

For Immediate Release
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White Paper Urges New Approaches to Assure Access to Scientific Data

(Ann Arbor, MI)—More than two dozen data repositories serving the social, natural, and physical sciences today released a white paper recommending new approaches to funding sharing and preservation of scientific data. The document emphasizes the need for sustainable funding of domain repositories—data archives with ties to specific scientific communities.

“Sustaining Domain Repositories for Digital Data: A White Paper,” is an outcome of a meeting convened June 24-25, 2013, in Ann Arbor. The meeting, organized by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) and supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, was attended by representatives of 22 data repositories from a wide spectrum of scientific disciplines.

Domain repositories accelerate intellectual discovery by facilitating data reuse and reproducibility. They leverage in-depth subject knowledge as well as expertise in data curation to make data accessible and meaningful to specific scientific communities. However, domain repositories face an uncertain financial future in the United States, as funding remains unpredictable and inadequate. Unlike our European competitors who support data archiving as necessary scientific infrastructure, the US does not assure the long-term viability of data archives.

“This white paper aims to start a conversation with funding agencies about how secure and sustainable funding can be provided for domain repositories,” said ICPSR Director George Alter. “We’re suggesting ways that modifications in US funding agencies’ policies can help domain repositories to achieve their mission.”

Five recommendations are offered to encourage data stewardship and support sustainable repositories:

- Commit to sustaining institutions that assure the long-term preservation and viability of research data
- Promote cooperation among funding agencies, universities, domain repositories, journals, and other stakeholders
- Support the human and organizational infrastructure for data stewardship as well as the hardware
- Establish review criteria appropriate for data repositories
- Incentivize Principal Investigators (PIs) to archive data

While a single funding model may not fit all disciplines, new approaches are urgently needed, the paper says.

“What’s really remarkable about this effort—the meeting and the resulting white paper—has been the consensus across disciplines from astronomy to archaeology to proteomics,” Alter said. “More than two dozen domain repositories from so many disciplines are saying the same thing: Data sharing can produce more science, but data stewards must know the needs of their scientific communities.”

This white paper is a must read for anyone who wants to understand the role of scientific domain repositories and their critical role in the advancement of science. It can be downloaded at <http://datacommunity.icpsr.umich.edu>

The **Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research** (ICPSR), based in Ann Arbor, MI, is the largest archive of behavioral and social science research data in the world. It advances research by acquiring, curating, preserving, and distributing original research data. www.icpsr.umich.edu

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