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Digital Curation of Research Data

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Digital Curation of Research Data

**Experiences of a Baseline Study
in Germany**

vwh

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Digital Curation of Research Data

Herausgegeben von Heike Neuroth, Stefan Strathmann, Achim Oßwald und Jens Ludwig · im Rahmen des Kooperationsverbundes nestor – Kompetenznetzwerk Langzeitarchivierung und Langzeitverfügbarkeit digitaler Ressourcen für Deutschland · <http://www.langzeitarchivierung.de/>

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Foreword

The relevance of research data today and for the future is well documented and discussed, in Germany as well as internationally. In addition, more and more policy makers are aware of the meaning of research data and the possibilities to access, share, and re-use them. Recently the government of the United Kingdom decided that publicly funded research publications and research data must be freely available and accessible to the public in all situations in which there are no copyright issues or other legal aspects that would prevent it. It is expected that the European Commission will publish similar requirements in the context of the next framework program Horizon 2020 starting at the end of 2013. The newly funded Research Data Alliance (RDA) is one example of the increasing interest in these topics worldwide. Ensuring that research data are accessible, sharable, and re-usable over time makes several further steps possible:

- Research data are documented and could therefore be validated.
- Research data could be the basis for other and new research questions, since they could be an integral part of the (digital) research lifecycle from the very beginning.
- Research data could be re-analysed by using new, innovative digital methods which were unknown at the moment of data acquisition.
- Research data could be used by other disciplines, therefore encouraging interdisciplinary research.

For all of these reasons, it is essential that research data are curated, which means that they are kept accessible and interpretable over time. A standardized questionnaire was developed in order to understand whether the approaches and methods of dealing with research data within the academic disciplines are different or whether there are similarities in terms of solutions as well as challenges and problems. This questionnaire was distributed to representatives from those disciplines in Germany that were identified as familiar with or already expert in research data curation.

The results of this survey have been published in German in 2012 in the handbook *“Langzeitarchivierung von Forschungsdaten – Eine Be-*

standsaufnahme".¹ This publication is the English-language translation of the main chapters of this handbook. The original German version also contains detailed analyses of the situation regarding the curation of research data of eleven disciplines ranging from humanities and social sciences to the natural sciences and medicine. Colleagues from these eleven disciplines were asked to describe the state-of-the-art regarding their methods of handling and experiences with research data curation in the questionnaire. These chapters have not been included in this English publication.

The last chapters of this English-language publication analyse the responses from all disciplines, compare the similarities as well as differences, and conclude with some overall implications and recommendations for stakeholders, policy-makers, key-players, and scholarly societies.

The editors of this volume, as well as the additional editors of the German version, have been working together closely for many years, such as in the context of nestor – the German competence network for digital preservation. When we started the data curation discussion in Germany at universities and in research disciplines, the terms “long-term preservation” and “digital preservation” were already established in Germany. Today we prefer the term “digital curation”. As a result we used these earlier terms in cases where we are following the original German handbook or for citations. In all other cases the more modern term “data curation” is used.

We would like to express our special thanks to Hanna-Lena Stolz and Dr. Kathleen M. Smith for their valuable support in translating the main chapters of the German handbook. Without their help, we would never have been able to share our experiences, thoughts, and conclusions on this important and urgent topic. We are eager for exchange with the broader data community, across geographic and linguistic borders, across academic disciplines, across funding agencies, and many other levels.

With best regards,

Heike Neuroth, Stefan Strathmann, Achim Oßwald and Jens Ludwig

¹ Neuroth et al. (2012).