Thinking like an Archivist: Supporting Qualitative Researchers in Long-Term Data Management

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Abstract:
Qualitative researchers amass a great deal of data in the process of conducting research. Their research processes and methods are supported and informed by their particular department, institution, and field at large. However, they are often left to their own devices when considering how to manage their data, if they develop a process at all. Data management and archiving data, as the final step, are not discussed in most research methods courses across disciplines.

Research and discipline-specific librarians offer one-on-one consultation, research guides, and workshops to support researchers. If archivists, on the other hand, interact with qualitative researchers it is often through reference work: locating appropriate materials and working within the researchers' focus. Data management support is more commonly provided by librarians, if at all. The archivist's knowledge of preservation paired with the librarian's closer proximity to the research process offers an excellent opportunity for collaboration.

Data management is often a low priority for qualitative researchers juggling a number of responsibilities within and outside of the research lifecycle, as supported in our findings. This poster will look at ways to incorporate the archivist in the research lifecycle to better support qualitative researchers, the long-term care of their data, and the librarians that already engage in this work.

Utilizing original mixed methods research on qualitative researchers' thoughts about data management, the author presents options for facilitating better data archiving practices and questions to consider moving forward.

About the author:
Shelby Long is a recent graduate from the University of Michigan's School of Information where she earned her MSI in Archives and Digital Curation. She began her work as a graduate research assistant in the Library as Research Lab in the summer of 2020 and continues to participate in the lab, of which this poster is a product. Her research interests include: digital preservation, de-identification of data, data management, and access to information. She is currently an Assistant Archivist for Audiovisual Collections at Ford Motor Company.