5 Tips for Managing Your Research Data

1. **Prepare a plan.**
   Data management planning is growing in importance as more and more funders require plans with grant proposals. Regardless, planning will help you manage your research data more efficiently. For example, how will you collect, process, store, and organize data during the active part of the research process? Will you share your data and, if so, how? Which data should be retained and how will it be preserved?

2. **Pay attention to formatting & organization.**
   Maximize your data's usability and long-term potential for future reuse by following good practices for formatting tables, naming files, and choosing file formats. For example, .csv or .txt files are easier to preserve and more cross-compatible than .xlsx files.

3. **Back up and secure your data.**
   It may be common sense, but make a priority of regularly backing up your research data to prevent loss from mechanical failure, theft, and natural disaster. Consider storing two copies onsite (on separate devices) and one copy offsite, and automate the backup process if possible.

4. **Select & prepare valuable data for long-term access.**
   Long-term retention of unique and valuable research data sets lays the foundation for future scholarship. Preservation is not simply backup and storage, it’s preparing your data to be secure and accessible far into the future. Optimally, place your data in a trusted archive where it will be regularly checked for integrity and kept with associated documentation to provide context and greater discoverability.

5. **Share your data for greatest impact.**
   Sharing data can spark unexpected discoveries as well as provide research material for those with little funding—and, with the proliferation of open data repositories, it’s increasingly easy to do. Be mindful of confidentiality, privacy, and licensing issues, and include metadata to help your data easily be understood.

**For further reading**
- **Data Management Planning Tool:** An online tool that provides data management templates for major funding agencies across the disciplines. [dmptool.org](http://dmptool.org)
- **Marquette Libraries Data Management:** Basic, practical steps and guidelines for developing a data management plan. [marquette.edu/library/dataplan/](http://marquette.edu/library/dataplan/)
- **Registry of Research Data Repositories:** An extensive, searchable list of global data repositories. [service.re3data.org](http://service.re3data.org)

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