

Reaping the benefits of the Research Data Alliance in Australia

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INTRODUCTION

The Research Data Alliance (RDA) is a community-driven organisation with the goal of building the social and technical infrastructure to enable open sharing of data. It was launched in 2013 by the European Commission, the United States National Science Foundation and National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the Australian Government's Department of Innovation.

With over 8400 individual members from more than 130 countries and over 50 organisational members and affiliates [1], RDA provides a neutral space for its members to come together in focused global Working and Interest Groups that develop and adopt infrastructure promoting data-sharing and enabling data-driven research, and to accelerate the growth of a cohesive data community that integrates contributors across domain, research, national, geographical and generational boundaries.

RDA holds biannual Plenaries that bring together several hundred RDA members, with international representation from the community of data scientists, librarians, computer scientists, and domain scientists. RDA Plenaries are special working events that as well as bringing the community together also create tangible deliverables that improve data sharing across disciplines, technologies, and countries, and also bring up new data topics and issues that members wish to address.

BENEFITS OF ENGAGING WITH RDA

For the Australian eResearch community, there are two general categories of benefits to engaging more closely with RDA. The first is the opportunity to adopt RDA Outputs. There are now 30 outputs covering a diverse range of data-related areas, and more are being developed all the time. This means that people do not have to reinvent the wheel but can adopt existing global standards and approaches. In Australia, e.g. the CoreTrustSeal (CTS) output has been adopted by the CSIRO DAP and the ADA, and NCI has been adopting the outputs of the Data Description Registry Interoperability Working Group. On CTS, CSIRO said:

Having the DAP certified with the CoreTrustSeal contributes to CSIRO's reputation as a trusted organisation and ensures the DAP is following international standards. There has been feedback from CSIRO's researchers that the CoreTrustSeal certification for the DAP really matters in building trust when they point data users to their published data and software. Also, knowing the DAP has been certified as a trusted data repository assists with decision-making in repository choice. It provides confidence in the long-term access and reliability of the data. An immediate impact

of the project was that documentation was readily available to address a funder's requirement of making data open.
[2]

The second benefit is the ability to influence the development of these outputs. This might be through membership and participation in the working and interest groups. For example, participation may include commenting on draft outputs or a new groups' establishment documents, or by establishing a new group to solve a problem that you care about. RDA is a wonderful platform for recruiting global experts to help you solve your problems!

Engaging in the RDA additionally offers an opportunity to work with others in catalysing Research Data activity in Australia. A number of Communities of Practice (CoP) already exist around specific topics (e.g. CoreTrustSeal, DMPs and Software Citation) that feed into and draw on RDA Working and Interest Groups and their outputs. In 2016, the ARDC facilitated another CoP around the 23 Research Data Things output.

BENEFITS OF ATTENDING RDA PLENARIES

Attending an RDA Plenary is a unique way to take the pulse of the global data community. The range of networking opportunities with experts cannot be found anywhere else and the experience can be both personally stimulating and professionally transformative. As one attendee said:

RDA is a great mixture of backgrounds, interests and personalities. I believe this is the only place where researchers having a wide range of problems concerning data can meet with those who are willing to help them solve these problems, or point them to already existing solutions [3].

For members of the Australian eResearch community, 2020 will provide an outstanding opportunity to engage with RDA by attending the first RDA Plenary meeting on Australian soil [date and venue still to be finalised]. This great opportunity to meet with colleagues and catalyse research data activity in our region should not be missed.

REFERENCES

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