

Press Release:

International organizations form partnership to increase the benefit of research data for society

8 March 2014

The Committee on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA) and the World Data System (WDS)—both Interdisciplinary Bodies of the International Council for Science—and the Research Data Alliance (RDA) are pleased to announce the signing of Memoranda of Understanding outlining their collaboration. Coordination of their efforts is important since each organization focuses on different but complementary aspects of research data: CODATA on advocacy, policy, and process; WDS on data provision and stewardship; and RDA on bottom-up implementation of data sharing tools and practices.

For hundreds of years, the publication of theories and the data on which they are based have been the engines of scientific progress and the resulting societal advancement. Germ theory has led to improvements in public health and sanitation, genetics has led to plant breeding techniques that let us feed billions, and the 'Standard Model' of particle physics has led to fundamental comprehension of mass and force. Scientific knowledge based on data from experiment and observation has changed the world.

Data are now more numerous and complex than ever. In this new world, we need to maintain the essential linkage between concept and data while recognizing that traditional models for research and data stewardship must change if we are to exploit a new data-intensive era. We increasingly recognize the value of research data, yet we struggle to preserve, share, and reuse data. The alignment of WDS, CODATA, and RDA activities will result in more coordinated worldwide data efforts by bringing together a global community of researchers, archivists, data scientists, librarians, and computer scientists to address the core problems of data for society.

Specifically, the three organizations through the Memoranda of Understanding seek to:

'Provide safe stewardship and ready access to data, guided by a culture of open and ethical sharing of all research products, including data, through a functionally transparent and open data-sharing infrastructure.'

CODATA, RDA, and WDS have different but complementary foci and strengths. While the three organizations already benefit from extensive collaboration, we believe the new Memoranda of Understanding will clarify our respective strengths; with the result that we will be able to accomplish more, and advance data practices and science faster and further in this newly defined partnership.



ICSU-CODATA was established in 1966. Its membership is comprised of National Academies, Science Councils, international Scientific Unions, and related organizations that care about data. Its focus is on creating both a culture and a framework of standards, agreements and protocols that enable data to be shared and reused.

ICSU-WDS was established in 2008 (its predecessor bodies, the World Data Centres and the Federation of Astronomical and Geophysical data Analysis Services were established in 1957). Its membership is comprised of data repositories, data service providers, and their partners. Its focus is on identifying, creating, and sustaining institutions that provide stewardship and access to data.

RDA was established in 2013 by several funding agencies in Europe, the US, and Australia. Its membership is comprised of individuals and organizations (private and non-profit). Its focus is on the detailed implementation of policies, practices, and technologies (i.e., infrastructure) that lower barriers to data exchange.

www.codata.org

www.icsu-wds.org

www.rd-alliance.org