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The State of Open Data 2021 Report

by Caroline Winter | 13 May 2022 | English, Observations, Observations and Responses | 0 comments



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This observation was written by Caroline Winter, with thanks to Ian Duncan and John Simpson for their feedback and contributions.

At a glance:

Title	<i>The State of Open Data 2021</i>
Creator	Springer Nature, Digital Science, and Figshare
Publication Date	November 30, 2021
Keywords	open data, reports

The State of Open Data 2021 report was released in November 2021. It is the sixth report in the series published by **Springer Nature**, **Digital Science**, and **Figshare** and presents the findings of a six-year longitudinal survey that gathered data about “researcher motivations, challenges, perceptions and behaviors toward open data” (Digital Science, 2021, 5). The survey received more than 21,000 individual responses from researchers in 192 countries, and **the survey and the respondent data** are openly available online.

The report is structured as a series of short analyses by authors working in libraries, publishing companies, and research and information organizations, all framed by a foreword and an introduction.

The foreword by Natasha Simons of the [Australian Research Data Commons \(ADRC\)](#) (4–8) contextualizes the report’s findings within the collaborative, global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, calling upon readers to “imagine how much more we could do, how many more lives we could save, if research data was routinely made open and shared” (4). Simons emphasizes the need for “underpinning research infrastructure and the experts need to run the infrastructure” (8) such as data repositories and advanced research computing facilities (see “[The Future of Open Scholarship Project Report on Open Infrastructure](#)” and “[NDRIO and the Canadian Digital Research Infrastructure Strategy](#)”). She also points to the [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science](#) as a “landmark document” for supporting and promoting open science in its 193 member states (5) (see “[UNESCO’s Recommendation on Open Science](#)”).

The introduction by Greg Goodey of Springer Nature and Megan Hardeman of Figshare (9–11) highlights the three key findings from the survey:

- Although respondents want to increase the visibility and impact of their work, viewing it as a public good, they are concerned about their data being misused, about not receiving appropriate credit for their work, and about copyright and licensing issues.
- Respondents report being more familiar with [FAIR \(Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable\)](#) data principles and reusing data more than in past years.
- Respondents rely upon support from institutional libraries, repositories, and publishers, particularly in relation to copyright and licensing, finding appropriate repositories, and data management.

The analyses that follow contextualize and discuss the survey data from various perspectives. Several are clustered together with a shared focus on data curation, examining the roles of data curators and publishers, the importance of collaboration, and the importance of consolidated research data management (RDM) infrastructure (12–23). Other pieces focus on the key findings from the survey for the life sciences (24–25), the development of an open data platform in Japan (26–28), tips for engaging researchers in open data practices, from a South African perspective (29–32), and the importance of open data for building public trust and confidence in research overall (33–35).

Two themes emerge from this report. The first is that we need open data to address global-scale, complex challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic (see “[Open Scholarship and COVID-19](#)”). Another is that making data open is not a passive process: data curation experts work actively with researchers to ensure their data aligns with the FAIR principles, and infrastructures—including technical ones and information infrastructures such as metadata standards—must be carefully developed and maintained, often through collaborations among researchers, librarians and other information professionals, publishers, and other stakeholders. Training at all stages is essential.

The Report and the INKE Community

The report features an analysis by Ginny Barbour of [Open Access Australasia](#), an INKE member through the [Canadian–Australian Partnership for Open Scholarship \(CAPOS\)](#) (see “[The Canadian–Australian Partnership for Open Scholarship \(CAPOS\)](#)”).

Barbour notes that the issues around open data discussed in the report relate to a larger context of openness, academic incentive systems, and research quality and trust. She argues that scholarly publishing needs to shift to focusing more on reproducibility and building public trust in research, both of which are supported by open data (33–35).

The Report and the Broader Community

The report has been [accessed widely](#), with more than 9600 views and 2200 downloads. It has also been shared across the publishing, library, and research communities on Twitter and other channels, including

the [Analysis & Policy Observatory](#), [Charleston Hub](#), the [Coalition of Networked Information](#), [Library Journal's InfoDocket](#), and [Research Information](#).

The *State of Open Data* Report and Open Scholarship

Open data is one branch of the broader Open Scholarship movement, along with Open Access, Open Education, and other open scholarly practices. Open infrastructures such as institutional and data repositories and practices such as RDM are foundational to open data and to open scholarship more broadly (see “[The TRUST Principles for Digital Repositories](#)” and “[RDM Capacity Building in Canada and the Portage Insights Reports Series](#)”).

The increasing awareness of open data that the report describes is aligned with the increasing momentum of the Open Data movement in recent years, as research in all disciplines and fields becomes more data driven. In 2020, nine groups representing more than 160 research institutions around the world signed the [Sorbonne Declaration on Research Data Rights](#), which calls for the development of legal and institutional frameworks for responsible data sharing, following the FAIR principles (see “[The Sorbonne Declaration on Research Data Rights](#)”). The *State of Open Data 2021* report highlights issues that are important to consider as the movement advances.

Work Cited

Digital Science, Natasha Simons, Greg Goodey, Megan Hardeman, Connie Clare, Sara Gonzales, et al. 2021. *The State of Open Data 2021*. Digital Science. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.17061347.v1>.

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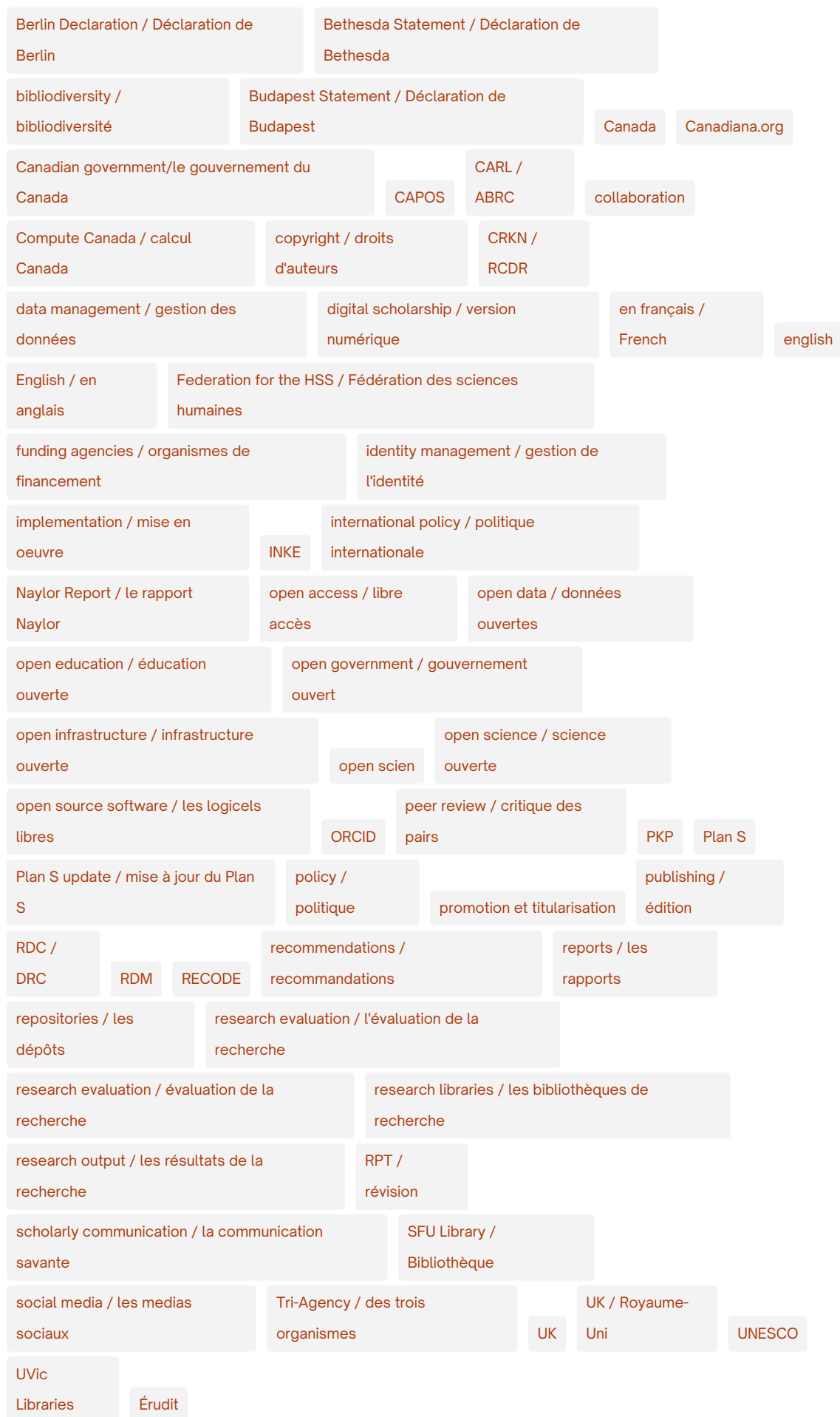
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