# Chapter 4
# Accessibility of Research Data at Academic Institutions in Zimbabwe

**Blessing Chiparausha**
*Bindura University of Science Education, Zimbabwe*

**Josiline Phiri Chigwada**
*Bindura University of Science Education, Zimbabwe*

## ABSTRACT

*This chapter presents the findings of an online survey that was carried out to assess research data accessibility at research and academic institutions in Zimbabwe. The study primarily sought to ascertain the custodianship, storage and accessibility of research data at these institutions. The chapter also highlights the challenges associated with accessing research data in Zimbabwe and proposes mechanisms that can be put in place to address these challenges.*

## INTRODUCTION

Research data is "any information collected, stored, and processed to produce and validate original research results" (Macalester College 2018). Research data is therefore critical to the research process. Research data can be in the form of text, figures, audio, video, graphs, specimens, software etc. DePaul University Library (2018) defines research data management (RDM) as the "care and maintenance of the data that is produced during the course of a research cycle". RDM involves file naming, data access, data documentation, metadata creation and controlled

vocabularies, data storage, data archiving and preservation, data sharing and reuse, data privacy, data rights and data publishing (Henderson 2017). RDM is a key component of the research process as it helps to ensure that data is properly organized, described, preserved and shared (DePaul University Library 2018). This chapter presents findings of an online survey that was carried out to assess research data accessibility at academic institutions in Zimbabwe. The academic institutions surveyed included universities, polytechnics, research institutions, libraries, records centres and archival institutions. Sixty-one responses were received from participating institutions and respondents included librarians, researchers, record managers, archivists, information technology experts and research officers. The study was aimed at ascertaining the custodianship, storage and accessibility of research data at these institutions and highlighting the challenges associated with accessing research data at academic institutions in Zimbabwe.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study sought to specifically answer the following research questions:

1.   Who is responsible for managing the data?
2.   Where is the research data stored?
3.   Who can access the research data?
4.   What are the challenges associated with accessing the research data?

### Research Data Custodianship

Whyte, Jones and Pryor (2014) and Corrall (2012) observe that although roles and responsibilities in RDM have not yet been clearly spelt out, libraries and librarians are taking a leading role in assuming responsibility for research data. She points out that university librarians are participating in activities that assist researchers in accessing research data. Corrall (2012), however, notes that apart from librarians, there are other key players who have been involved in RDM; information and computer scientists, database and software engineers and programmers, disciplinary experts, curators and expert annotators and archivists. In the context of RDM, these professionals are collectively referred to as 'data scientists' and the same study also confirms collaboration amongst the various professionals in RDM (Corrall 2012:106). Some researchers however, continue to prefer keep research data themselves on their desktops, laptops and other devices at their disposal (Procter, Halfpenny and Voss 2012).

7 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/accessibility-of-research-data-at-academic-institutions-in-zimbabwe/232425

# Related Content

### The Trends of Chinese-American Library Relations
Lian Ruanand Li Fu (2017). *Academic Library Development and Administration in China (pp. 301-333).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-trends-of-chinese-american-library-relations/165599

### The Impact of Technology Platform Change on the Information Seeking Behavior of Academicians in Amhara
Chalachew Muluken Liyew, Sertse Abebe Ayalewand Yibeltal Tafere Bayih (2019). *International Journal of Library and Information Services (pp. 1-10).*
www.irma-international.org/article/the-impact-of-technology-platform-change-on-the-information-seeking-behavior-of-academicians-in-amhara/225840

### Public Libraries and the Right to the [Smart] City
John Blewitt (2018). *Library Science and Administration: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 1720-1735).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/public-libraries-and-the-right-to-the-smart-city/191588

### Survey of Reading Promotion of Public Libraries in China
Junling Zhaoand Wenxian Ge (2020). *International Journal of Library and Information Services (pp. 1-9).*
www.irma-international.org/article/survey-of-reading-promotion-of-public-libraries-in-china/240794

### Research Productivity, Visibility, and Impact at the University of Namibia: Building a Framework for Open Access and Research Data Management
Trywell Kalusopa, Patiswa Zibani, Ronald Kangutiand Anna Leonard (2020). *Handbook of Research on Connecting Research Methods for Information Science Research (pp. 489-516).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/research-productivity-visibility-and-impact-at-the-university-of-namibia/240541