
Data Life-Cycle Management (Pre-project)

Research Data Life-Cycle Management (DLCM)

The partners within this pre-project are currently working on a new proposal, which will be submitted in February 2015. Having conducted more than 50 semi-structured interviews in all partner institutions (UNIGE, UNIBAS, UZH, EPFL, ETH, UNIL, HEG, Switch), findings generally show that data management is a question of discipline, institutions and individual knowledge and organized according to existing know-how. However, some tendencies become apparent. Data Management Plans, at the beginning of a project, as well as the notion of long-term preservation after the end of a research project are mostly absent. Important issues are also mentioned concerning active data management, where problems occur because of data coming from different sources and storage shortages. Data publication, as researchers underlined several times, will be done in future only if there is an incentive such as data citation. There is some awareness about the current changes in research, in this case, training or consulting is asked by researchers, in order to be able to confront those changes.

Based on these findings, the aim of this project is to improve support for Swiss researchers in managing their research data throughout its so-called "life-cycle". Building on existing work on national and international levels, project partners target the setting up of the needed services that will allow efficient managing of active research data, and ensure long-term preservation of subsets of data selected by researchers. Those services will need adequate underlying infrastructures that the project partners intend to test on specific use cases (in a first stage, mainly in life-sciences and humanities). The project will specify guidelines and data management plans (DMP), based on national and international policies, necessary for providing researchers with the incentive to care for their data. Moreover, because data life-cycle management (DLCM) of research data involves many questions, which include, but are not limited to data organization, file formats, metadata as well as legal and regulatory aspects, an important aspect of this project will be the training of the end-users as well as offering consulting in some cases.

Apart from the immediate benefit in day-to-day data management, the deliverables of this project should also facilitate the transfer of responsibility for data throughout the different phases of their life-cycle, e.g. when data is transferred from facilities to the researchers' working environments, or to institutional or other long-term data archives. The institutions in charge of data management and long-term preservation – in most universities, IT services, research units and libraries are involved – will therefore rely on the proposed frameworks for a range of pilot implementations of DLCM solutions, from hard sciences to digital humanities.