

Interview: Jen Ferguson – Northeastern University

1. Tell me about the product or service that you provide in the role that you play at your library?

Like many other libraries, data management plans (DMPs) have been a great entry point for us to start getting more involved in research data. It's been interesting to see how support for data management plans has unfolded at different institutions. At Northeastern, the most common scenario so far is that researchers working on a DMP get in touch with me and ask for feedback on a draft plan.

Another piece of my role is to talk to researchers about our nascent digital repository service (DRS), and determine whether depositing their research data in the DRS could be a good fit for all concerned. The DMP-related services I provide have been useful in those conversations, since the "where are you going to put it?" question flows very naturally from the DMP generation process.

2. How can other librarians use this product or service?

Our partnership with DMPTool is a cornerstone of our data management plan support. Our campus researchers are particularly fond of the templates on the DMPTool site. It's great that the help screens are customizable to include local resources and language. Once our digital repository service has its public launch, we'll be able to suggest it as a data storage option at a point of need, right within the DMPTool.

Every institution is different, of course, but for librarians just starting out in data management planning I think DMPTool is certainly worth a look.

3. How has your library reached out to your institutional community and how have you earned support for this particular service?

We enjoy good relationships with our colleagues in the Office of Research Administration and Finance. That was crucial, as all grant activity from Northeastern flows through them. While the library saw a great opportunity to become more enmeshed in campus research by leading support for data management plans, we had to be careful not to invade their 'turf'. About a third of the researchers who contact me about DMPs are referred through their contacts in the research admin office, so I think that's a sign that the relationship is working fairly well.

In terms of reaching out to researchers, we're very fortunate to have a marketing group within our library; they do an excellent job of keeping in touch with our community through social media as well as through more conventional outreach like faculty newsletters. It is a challenge to keep that message fresh as new researchers and grad students arrive on campus.

4. What skills or experience do you think librarians need to acquire to meet the needs of science and data management and can you provide examples of the skills and services that you or your other staff have in this particular area?

I come from a science background. I worked in molecular biology labs before I started my library career, and that experience has definitely been helpful. But while skills/experience are important, I

think attitude and personality traits are key. This is such uncharted territory for librarians – it takes a real entrepreneurial kind of approach, a willingness to take some risks and a high tolerance for failure.



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