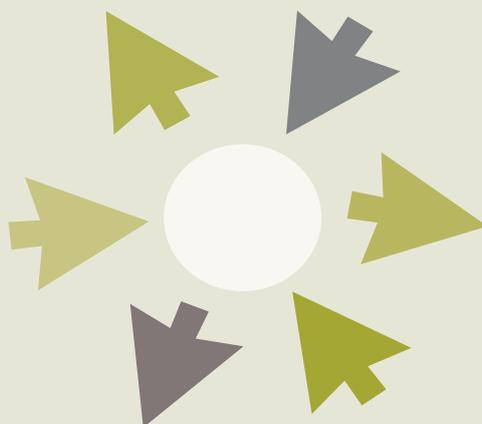# Open Access for Data and the Digital Repository of Ireland

The Digital Repository of Ireland is the national trusted digital repository for Humanities and Social Sciences data, preserving and providing access to our cultural and social digital heritage. Access to the data in the DRI repository is guided by the principles of Open Access for Data where appropriate.

Open Access for Data is an initiative on a global scale. It faces challenges due to its relative novelty and the complexity of its implementation. It generally includes *government data* and *publicly funded research data*. The EU Digital Agenda encompasses both under *public sector information*; 'all the information that public bodies produce, collect or pay for. Examples include geographical information, statistics, weather data, data from publicly funded research projects, and digitised books from libraries.'[1]

What does Open Access for Data mean? Boldly, it means that certain data should be freely available for anyone to use and re-use without restrictions from copyright, patents or other mechanisms of control. Critical to incentivising data sharing is proper acknowledgement. The advantages of opening up data for re-use include accelerated, enhanced discoveries, cost savings, re-use for education and cross-sectoral use, and research validation. Various studies quantify the return on sharing data (e.g. overall economic gains from opening up public sector information are estimated at € 40 billion per annum for the EU[2]), however in my opinion, valuing data for commercial exploitation only does not capture the fuller societal and cultural value of data sharing.

There is a growing body of policy which either mandates or encourages Open Access for Data. An important example is the Obama Administration's Executive Order requiring that data generated by the government be made available in open, machine-readable formats, while appropriately safeguarding privacy, confidentiality, and security. This policy is based on the declaration that 'information is a valuable national asset whose value is multiplied when it is made easily accessible to the public.'[3] The repercussions for citizen privacy should be factored into this argument.

[1] Digital Agenda for Europe – a Europe 2020 initiative: http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/open-data-0
[2] Review of recent studies on PSI re-use and related market developments, G. Vickery, August 2011.
[3] Obama Administration's Executive Order on Open Data: http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2013/m-13-13.pdf

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In Europe the situation is complex. The EU Commission has a legislative framework for public sector information that covers written texts, databases, audio files and film fragments, but it does not apply to the educational, scientific, broadcasting and cultural sectors.[4] European policy is either sector specific (e.g. INSPIRE Directives for environmental data[5]), or focuses on research publications, or supports digitisation of cultural heritage via the development of Europeana.[6] The EU Commission acknowledges that 'significant differences in national rules and practices persist', slowing progress. Their strategy is to adapt legal frameworks, soft law and policy, to leverage funding instruments and to raise awareness and facilitate Member State cooperation.[7]

In 2012, the Irish Government published the National Principles on Open Access Policy Statement. This statement was developed by the National Steering Committee on Open Access Policy, and while it primarily addresses research publications it also states that 'research data should be deposited whenever this is feasible, and linked to associated publications where this is appropriate'.[8] The policy applies to publicly funded research outputs; Ireland is also beginning a suite of initiatives for Open Government Data, where much can be achieved with policy development and an online Open Data Platform.

Policy alone is not sufficient to achieve a change in practice. Researchers have reasonable concerns regarding the re-use of their data including a lack of credit and citation, the labour and cost required, and the risk of misuse or misinterpretation. What further steps are required to support and incentivise researchers to share their data? The answer is an ecosystem of interdependent actions at policy, system and service level, including: data training and sustained e-infrastructures to provide the needed services, standardised data citation practices, and a progressive approach to licensing, copyright, and data protection that accommodates the changing digital world. Incentives such as funding archiving costs, suitable metric development and acknowledgement in career progression would improve research practice.

The Digital Repository of Ireland works to raise awareness of the need and benefits of digital preservation and Open Access, while respecting rights, privacy and confidentiality. DRI seeks to share best practices with the community to enable cost savings and improved standards of preservation and access, and to inform national policy for digital preservation and access. Data Protection and IPR and Copyright are complex issues that require careful consideration in their implementation. In DRI we have taken concrete steps to mint persistent Digital Object Identifiers and publish ingested metadata under a Creative Commons Attribution licence (CC-BY)[9], while implementing an authentication and authorisation system in our infrastructure that controls access to the digital objects as required. As a trusted digital repository we are following the path to certification by the international Data Seal of Approval. These are tangible steps informed by international best practice for digital repositories. We participate in a number of international networks and organisations such the Research Data Alliance and the Digital Preservation Coalition to ensure that we are both informed by and informing practice, standards and training as they develop. We believe that now is the time to proactively engage to influence the development of policy and practice to achieve a systemic, responsible data-sharing society.

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[4] EU Directive on the re-use of public sector information (Directive 2003/98/EC known as the 'PSI Directive': http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:345:0090:0096:EN:PDF

[5] INSPIRE Directives for environmental data: Directives 2003/4/EC, OJ L 41/26, 14.2.03 and 2007/2/EC, OJ L108/1, 14.3.2007

[6] Europeana: www.europeana.eu

[7] EU Digital Agenda 'Communications on Open Data': http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0882:FIN:EN:PDF

[8] Irish National Principles on Open Access Policy Statement http://www.dri.ie/sites/default/files/files/National%20Principles%20on%20Open%20Access%20Policy%20Statement%20(FINAL%2023%20Oct%202012%20).pdf

[9] http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

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