Testing the DAF for Implementation at Georgia Tech

Formal data management has become an increasingly pressing need for researchers in every discipline, and the Georgia Tech Library is investigating ways in which we can support campus researchers in this area. Vast quantities of research data are generated each year – the creation of which is dependent upon a great investment of both intellectual effort and financial backing by individuals and groups affiliated with Georgia Tech, from departments and research centers to federal funding agencies and private donors. The curation of these assets is of strategic importance to the university and all those involved in their creation.

As part of our investigation into providing data management services to GT faculty and researchers, the library is conducting an assessment of campus research data outputs based upon the Data Asset Framework (DAF), an assessment tool developed by HATII at the University of Glasgow in conjunction with the Digital Curation Centre.

In preparation for implementing the DAF, the Research Data Project Team first determined the goals and scope of our assessment, and identified available resources, such as funding, technical support, discipline expertise, and institutional partners. Based on these criteria, we modified the tool to match our local requirements. Rather than focusing on a comprehensive audit of a single school or research group, we developed a plan to canvas the entire campus; we require a broad understanding of the research data environment across a university known for its de-centralized nature. While much attention in the professional literature is focused on the data-intensive disciplines within science and engineering, we also wanted to include other technology-rich disciplines that have a strong presence at Georgia Tech – including computing, architecture, music technology, and humanities-based digital media.

We conducted a pilot study across all seven university colleges, along with a number of major research centers and affiliated campus units. Because we plan to survey research projects with a wide spectrum of methodologies, practices, budgets, and data management requirements, we needed to insure that the assessment questions were not biased toward any one discipline or research scenario.

This poster will outline the findings from the assessment pilot study. I will report on our initial tool design, researcher feedback, survey results, a comparison of expected and actual study outcomes, and modifications made to the assessment tool. By working with this cross-section of the Georgia Tech research community, we were able to refine and improve our original version of the assessment tool for a full, campus-wide implementation in late 2010.