Policy Recommendations for Open Access to Research Data in Europe

by Caroline Winter | 1 December 2017 | English, Observations, Observations and Responses | 0 comments

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This observation was written by Alyssa Arbuckle.

At a glance

Title	Policy Recommendations for Open Access to Research Data in Europe
Creators	RECODE Project Consortium
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In 2014, the RECODE Project released overarching policy recommendations for open access implementation and effective research data management, as well as more targeted recommendations for individual stakeholder groups. The RECODE Project is a European Union-funded FP7 partnership made up of Trilateral Research & Consulting, the (now transitioned) e-Humanities group at KNAW, the University of Sheffield, the Stichting LIBER Foundation, the National Documentation Center, the National Research Council of Italy, the Biekinge Institute for Technology, and the Amsterdam University Press. In "Policy Recommendations for Open Access to Research Data," the RECODE Project argues that there is

> "a lack of a coherent open data ecosystem; and a lack of attention to the specificity of research practice, processes and data collections" (3).

Their recommendations aim to remedy these issues. Of note, the recommendations are now available via their website as well: <https://www.hrionline.ac.uk/recode/>.

The impact of this report was primarily seen in Europe, and the European Commission promoted the recommendations via their website and Twitter account. Although there has been positive support in the open access and open data communities, especially in Europe, it is too early to tell whether recommendations have been taken up or not. Regardless, the public support of the European Commission and groups like OpenAIRE bode well for the possibility of implementation.

We can compare the European-focused recommendations with similar Canadian efforts. Although the RECODE Project offers targeted recommendations for funders, research institutions, data managers, and publishers, they also suggest the following overarching recommendations (emphasis ours):

1. Develop aligned and comprehensive policies for open access to research data;
2. Ensure appropriate funding for open access to research data;
3. Develop policies and initiatives that offer researchers rewards for open access to high quality data;
4. Identify key stakeholders and relevant networks and foster collaborative work for a sustainable ecosystem for open access to research data;
5. Plan for the long-term, sustainable curation and preservation of open access data;
6. Develop comprehensive and collaborative technical and infrastructure solutions that afford open access to and long-term preservation of high-quality research data;
7. Develop technical and scientific quality standards for research data;
8. Require the use of harmonized open licensing frameworks;
9. Systematically address legal and ethical issues arising from open access to research data;
10. Support the transition to open research data through curriculum-development and training.

All of these recommendations could apply to the Canadian digital ecosystem, and would go a long way to advance open scholarship on a national scale. Indeed, the Government of Canada released a "Tri-Agency Statement of Principles on Digital Data Management" in 2016 that acknowledges many of the same issues as the RECODE Project. Instead of recommendations, the Government of Canada provides a list of expectations, as well as delineates the responsibilities of researchers, research communities, research institutions, and research funders. There are many areas of overlap, especially in regards to the importance of adhering to data management standards, addressing ethical and legal issues, and developing comprehensive data management strategies. But there are points of divergence as well. For instance, in the Canadian document, open access to research data is not considered to be a mandatory baseline. Instead, the authors suggest that

> "All data need to be managed, but not all data need to be shared or preserved—costs and benefits of doing so should be considered in the data management planning process" (n.p.).

This claim is made despite the fact that the document also outlines the benefits of public access to research data and draws attention to the government's 2014 "Action Plan on Open Government" and the 2015 "Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications" as foundational documents. Other notable RECODE Project recommendations that are not discussed in the Canadian material include open licensing, training data managers, and ensuring appropriate funding for open access to research data. Overall, the RECODE Project material is more rooted in open scholarship ideals, whereas the Government of Canada statement focuses on pragmatic guidelines and offers a more mild approach to research data management and sharing.

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