Open STS Publishing Infrastructures

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Midspace link | ESTS journal site

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What's "open data" for an STS journal anyway?

Expansively understood.
Includes but not limited to:

Documents - texts, manuals, transcripts, reports, fieldnotes, found artifacts, news coverage, etc.

Multimedia - video, audio, other composite forms, art, posters, etc.

Numerical - budgets, demographic data, public records, census, court records, public health data, etc.

Right to governance/ ownership/ data design

Foundational Tension:

“We [i.e. *ESTS*] want to provide an open forum for publishing research that draws on and extends the crucial ideas and literatures developed in STS.”

But also,

“We recognize that there is no *single* STS community. STS is in the process of broadening its aims, foci, methodologies, concepts, practices, and membership in ways that we may not anticipate.”

What is at stake in open data?

1) Describe the systems/initiative(s) you are working on and with what social, political and economic commitments?

2) How have you and your colleagues been thinking about publishing “open data”?
   - What risks are part of your considerations?

Audience Questions

Prompt Questions

- What kinds of challenges do you perceive data sharing projects face?
- What do you believe is the role of the journal (or library, or scholarly society) in open research data?
- Where are promising areas of future work related to these topics that you would like to see worked on, either by your own group or others?

ESTS Next Steps

- Developing processes towards supporting linked ethnographic data in *ESTS*
- Experimentation with new genres of publication
- Continuing to foster these discussions

Thank you!

Further discussion at **Jan 2022** Meeting of T-STS Network Publishing Working Group

Sign-up via this listserv to continue this conversation

Additional Materials for Future Discussions

Q: Should the data produced or acquired by STS researchers be shared with other researchers and/or the public at large?

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The “FAIR” standpoint:

- Sharing data is imagined as **a professional obligation**. In short, better research will usually result from sharing data.
- **Reproducibility and reliability**: Sharing data will make it possible for the scientific community to vet the results of research, by making available the data from which those results were derived.
- **Scientific development**: Researchers will have the opportunity to draw on larger pools of more diverse data to derive new insights and research directions.

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The “FAIR” standpoint:

- **Pedagogical value:** Junior researchers can benefit from accessing data that they may not have otherwise, and use it in new ways.
- Sharing data is also imagined as **a responsibility that researchers have to the public**.
- **Return on public research investments**: The creation of research often involves substantial public investments. The public should therefore be able to access the products of the research.
- **Accountability:** Shared data makes it easier for researchers’ conclusions to be verified, and to ensure that funds are being properly used.

“FAIR” Assumptions

- Data is primarily **an object of scientific exchange** that can be shared without friction.
- The expertise required to interpret and analyze data can be neatly **separated** from the data itself.
- The main harms of open data are in **the negative impacts that publication** may have on those from whom data is extracted in ways that cannot be foreseen by the original holder of the data.
- **Obstructions to data sharing are posed as social ones**, and not related to the content of the data itself, or the sociotechnical infrastructures that make, manage, and store the data.

Other than “FAIR”: Data Relationalities

- Data **embodies other relations** between researchers and interlocutors.
- Data **embodies research interlocutors’ relations with each other**.
- Data **embodies infrastructural relations**.
- In sum, data objects are nodal points in **multiple relationalities** that may be in tension with each other.
- Key reference point: **CARE** Principles for Indigenous Data Governance (**C**ollective Benefit, **A**uthority to Control, **R**esponsibility, **E**thics)

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We need to ask:

- Who benefits from the creation of data? Who bears the costs?
- Who holds the power to shape what becomes data?
- Within what histories is data created?
- How are data relations entangled with relationalities and attendant responsibilities that exist *among* interlocutors?
- What tensions and conflicts emerge between objectified data and the data relationalities among the people or groups from whom it is derived?

What is the role of the scholarly journal in open data?

- What *should* a journal do vs what *can* it do?
- Help researchers fulfill institutional mandates?
- Peer-review of data?
- Offer opportunities and fora for researchers to think about their own + communities' data practices and capacities?
- Clarifying "genres of openness"?

Possibilities

1. Relations among researchers.
    a. Journals can facilitate conversations about data reuse.
    b. Journals can raise awareness among researchers of the values, risks, and politics of data sharing.
2. Relations between researchers and funders.
    a. Journals can help researchers to fulfill funders' open data mandates.
    b. Journals can link researchers with appropriate infrastructures.
    c. Journals can develop and provide those infrastructures.
3. Relations between researchers and the public.
    a. Journals can engage with funders to advocate for investment beyond "data as an object" and to foreground other crucial data relationalities.
4. Relations among researchers and interlocutors.
    a. Journals can help researchers consider issues emergent from data sharing that bear on interlocutors.
5. Infrastructural relations / infrastructuring relations
    a. Journals can help researchers consider infrastructural issues emergent from the sharing of their data.
    b. Journals can help build connections across new groups and facilitate connections and collaborative relationships