The Problem of Data: iSchools and the New Data Professional

Spencer D. C. Keralis
University of North Texas
Digital Scholarship Co-Operative
spencer.keralis@unt.edu

Shannon Stark
University of North Texas
Libraries
shannon.stark@unt.edu

Abstract

In this fishbowl event, we invite iSchool and LIS faculty and administrators, recent graduates, Library staff and administrators, researchers, and data professionals to speak to the state of data curation education. What are iSchools doing to train data professionals? What are institutions doing to address the professional development needs of librarians? What are the real skills libraries should be demanding of LIS graduates? And how can the various constituents in the data curation lifecycle collaborate to develop and foster these skills in emerging professionals?

Keywords: Data Curation, Data Lifecycle, Pedagogy, Professional Development, Library Education

Introduction

In the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) report *The Problem of Data* (Asher, Keralis, & Jahnke. Washington, D.C.: CLIR, 2012), researchers concluded that while iSchools and the LIS field perceive data curation as part of their domain expertise, in the current curricular landscape of these programs, it is improbable that most students would "encounter a data-centric course in their line of study" (Keralis, 2012). Further, the recent Data Conservancy's Data Curation Curriculum Search underscored the paucity of truly data-centric courses, and the difficulty in identifying courses that might provide data management skills in most U.S. LIS programs. Given these circumstances, LIS students must be "committed to crafting a data-intensive education for themselves … in order to come out of most existing U.S. LIS programs with the skills and knowledge necessary to support the needs of data-intensive research" (Keralis, 2012, 34-35). Further, it is clear from the CLIR study that there is a gap between how academic libraries understand their place in the research process and how libraries are perceived by researchers: "Few researchers see the library as a partner … and most of the researchers regard the library as a dispensary of goods rather than a locus for badly needed support" (Asher & Jahnke, 2012, 16).

Audience

The purpose of this event is to generate conversation around the question of how best to develop skills for data professionals. The audience for this event is anyone with a stake in the data curation lifecycle: representatives from funding agencies; LIS and iSchool students, faculty, and administration; librarians; library administrators; training vendors; technologists; researchers; graduate students in the sciences and social sciences; and science and social science faculty.

Activities

Supporting documentation and resources designed to stimulate conversation will be available at http://datamanagement.unt.edu/fishbowl.

The event will consist of a brief introduction to the issues surrounding educational support for data professionals; the remainder of the event will be conducted as a fishbowl, in which audience members will come forward and speak about their perspective on the issues, in response to key questions framed by the presenters. The presenters will record these responses, and help facilitate dialogue among the attendees. Key findings from the conversation will be shared after the event at event website.

Relevance

The event will appeal to conference attendees in terms of content, because data curation is having an ongoing and profound impact on iSchools, those who receive their training in iSchools, and those who employ iSchool graduates. The format allows a more democratic range of expression for attendees to relate information and challenge premise of the event, and allows more people to be heard than a traditional panel or plenary event.

Logistics

The event will be 90 minutes: 10 minute introduction, 70 minutes of conversation, and 10 minutes of wrap up. The event would be optimal with approximately 50-75 attendees. The room should be arranged in a half-circle with a chair or podium and microphone at the center.

References

Data Curation Curriculum Search. Available at http://cirssweb.lis.illinois.edu/DCCourseScan1/index.html

Jahnke, L., & Asher, A. "The Problem of Data: Data Management and Curation Practices Among University Researchers." *The Problem of Data* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library & Information Resources, 2012), 3-31.

Keralis, S. "Data Curation Education: A Snapshot." *The Problem of Data* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library & Information Resources, 2012), 32-39.

Varvel, V. E. Jr., Bammerlin E., & Palmer, C. 2012. Education for Data Professionals: A Study of Current Courses and Programs. *Proceedings of the 2012 iConference*, 527–529. New York: Association for Computing Machinery.