# Out of the Library and into the Lab

## Data interviews with lab managers to create new partnerships and develop new library services

## Introduction

Promotion of data management has become a goal for many academic libraries that plan for the future and take part in strategic planning activities (1). Health sciences academic libraries should be aware of this initiative and should try to take part to be involved in data curation and archiving at the institutional level (2). The University of Toronto Libraries (UTL) strategic plan lists digital scholarship as one of its Innovative Inquiry goals, which includes helping researchers and scholars navigate through an increasing amount of digital information and data (3). Little is known at the Dentistry Library, University of Toronto, about the research data needs and practices of the Faculty's laboratories.

## Aim

In order to fulfill UTL's strategic goal to promote digital scholarship, the Dentistry Library decided to interview laboratory managers and staff to learn more about their data management practices, and to assess what data services can be provided, if any. **Data management** includes methods to record, share, and archive data generated in the labs.

## Methodology

Due to the popularity of data management surveys and interviews we are able to use the Data Curation Profiles Toolkit from Purdue University, adapted with permission, to conduct in-person interviews. We will take this opportunity to learn as much as we can about their data practices and needs, but also to promote our archiving and management potential.

## Findings/Results



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Lab managers are open to research receiving data management support from the library. They would be interested in archive and preservation services. One respondent said the data should be preserved for 2 to 5 years; two others said indefinitely.

Individual labs report feeling isolated from other labs and departments within the Faculty of Dentistry. Currently some respondents seek help from family members to set up backups and troubleshoot new software.

Lab managers would need to have some control or else be guaranteed of the safety of their data, were it to be stored in a repository or managed on their behalf. Some respondents mentioned secrecy in their work and would definitely share after publication, but not prior. All respondents mentioned that security is a priority for a repository, such as password protection.

Lab managers and staff are using their own (oftentimes unique) hardware and software to store their data. One of the respondents uses a personal iMac computer that is not on the faculty server. One lab is paying for their own software, so they rely on open source and independent troubleshooting and setting up.

It was suggested that standardized processes and workflows would have to be established in order to encourage Faculty of Dentistry members to save their data to a central repository or archive. However, standards tend to vary a lot across the dentistry research disciplines, or are nonexistent as of yet.

## Discussion

The answers will be coded and used to assess how the library can help with data management processes, such as suggesting data management software; providing assistance in creating data management plans systematically; or suggesting repository options based on needs. Promotion and implementation of new library services will follow shortly after.

## Limitations

At this time we remain limited by our small sample size of 5 (3 faculty member and 2 respondents in administrative roles). We are hoping to engage more lab managers and staff in interviews in the near future.
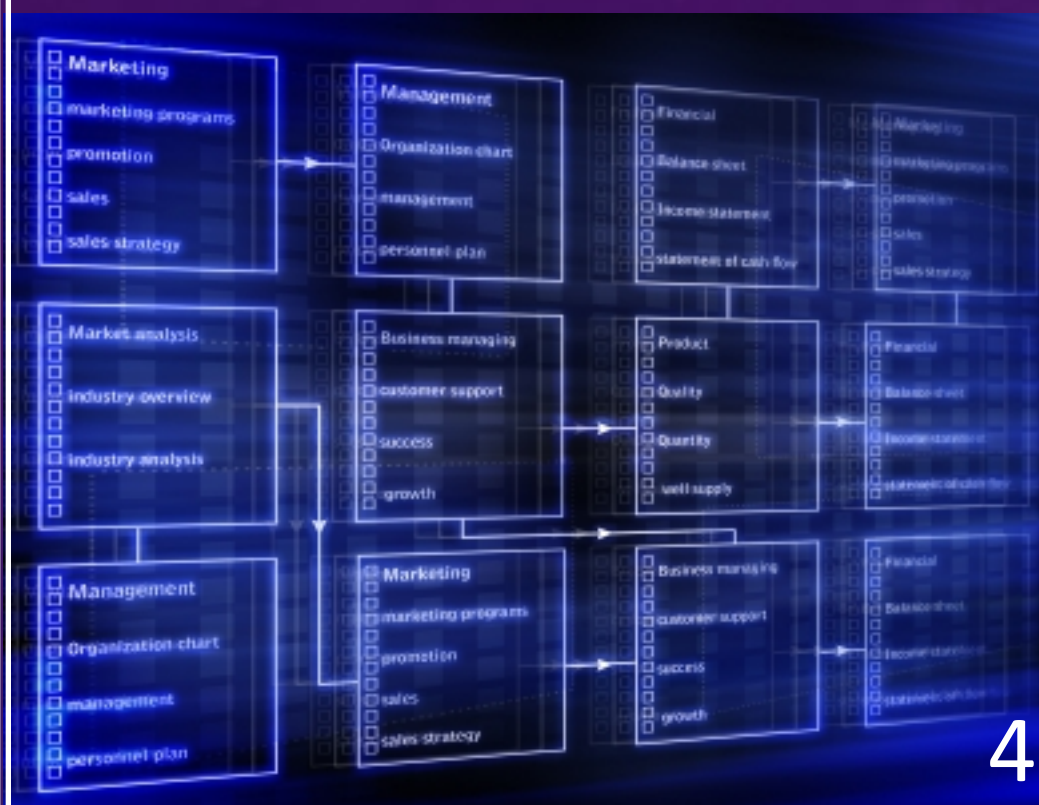
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