and events on this topic
- plan for RDAP3 in New Orleans in 2012.

Contact mweaver@asis.org if you want to volunteer or have questions or suggestions for our RDAP3 team.

Do you Tweet?

- Tweet RDAP issues with the hashtag #rdap.
- Look at our RDAP twitter list http://twitter.com/#!/list/asist_org/rdap and make suggestions on whom we should follow.
- Chris Scibella (@scibella_chris) created a very useful archive of RDAP hashtag and related issues and events in XML. You can visit it at http://scibella.wordpress.com/2011/04/04/twitter-hashtag-archives/