

DATA CURATION NETWORK

Strategic Framework 2022-2025

Our three year “living” strategic framework outlines our vision for continued growth while further cementing our sustainability as an organization and within the open research community.

The purpose of this document is to:

- Publicly and clearly articulate the Data Curation Network’s mission, vision, and values
- Capture members’ ideas and aspirations for the next few years
- Anticipate (in order to respond to) spending priorities
- Help all DCN members understand what they can do to move us forward

The Data Curation Network (DCN) began in 2016 with a simple goal: to share expertise in data curation across institutional boundaries. Five years later, the DCN has grown to become much more. With support from the Alfred P Sloan Foundation and other funding agencies, we

- developed and implemented our shared data curation service
- created open educational programming to train information professionals in curation workflows
- advocated for curation as a critical component of high-quality data shared ethically and FAIR
- provided a stable platform for the community to come together and co-author new tools and resources, such as data curation primers, and
- successfully transitioned into a sustainable organization with 15 institutions.

As we grow and evolve, it’s vital that we stay true to our mission as an organization. In 2021, we began a process to outline a strategic framework for continued growth while further cementing our role within the broader data sharing community. Starting with a community-led update to our vision, mission, and value statements (see below), we embarked on a series of listening sessions with DCN members to capture potential strategies and projects that align with our committees and special interest groups. Rather than having a separate theme related to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), we’ve tried to embed our strategies identified by DCN’s Racial Justice Working Group (Appendix A) throughout the framework to better incorporate equitable and inclusive best practice into the fabric of our work. We will continue to update this living document to respond to the broader data sharing landscape (internationally, nationally, and institutionally).

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Vision A trusted community-led network of curators advancing open research by making data more ethical, reusable, and understandable.

Values Open. Trusted. Inclusive. Collaborative. Empowering.

Mission

As professional data curators → Empower researchers to share/publish high quality data, ethically and FAIR

As a network → Collaboratively advance the art and science of data curation by creating, adopting, and openly sharing best practices and tools

As part of the broader data sharing community → Support thoughtful, innovative, and inclusive data curation training and professional development opportunities

As an organization → Grow the DCN in a sustainable and responsive way

Data Curation Network 2022-2025 Objectives

Mission	2022-2025 Objectives
Ethical/FAIR Data	Objective #1 Refine DCN curation workflows to be efficient and effective
	Objective #2 Be strong advocates for curation
Curation Best Practice	Objective #3 Peer compare across our Community of Practice
	Objective #4 Perform research and develop new tools
Education	Objective #5 Create professional development opportunities for members
	Objective #6 Provide education and training external to DCN
Organizational Growth	Objective #7 Forge strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations
	Objective #8 Grow in a sustainable and responsive way

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Ethical/FAIR Data

Objective 1: Refine DCN shared curation workflows to be efficient and effective

We will build and refine DCN curation workflows and practices to be more efficient, thereby enabling data curators to be more effective so their time can be freed up. One past example of how we did this was creating the CURATE(D) protocol and embedding this within the DCN workflow to facilitate the networked curation process.

Possible strategies

- Research and implement ways to make curation workflows faster and more efficient, including leveraging new and emerging technologies that may leverage “human in the loop” automation
- Collect use case studies (qualitative and quantitative) to assess the curation work in the DCN to understand the most impactful work
- Celebrate our “failures” (e.g., dataset not matched to curator in the DCN) by recognizing these as opportunities from which to learn
- Curate a broader range of data sets, including data derived from human participants in ways that more clearly demonstrate our ethics in practice (e.g., incorporate data sovereignty frameworks that engage the community from which the data was collected)
- Explore options for expediting DCN curation turn-around time and expand DCN shared expertise to curators who want peer-to-peer support (e.g., a second set of eyes).

Possible measures of impact

- Increase the number of curated datasets year-over-year due, in part, to DCN’s networked curation
- Collect case studies that demonstrate the quality of data curated through DCN to demonstrate impact of open science through reuse and/or citations

Ethical/FAIR Data

Objective #2 Be strong advocates for curation

In order for the DCN to positively impact data sharing, we must continue to advocate for increased attention, investment, and support for data curation work to improve outcomes such as FAIR and ethically shared data. One of the ways we’ve been able to do this in the past has been by partnering with national-level open science work, such as our invited case study to the 2021 AAU/APLU report “Accelerating Public Access to Research Data” aimed at University presidents and administrators.

Possible strategies

- Present on the role and importance of data curation and data curators and promote the DCN at national and international conferences
- Respond to requests for information (RFIs) and other calls for feedback to ensure data

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curation and data curators views are represented

- Emphasize the important role curation can play in ensuring equitable access to data by offering additional curation support for social and racial justice data curation

Possible measures of impact

- the number of mentions of the DCN in the press, news coverage, and citations.

Curation Best Practice

Objective 3: Peer compare across our Community of Practice

The DCN supports a complex and multifaceted community of practice, recognizing that data curation does not start or stop at deposit and ingest into a data repository, but rather data curators support data sharing across the full data lifecycle (e.g., planning, creation, analysis, sharing, preservation, and reuse). With this in mind, the DCN will serve as a test bed for research and comparison of data strategies.

Possible strategies

- Peer comparison across DCN members to benchmark our local data curation workflows, policies, staff levels, technologies, and organizational structure
- Increase member and non-member participation with DCN Special Interest Groups (e.g., big data, sensitive data) and open opportunities for broader participation outside the Network
- Establish a collection of curation resources and best practices (e.g., a clearinghouse)

Possible measures of impact:

- Community engagement beyond the DCN in special interest groups
- Access and usage of DCN tools and resources

Curation Best Practice

Objective 4: Perform research and develop new tools

We will continue to increase our understanding of how data sharing is currently performed by researchers and supported by institutions. For example, in the 2018-2021 implementation phase we launched the “Value of Curation” project which involved surveying repository staff and end users of repository services. Building on the broader literature in this area and collaborating with others outside the DCN will be a key aspect of this objective.

Possible Strategies

- Encourage grant-funded and other research efforts aligned with the DCN mission and values, (eg. ITHAKA / DCN Data Communities NSF grant, ARL Realities of Data Sharing NSF grant, IMLS education and training grants, etc.)
- Publish a data sharing ethics statement aimed at researchers responsible for data sharing that articulates their ethical roles and responsibilities.
- Using metrics, build on our understanding of data use and re-use to determine if curated data are of measurable greater reuse value than non curated.
- Target open source software development pertinent to this objective for broader

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collaboration and opportunity for success (e.g. Invenio RDM, BlackLight, Samvera, etc)

Possible measures of success

- Track grants and research outputs related to, sponsored by, or in collaboration with the DCN
- Track usage metrics related to DCN research outputs (e.g., citations, views, downloads, etc.)

Education

Objective 5: Create professional development opportunities for DCN members

The DCN curator community will stay well-informed and up-to-date on curation practice and state-of-the-art curation tools. We will provide internal-facing webinars, training, and provide professional development opportunities for gaining new skills.

Possible strategies

- Invite and host speakers to present on new or emerging data curation topics (e.g., FAIRsFAIR, Frictionless data, indigenous data sovereignty, data justice movements, NIH public access requirement)
- Invite mini-workshops or how-tos from DCN curators to cross-train on specialized data curation skills (e.g., personalized approaches to data curation)
- Hold information exchanges with peer groups (e.g., COAR, GoFAIR, DataOne).

Possible measures of success:

- Number of DCN members to attend webinars and trainings
- Number of non-DCN members to attend webinars and trainings
- New webinars developed and new partners co-presenting on both practical and theoretical considerations

Education

Objective 6: Provide education and training external to DCN

We will enhance our educational programming offerings and resources for the broader community, building on the success of the 2018-2021 Specialized Education Workshops that trained over 70 data curation professionals. We will advance and iterate our educational outreach and provide a networking bridge spanning across the library, archives, data science and other professions that is the data curator community to better prepare one another to face a multitude of shared challenges.

Possible strategies

- Update and iterate CURATE(D) steps with a focus on DEI and ethics, building from these representations in FATE, CARE, FAccT and other models
- Develop a mechanism by which our curation primers are maintained, edits are approved, and new primers can be added through a formal review process.
- Explore the creation of fellowships or mini-grants for early career and BIPOC research data stewards, building from peers like DLF/CLIR fellows, CuRe Fellows, USAIN etc.

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- Build a job bank of examples to positively demonstrate what skills and duties are entrusted to data curators

Possible measures of success:

- Number of individuals reached by our training and education, both in workshops and via use metrics of online materials, and their perceived satisfaction
- Surveys of workshop attendees six months to a year later to learn how and to what extent they have incorporated what they learned into their professional lives
- Increased number of curation primers and/or revisions to extant primers.
- Successful partnership with organizations, with an emphasis on data ethics, to collaboratively offer training opportunities

Organizational Growth

Objective: 7: Forge strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations

We will forge strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations that share our programmatic and aspirational goals. For example in 2018-2021, the DCN launched programs and partnerships with peer organizations including the Canadian Portage Network's Curation Experts Group, the Association of Research Libraries, and ITHAKA S+R.

Possible Strategies

- Engage institutions not well-represented in the DCN (non-R1 and smaller institutions, HBCU's, tribal colleges and universities, minority serving institutions, etc.) to understand their challenges for data curation; listen to their needs and ask what types of partnerships or other collaboration opportunities would be most useful to them
- Build on our existing partnership with organizations such as Portage, ARL, and ITHAKA, and seek out mutually beneficial and clearly articulated collaborations
- Research and develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) template that articulates the potential benefits and up-front arrangements between the DCN and potential partner organizations

Possible measures of impact

- New grant partnerships or strategic collaborations resulting in impactful work
- Increased participation for non-R1 institutions and individual curators as a result of lower barriers to entry
- Develop new workflows or partnerships to meet the needs of different member types

Organizational Growth

Objective: 8: Grow the DCN in a sustainable and responsive way

We will grow the Data Curation Network in ways that are fiscally sustainable (e.g., via membership model and diversified income sources) and responsive to the needs of current and future community members. For example building on the 2021 membership model that transitioned the DCN from a grant-funded project to a membership-driven organization.

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Possible Strategies

- Continuously refine membership model to provide highest value for institutions
- Implement and continue to refine the governance model, especially the financial and membership aspects
- Increase membership in a responsive and sustainable way that stays true to the organizational mission (e.g., retain the community feel without growing too fast)
- Target membership recruitment to fill disciplinary- and format-specific curation needs in the distributed curation service
- Regularly check-in with all interested parties (curators, representative, advisory board, etc.) to maintain and optimize value for all members

Possible measures of impact

- Number of member organizations
- Member retention rates

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A: Centering Racial Equity in Data Curation

Co-created with DCN members and consultant Fay Cobb Payton.

Actionable Items for Institutional Members (Individually) and DCN (Collectively):

- Develop a collaboration strategy for inclusiveness of Minority Serving Institutions (Historical Black Colleges & Universities, Tribal Colleges & Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions), community colleges, non-Research 1 institutions via participatory design (this point may not necessarily result in membership expansion and will require intentionality.)
- Hold focus groups at professional conferences and with professional organizations
- Leverage the DCN members' location to connect to the collaboration or expansion strategy
- Participate in hiring committees/search committees
- Examine language associated with position descriptions
- Heightening awareness of institutional whiteness and the how to dismantle racism via action (Reference: [The Centre for Community Organizations](#))
- Go beyond educating yourselves individually and collectively using the references from these sessions and other DCN activities and act
- Develop a DCN social impact statement which articulates why addressing racial diversity, equity & inclusion to address community (data curation) need(s).

“The DCN is challenged to evaluate short-term and long-term steps, as outlined in this document, to reimagine its CURATE framework for sustainability and inclusive language, actions and processes.” Read full report:

<https://datacurationnetwork.org/2021/06/04/new-release-centering-racial-equity-in-data-curation-report-to-the-data-curation-network/>

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Appendix B: Adoption and review process

Adoption / communication timeline:

1. March-June 2021 - Working group updated our Mission, Vision, and Values. Presented results at AHM 2021.
2. July - Dec 2021 - Drafted Strategic Framework
3. January 11, 2022: Governance Board Review and recommendations from Governance members on incorporating DEIA.
4. January 24 2022: Finalize recommendations from review
 - a. Send to Governance Board + Curators list – finalized, thanks to Scout and Jen; consider this finalized if we do not hear any concerns by January 31
5. February 1 – blog post / press release and publish on website
 - a. UDC
 - b. Link from publication page
 - c. Link from Governance page
6. Early February– after site has been updated– share about new weblook and have strategic framework as a tie in – DCN, RDAP, DataCure, etc.
 - a. Start with “how to get involved” messaging and roll in strag plan

Review / Suggestion process:

1. Any member of the Data Curation Network can suggest changes to this document at any time using the “Suggesting” feature of Google Docs.
2. Annual review process:
 - a. October: All changes shared via listservs with request for feedback
 - i. Listening session(s) offered
 - b. November: All changes folded into document and approved at Governance Board Meeting
 - c. January: New version uploaded to UDC, website, etc.
 - d. Release as v2, v3, v4...etc.