

RDA Value for the Evaluation of Research

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The evaluation of research is evolving from being mostly bibliographic index-based to a broader context, which is now recognised as indispensable for enabling Open Research. In the same way that Open Research promotes the open sharing of FAIR data and other research outputs, evaluators must also value and consider these outputs as part of the wider research evaluation framework. The RDA is an appropriate forum for addressing the evolving requirements of research evaluation as they relate to Open Research practices. The RDA Interest Group “Evaluation of Research” organises the discussion on the subject in RDA, particularly as it relates to data and RDA activities on research software.

The topic is perfectly aligned with RDA’s mission of “building the social and technical bridges to enable open sharing and re-use of data” since the evolution of research evaluation is an essential social bridge to enable open sharing and re-use of data and related research outputs. It is also aligned with the strategic area “Champion progress in research data management practice and policy” of the Empower pillar of the RDA Strategic Plan 2024-2028, in particular its priorities “Advocate the importance of best practices in research data management for sound science policy development and implementation” and more specifically “Ensure the recognition of best practices in research data management and open research.”

RDA’s reach across the international community, including research organisations and funders, and the diverse profiles of its individual members, can help to facilitate and align a global discussion of research evaluation, drawing on data experts from a range of domains. Research software experts are also active in the RDA and their involvement will be sought. Liaison is sought with the Research Software Alliance, with which RDA has established a strong collaboration.

The topic is increasingly prominent with more research assessment reform initiatives being established at the local, organisational, national, regional and international levels. The Interest Group is leveraging the connections that RDA has with participating organisations, funders, and policy makers. In addition, the group is building connections with external initiatives tackling this topic, particularly the [Coalition for Advancement of Research Assessment](#) (CoARA), to bring voices of the RDA community of experts to their attention for consideration. The RDA community comments about proposed research assessment evolutions will help improve these proposals and make them more relevant, equitable, and applicable. In turn, the community of RDA data experts will benefit from better recognition of their activities. The organisations,

funders and policy makers who use the RDA as an international, neutral forum, are informed about the work of the external initiatives and the input of the RDA community, which can help them shape their own activities in the domain.

With regard to the value of the RDA community expertise, a number of RDA Groups have activities relevant to the many changes surrounding the evaluation of research. The evaluation of research is embedded in a complex ecosystem. Building on the diversity of the RDA community and activities, possible RDA contributions to the debate fall in several categories: *possible metrics and criteria*, *stakeholder representation*, *research outputs and their relevant properties*, *disciplinary aspects*. The groups dealing with *support activities* contribute to the ecosystem's progression by providing discussions and outputs that help researchers to engage in and with the transforming context.

The most straightforward connections are related to *possible metrics and criteria*. Several Groups have been active in the domain, in particular the [Data Usage Metrics WG](#) and the [Sharing Rewards and Credit \(SHARC\) IG](#). The IG [Understanding and Capturing the Usage of Digital Research Infrastructure](#), currently under discussion, will also have the capacity to assess possible new criteria if it gathers enough support to be endorsed.

The evolution of research assessment will be possible only with a contribution of all relevant *stakeholders*. The RDA contributes a range of groups gathering key stakeholders at the international level, taking into account global perspectives of inclusiveness at the level of evaluation policies and models. Two of the governance bodies are particularly relevant, the Organisational Assembly and the Regional Assembly, which gather respectively the RDA organisational members and representatives from the countries and regions interested in the RDA. The [Funders Forum](#) and its [Interest Group](#) enable connections with research funders. The [Early Career and Engagement IG](#) gives a voice to the early career researchers working in the domain. The [Data Policy Standardisation and Implementation IG](#) gathers publishers and other stakeholders involved in the definition and implementation of journal/publishers' research data policies.

One important aspect of the expansion of the evaluation of research is the recognition of *research output* diversity. Data is at the core of RDA's mission. The strong link between research data and software led the RDA community to establish the [Software Source Code IG](#). Physical samples and collections, which are important assets for several research fields, are addressed by the [Physical Samples and Collections in the Research Data Ecosystem IG](#). Several Groups have been dealing with the definition of FAIR for different kinds of research outputs, in particular the [FAIR Data Maturity Model](#) and [FAIR for Research Software](#) Working Groups.

A number of groups, including the [Improving Global Agricultural Data \(IGAD\) Community of Practice](#), are focusing on the *disciplinary aspects* of data sharing in their field. Several of the RDA IGs and WGs are in disciplinary fields such as Natural Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Agricultural and Veterinary Science, Health Sciences including omics, and Social Sciences. It is well recognised that the developments in the evaluation of research must take

disciplinary specificities into account. The RDA Groups can contribute by identifying research outputs relevant to their disciplinary fields and specific constraints, e.g., the production and usage of sensitive data. The RDA Domain Ambassadors IG currently under discussion could be a good venue for cross-disciplinary discussions.

Finally, the groups contributing to activities enhancing and supporting open data and more generally open research provide potentially important input on the ecosystem, in support of the adoption of open research practices by researchers and others involved in the research endeavour, a necessary element for the community to accept and engage in changes to the evaluation of research. RDA Groups dealing with researcher engagement, education and training include [Engaging Researchers with Data IG](#), [Education and Training on Handling of Research Data IG](#), and [CODATA/RDA Research Data Science Schools for Low and Middle Income Countries](#). New activities and expertise are required for FAIR data, and others involved in the research endeavour are experiencing higher profiles and increased demand in recognition of their new capacities, as represented by the [Professionalising Data Stewardship IG](#) and the [Libraries for Research Data IG](#). The numerous activities that support data management, life cycle and FAIRisation also contribute to the transformation of the evaluation of research (e.g. [Active Data Management Plans IG](#), [Reproducibility IG](#), [National PID Strategies IG](#), [Vocabulary Services IG](#), [Sensitive Data IG](#), [FAIR Principles for Research Hardware](#), [Virtual Research Environment IG](#), [RDA/WDS Certification of Digital Repositories IG](#), [Data Repository Attributes WG](#).)