Nelson Memo: relevance for research data

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Abstract

Bringing rigor to the scholarly record DataCite celebrates the recently issued Nelson memo *"to make the results of taxpayer-supported research immediately available to the American public at no cost."* This is a significant step in the global policy landscape and will support collective action for change.

Keywords

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Bringing rigor to the scholarly record

DataCite celebrates the recently issued Nelson memo *"to make the results of taxpayer-supported research immediately available to the American public at no cost."* This is a significant step in the global policy landscape and will support collective action for change.

DataCite, founded in 2009, was established with a common purpose towards making research outputs and resources publicly available. Today, our community remains committed to our founding principles and works together with a common purpose. Our vision "Connecting Research, Identifying Knowledge" encapsulates our collective effort as a community to bring together the disparate pieces of the research lifecycle and bring rigor to the scholarly record by making outputs and resources findable, citable, connected and reused globally.

The scholarly record

This new guidance from OSTP rightfully focuses its scope beyond published articles. Of course, published papers that have been through a traditional peer review and editorial process remain an important means of communicating science today. However, a major obstacle is that current research articles offer no underlying information and/or no mechanism to easily link to the experimental design, the research data, and the analytical tools that were used to generate the reported outcomes.

This challenge prevents the research community from being able to fully understand the results of the research, to replicate its results, and to decisively evaluate,and reuse existing research. Availability of the different outputs of a research project would enable reuse of data and software in order to aggregate findings across studies to evaluate discoveries in the field, and ultimately to assess and accelerate progress.

The OSTP guidance exemplifies a major global policy shift. Other national bodies have issued similar guidance or statements, such as the Australian Academy of Science policy states *"Open science requires unhindered access to scientific articles, access to data from public research, and collaborative research. Broadening access to scientific publications and data is at the heart of open science so that research outputs are in the hands of as many as possible, and potential benefits are spread as widely as possible."* We hope these examples will become a catalyst for other policy makers around the globe.

DataCite's role

As an open scholarly infrastructure we develop services to make it possible and easy for systems around the world to integrate and support their researchers to make outputs and resources openly available. This is a collective movement, it has the promise to make research more open, efficient, reliable, and responsive to societal challenges.

Clear and succinct policy helps to start a culture change, where it becomes a standard part of the research culture to make outputs openly available. The OSTP guidance makes a clear statement regarding the research data, stating "*Scientific data underlying peer-reviewed scholarly publications resulting from federally funded research should be made freely available and publicly accessible by default at the time of publication....*" This provides an opportunity for research funders to formally create incentive and make it normative as part of the research process.

The DataCite community has been committed to driving this change for over ten years and welcome such policy guidance to support our efforts. Ultimately, our open scholarly infrastructure services support open access, availability and reproducibility of research results, and make it easier to communicate knowledge and advances in science.