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Journal Research Data Policy Frameworks

The Value of RDA for Policy
White Paper Series

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This report forms part of a [comprehensive white paper](#) examining the value of the Research Data Alliance for policy development and implementation.

1. The Value of RDA for Journal Research Data Policy Frameworks

The [Research Data Alliance \(RDA\)](https://www.rd-alliance.org/)¹ organised workshops on 15 and 20 May 2025, to demonstrate the RDA's policy impact and encourage implementation of [RDA recommendations and outputs](https://www.rd-alliance.org/recommendations-and-outputs/outputs/)² in different policy contexts. The workshops focused on critical policy areas that form essential research infrastructure including **Journal Research Data Policy Frameworks** for establishing consistent data sharing standards across academic publishing.

The workshops featured lightning talks presenting policy statements and 'Adoption Stories' that showcased practical applications of RDA recommendations, followed by Q&A sessions to facilitate participant engagement with the speakers. During the workshops, co-chair of the [RDA Research Data Policy Interest Group](https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/research-data-policy-ig/activity/)³ (formerly the Data Policy Standardisation and Implementation Interest Group), [Rebecca Taylor-Grant](https://www.rd-alliance.org/members/rebecca-taylor-grant/),⁴ provided an overview of the value of the RDA for journal research data policies. Rebecca provided a policy statement, explaining the importance of the RDA's 'Research Data Policy Framework for All Journals and Publishers' and how it has been adopted by various scholarly journals and publishers to simplify the implementation of journal data policies.

2. What is the Journal Research Data Policy Framework?

Journal research data policies require or recommend the publication of research data that underpins research articles as an important part of the shift toward transparent, FAIR, and reproducible research.⁵ As the prevalence of journal data policies increases, there is potential to confuse researchers and support staff with numerous or inconsistent policy requirements. Due to the wide variation in content, discoverability, ease of interpretation, infrastructure integration and support for compliance of journal data policies, it is challenging for journal editors to develop and implement such policies consistently, difficult for researchers to understand the nuance of how they differ across journals, and complex for infrastructure providers and support staff to assist policy compliance.⁶

In this context, a journal research data policy framework identifies the key elements of an effective journal data policy and provides a standardised approach to help journals and publishers create or enhance their own research data policy. The framework supports the development of consistent and comprehensive data sharing policies for all journals and publishers, simplifying data sharing practices for researchers, support staff and journals alike.

¹ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/>

² <https://www.rd-alliance.org/recommendations-and-outputs/outputs/>

³ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/research-data-policy-ig/activity/>

⁴ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/members/rebecca-taylor-grant/>

⁵ <https://doi.org/10.1629/uksg.463>

⁶ <http://doi.org/10.5334/dsj-2020-005>

2.1. Why Should You Care?

POLICY STATEMENT

Journal research data policies are important because they **support or enforce consistent standards for data sharing**, while being flexible to **include discipline-specific guidance and terminology**. They are embedded in **key guidance (Instructions for Authors)** that must be followed during publishing, and align with **funder and institutional requirements for data sharing** at critical points in the research lifecycle.

2.2. Benefits and Consequences

The RDA's Journal Research Data Policy Framework delivers multifaceted benefits by clarifying data sharing expectations for researchers, extending and reinforcing established disciplinary practices across research communities, enhancing research impact through improved reproducibility and discoverability, and simplifying policy implementation through standardised frameworks that reduce complexity for publishers and journal editors.

2.2.1. Clarifying Data Sharing

Journal research data policies clearly stipulate what data sharing practice is expected when authors publish research articles using a particular journal. They clarify and enforce the process of data sharing for researchers, especially as journal data policies align with the requirement of funders and institutions that data is published no later than the point at which the research article is published. At the final stage of a research project, when an article is submitted to a journal, researchers are usually highly motivated to comply with data sharing policies and journal editors are able to confirm that authors have followed policy guidance.

“When journals do not adopt data policies a key opportunity is missed. Researchers in the process of publishing are highly motivated to address any mandatory editorial requirements which apply to them.”

*– Rebecca Taylor-Grant
Taylor & Francis, UK*

2.2.2. Extending Disciplinary Practices

Journal research data policies help to extend and enforce community standards around data sharing, offering the flexibility to incorporate discipline-specific guidance and terminology that resonates with researchers across different domains. This journal-by-journal implementation approach ensures policies remain relevant and practical for specific research communities.

Journal editors, as influential members of the research community with domain expertise, are well-positioned to identify and implement journal data policies that support emerging best practices within their fields. The

success of data sharing in genomics and genetics exemplifies this approach as specialised repositories supported by their communities and by journal policies have created a network that enhances reproducibility and accelerates research progress, demonstrating how targeted, community-driven policies can transform research practices.⁷

2.2.3. Enhancing Research Impact

Data sharing enhances research impact by facilitating the validation, replication, reanalysis, new analysis, reinterpretation or inclusion into meta-analyses, and reproducibility of research. It increases the value of the investment made in funding scientific research, and decreases the burden on authors of preserving and finding data, and managing data access requests. Citation of data in associated research articles enhances visibility, recognition and credit for authors, creating incentives for quality data sharing practice.⁸ Journal research data policies also provide quality assurance with some policies including peer review to ensure data quality and completeness.

2.2.4. Simplifying Policy Implementation

The RDA's Journal Research Data Policy Framework offers a standardised yet flexible approach that enables journals and publishers to adopt data policies tailored to their editorial model and community readiness. The framework simplifies the implementation process for journal data policies. It meets the specific needs of individual journals while maintaining consistency across the publishing ecosystem.

3. RDA's Impact

The RDA community empowers journals and publishers to create effective data policies through a proven framework and global success stories.

3.1. Research Data Policy Interest Group

The [RDA Research Data Policy Interest Group](#), endorsed in 2017, acts as a centralised space for discussion on research data policy development and implementation. The group's aim is to support and standardise research data policy implementation, with the assumption that reducing complexity and improving consistency of research data policies of journals will benefit research, researchers, funders and institutions. By 2020, the group developed a comprehensive research data policy framework for journals and publishers. Since 2020, the group has expanded its focus to explore policy standardisation among funding agencies, promote policy implementation among publishers, and identify barriers to effective policies through workshops and collaborative efforts with external organisations.

3.2. A Research Data Policy Framework for All Journals and Publishers

In June 2020, the Interest Group produced the [Developing a Research Data Policy Framework for All Journals and Publishers](#)⁹ to provide a consistent framework for the implementation of journal data policies. The framework defines and describes 14 features of journal research data policies and arranges these into a set of six standard policy types (tiers) which can be adopted by journals and publishers to promote data sharing in a way that encourages good practice and is appropriate for their authors' perceived needs. The policy features

⁷ <https://doi.org/10.1177/1073110519840482>

⁸ <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/s/data-availability>

⁹ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/research-data-policy-ig/outputs/?output=94545>

and types (tiers) were created by reviewing policies of multiple scholarly publishers, which collectively publish more than 10,000 journals, and through discussions and consensus building with multiple stakeholders associated with the interest group.

14 journal research data policy features arranged as 6 policy types (tiers)

	Policy 01	Policy 02	Policy 03	Policy 04	Policy 05	Policy 06
Definition of the research data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exceptions to policy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Embargoes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Supplementary materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Data repositories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Data citation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Data licensing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Researcher/ author support	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Data availability statements		<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Data formats and standards				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Mandatory data sharing (specific data types)				<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Mandatory data sharing (all papers)				<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Peer review of data				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Data Management Plans (DMPs)				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Provide information

The text for the policy feature will be included in the policy template but it is clear that the feature will not be enforced and checked as part of the publishing or peer review process

Provide information and action

The text of the policy feature is included and makes clear where applicable that the feature will be checked and enforced in the publishing or peer-review process

Figure 1. Fourteen journal research data policy features arranged as 6 policy types (tiers)

[Hrynaszkiewicz, et al. \(2020\)](#)¹⁰

¹⁰ <http://doi.org/10.5334/dsj-2020-017>

Each policy type becomes progressively more stringent, with 'Policy 01' being the least strict and 'Policy 06' requiring the most comprehensive data sharing requirements (**Figure 1**). Policy types '03' and above require data availability statements in research articles which are a recognised compliance monitoring and data-discovery tool. Policy features include topics such as data citation, data repositories, data availability statements, data standards and formats, and peer review of data. The framework also provides implementation guidelines and template policy texts which can be implemented by journals and publishers in their 'Instructions for Authors' and publishing workflows.

“When you look at a publisher's portfolio of journals, and consider disciplinary differences, there can be differences in the readiness of a journal to implement a stringent data policy. The RDA's Journal Data Policy Framework provides six policies that a journal can choose from to meet its needs.”

*- Rebecca Taylor-Grant
Taylor & Francis, UK*

3.3. The Journal Research Data Policy Framework in Practice

The RDA's Journal Research Data Policy Framework is driving a significant and measurable increase in journal data policies and published papers featuring data availability statements. Since its peer-reviewed publication in the [Data Science Journal](#),¹¹ the framework has gained widespread recognition with over 50 citations and adoption by major publishers including [PLoS](#),¹² [Springer Nature](#),¹³ Slovenian scientific journals, Earth Science and Biodiversity journals, and the [International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers \(STM\)](#),¹⁴ demonstrating its transformative impact across the global publishing ecosystem.

3.3.1. Slovenian Social Science Data Archives: National Policy Progress



“Journal data policies are important because they provide consistent, scalable guidance for journals to support FAIR and open research. In Slovenia, adopting the framework helps to align publishing practices with national and European open science mandates, enabling data sharing, citation, and repository use across disciplines.”

*– Maja Dolinar
Slovenian Social Science Data Archives (ADP), Slovenia*

In 2020, the Slovenian Social Science Data Archives (ADP) published [guidelines](#),¹⁵ based on the RDA's Journal Research Data Policy Framework, to help Slovenian scientific publishers and editors create journal data policies. The regional group, [RDA in Slovenia](#),¹⁶ began by translating and contextualising the framework, establishing policies for the provision of data availability statements, selection of appropriate data repositories,

¹¹ <https://datascience.codata.org/>

¹² <https://plos.org/>

¹³ <https://www.springernature.com/gp/products/journals>

¹⁴ <https://stm-assoc.org/>

¹⁵ <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4040672>

¹⁶ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rda-slovenia/activity/>

and adherence to proper data citation standards. This laid the foundation for national alignment with FAIR and Open Science principles.

Initial implementation involved a national pilot programme with scientific editorial boards and stakeholders across disciplines. Several journals developed tailored journal data policies using the guidelines. While initial uptake was promising, full implementation stalled due to limited editorial capacity, lack of technical support, and absence of monitoring mechanisms.

This year, the [RDA in Slovenia](#)¹⁷ regional group is restarting the process through a structured work plan involving national funder, the [Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency \(ARIS\)](#),¹⁸ and major academic publishers. The approach includes forming working groups, supporting pilot journals with data editors, updating guidelines, and embedding policy elements into [FAIRsharing](#),¹⁹ a [flagship RDA output and community-driven registry](#)²⁰ that catalogues data standards, databases, repositories, and policies to help researchers find and select appropriate resources for managing and sharing their data.

Key outcomes will include harmonised data sharing policies across publicly funded journals, clearer guidance for authors, and strengthened editorial practices aligned with European mandates. The RDA's Journal Research Data Policy Framework has provided Slovenian journals with internationally aligned, FAIR-compliant data policies, improving transparency and supporting national open science goals.

“The RDA Research Data Policy Framework provides a practical and flexible structure for implementing journal data policies. The framework remains central to our approach, providing a shared language for policy development and a tiered model suited to the diverse capacities of Slovenian journals.”

- Maja Dolinar

Slovenian Social Science Data Archives (ADP), Slovenia

3.3.2. STM Association: Policy for Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers



“Many publishers provide data sharing guidance that is general. However, for certain subject areas this does not adequately guide researchers on how and what to share. For medical research especially, there should be clearer guidance available to ensure this valuable data has the best chance of reuse.”

*- Matthew Cannon
Taylor & Francis, UK*

Common data sharing concerns of pharmaceutical companies may differ from those of academic authors and institutions. Patient privacy, intellectual property and data ownership are consistently highlighted as important

¹⁷ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rda-slovenia/activity/>

¹⁸ <https://www.arrs.si/en/>

¹⁹ <https://fairsharing.org/>

²⁰ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/group-fairsharing-registry-connecting-data-policies-standards-databases-rda-wg/activity/>

concerns by pharmaceutical companies.²¹ A [recent survey](#)²² conducted by [Open Pharma](#)²³ revealed that many pharmaceutical companies do not fully understand journal and publisher data sharing policies. Matthew Cannon, Head of Open Research at Taylor & Francis, proposed an [International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers \(STM Association\)](#)²⁴ project to clarify data sharing requirements for medical and health sciences researchers.

Workshops captured insights from both publishers and pharmaceutical companies to understand current challenges and identify a range of use cases for improvements in data sharing practices. To structure the necessary changes and develop a new guidance document for scientific, technical and medical publishers, the project team strategically adopted the structure and headings from the RDA's Journal Research Data Policy Framework. This proved beneficial since the team did not need to create an entirely new organisational framework. More importantly, following the RDA framework ensured that the guidance would automatically align with RDA-approved best practices for publisher data sharing policy guidance, lending credibility and international recognition to their work.

“The RDA’s Journal Research Data Policy Framework provided the structured approach we needed to organise our findings and recommendations effectively to clarify data sharing requirements for medical and health sciences researchers.”

*- Matthew Cannon
Taylor & Francis, UK*

3.3.3. The BRIDGE project: Bridging French Research Units



“Journal data policies are important because they set the scene for the adoption of common rules by people and projects within a research entity, such as a Joint Research Unit, and potentially facilitate collaboration with other entities through policy alignment.”

*– Françoise Genova
Astronomical Observatory Strasbourg, France and RDA France*

The [French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development \(IRD\)](#),²⁵ [National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment \(INRAE\)](#)²⁶ and [French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development \(CIRAD\)](#)²⁷ partnered on the [BRIDGE project](#)²⁸ funded by the [French National Research](#)

²¹ <https://www.openpharma.blog/blog/transparency/data-sharing/how-open-pharma-supports-responsible-sharing-of-patient-level-data-for-pharma-funded-research/>

²² https://www.openpharma.blog/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Osorio-et-al_ISMPP-Annual-2024_FINAL.pdf

²³ <https://www.openpharma.blog/>

²⁴ <https://stm-assoc.org/>

²⁵ <https://en.ird.fr/>

²⁶ <https://www.inrae.fr/en>

²⁷ <https://www.cirad.fr/en>

²⁸ <https://bridge-science-ouverte.fr/>

[Agency](#)²⁹ in 2019. The BRIDGE project focused on sharing research data within Joint Research Units (UMRs) where data is created as a collaborative effort between multiple organisations or stakeholders. Harmonisation of data management practices was required to enable open access to FAIR data across UMRs.

The project produced a roadmap for implementing FAIR principles in three partner data repositories using open source software, [Dataverse](#).³⁰ The goal was to provide guidelines and harmonise research data policies and repository management in a reusable approach for other institutes or contexts, focusing on: 1) comparing and analysing data governance policies; 2) producing best practice data management guides supported by case studies; and, 3) developing joint technical functionalities and recommendations to ensure interoperability of data descriptions (metadata) and related datasets.

The RDA's Journal Research Data Policy Framework was used for the development of a [cross-institutional governance framework](#)³¹ that enabled the partner organisations to define and adopt common rules and data management plans. Other outputs of the BRIDGE project included overcoming practical challenges of making data FAIR (e.g. creating standards, defining sharing conditions and common rules for harvesting metadata) and aligning with common ontologies and controlled vocabularies (data type, disciplinary fields, etc.) available via the semantic web. How the RDA framework was used to support the BRIDGE project was demonstrated during a [webinar](#)³² organised by the regional group, [RDA in France](#),³³ in May 2023.

4. Conclusions and Future Directions

The RDA's 'Journal Research Data Policy Framework for All Journals and Publishers' is practical and pragmatic, enabling any journal to implement a research data policy compatible with its editorial model, procedures, and level of support for data sharing in its author and reader community. The framework offers value across diverse contexts, providing an established structure that eliminates the need to 'reinvent the wheel' and create new journal data policies. Adopting the RDA-approved framework ensures credibility and alignment with international best practices.

The framework's flexibility allows its successful implementation across different sectors (e.g. pharmaceutical, academic, multi-institutional) and national contexts (e.g. Slovenia, France, UK). The example of how it was used to inspire and influence the BRIDGE project ([Section 3.4.3.3.](#)) illustrates how RDA recommendations and outputs can be successfully adapted and applied to influence policy development in contexts beyond their original intended focus.

Collectively, the adoption stories demonstrate that data sharing challenges persist across different sectors, demanding tailored solutions while maintaining standardised frameworks. For instance, pharmaceutical companies encounter data sharing concerns pertaining to patient privacy, intellectual property and data ownership. Within industry, there is a general lack of understanding of journal and publisher data policies

²⁹ <https://anr.fr/en/>

³⁰ <https://dataverse.org/>

³¹ <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6652405>

³² <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rda-france/wikis/?wiki=136945>

³³ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rda-france/activity/>

highlighting the need for clearer guidance. Furthermore, cross-institutional collaborations require harmonised approaches to surmount varying organisational policies and technical capabilities.

Going forward, the adoption of this framework by journals and publishers remains crucial to its success. Early adoption of the framework from project initiation, consultation of relevant stakeholders, securement of institutional and technical support, implementation of pilot programmes and policy monitoring mechanisms are important considerations. However, it should be acknowledged that adequate resources and capacity are required to achieve full implementation and adoption.

Long term success should be measured by increased levels of data sharing and reuse, which means enabling journals, editors and researchers to implement the policy types 03 and above. Policy implementation should be combined with ongoing evaluation of the impact (costs, as well as benefits) of journal data policies.³⁴

5. Contributors

We extend our appreciation to the editors for their careful review and constructive feedback on this white paper. Most importantly, we recognise the speakers, case study contributors, and workshop participants who generously volunteered their time, expertise, and insights, collectively demonstrating the profound value of the RDA in shaping research policy and practice.

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³⁴ <http://doi.org/10.5334/dsj-2020-005>

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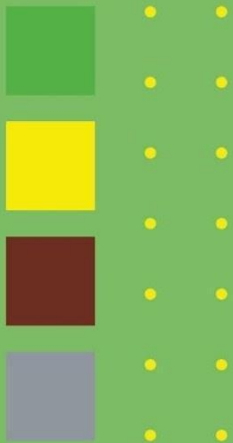
6. About the RDA

The Research Data Alliance (RDA) was launched as a community-driven initiative in 2013 with the vision that researchers and innovators can openly share and re-use data across technologies, disciplines, and countries to address the grand challenges of society. The RDA's mission is to build the social and technical bridges that enable that vision, accomplished through the creation, adoption and use of the social, organisational, and technical infrastructure needed to reduce barriers to data sharing and exchange.

As of June 2025, the RDA comprises a 15,000+ member-strong community of researchers, data professionals, publishers, funders and policymakers, that collaborate in working groups, interest groups and communities of practice to create recommendations and outputs. [Individual membership](https://www.rd-alliance.org/register/)³⁵ is free of charge and open to all who share the RDA's Guiding Principles. To get involved at the organisational level, explore our [organisational and affiliate membership options](https://www.rd-alliance.org/membership/organisational-membership/).³⁶

³⁵ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/register/>

³⁶ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/membership/organisational-membership/>



research data sharing without barriers

rd-alliance.org