International Workshop: Data Resources in the Life Sciences

HFSPO Secretariat

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To set the stage

Brief summary of results from survey
of data resource leaders

How is your resource funded?

- Most funding comes from public (e.g. government granting agencies) or non-profit sources (e.g. Wellcome Trust). UNIPROT reported some industry support.

- Most support comes through competitive processes with 3-5 yr terms.

- Some resources have multiple sources of funding, usually from different national granting councils, but others rely on a single source.

Who are your users?

- Model organism databases
  - Researchers using the model organism in question.
  - Researchers using other model organisms.
  - Clinical geneticists.
- Primary data repositories
  - Broad range of scientists in academia and industry.

What is your data used for and how is that monitored?

- Data are used to advance research by guiding experimental design and to provide education. Some include extensive information about reagents and facilitate physical resource sharing.

- Monitoring involves measuring download statistics, and literature citations, particularly those of articles that describe the databases.

- Most databases do community outreach to educate new users and to inform users about new functionalities.

Are the means of measuring impact sufficient?

- There are reasonably adequate means of measuring the overall impact of a resource but little means of measuring the impact of individual items within the resource. Different resources had different views about the importance of this latter item.

- Resources are often used and re-used without attribution, which reduces their apparent impact.

What would be the impact if your resource were lost?

- Model organism research would become far more difficult and inefficient.

- Downstream research that depends on the resource, for instance, drug discovery, would be deeply compromised.

- Re-analysis of data from new perspectives would be impossible.

- Money and time would be wasted in efforts to recreate the resource.

What would be the contingency plan?

- Other sources of funding would be investigated but chances of success may be low.

- A paywall could be instituted, but it is felt that stepping away from free and open access, even for industrial users, compromises both the utility and the integrity of the resource.

- Resources with multiple funding sources feel more secure in this regard.

What are the greatest challenges to financially sustaining the resource?

- Short-term duration of grants.
- Declining overall public-sector support for research.
- Requirement for resources to compete against research projects.
- Lack of appreciation of the value of human curation.
- Perceived preference of funders to create new entities over sustaining existing ones.
- Absence of coordinated international funding agreements.