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Editorial

Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* and Data Librarians: Connections that Resonate

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Focus

Key themes in Dickens' novel, transformation and resurrection, darkness and light, and social justice are firmly connected to the work being done in data. Data librarians can make a difference in times like these: resurrecting data, transforming how students, researchers, or the public think about and use data; unearthing and bringing to light historical data that will give context and meaning to an issue; and that accessible data can help address, and perhaps solve, social justice issues.

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“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

Since March 2020, this quote has been on replay in my mind—not unlike the film *Groundhog Day* or the viral song “Baby Shark”. This was one of my mother’s favorite books, and yet I could never read past the first few chapters. She was incredulous at the thought that I just couldn’t “get into” one of Dickens’ best novels. And yet, here I am considering if I should make another attempt to read this work. Why now and what does this have to do with data? [Key themes](#) in Dickens’ novel, transformation and resurrection, darkness and light, and social justice are firmly connected to the work being done in data.

In this issue of the *Journal of eScience Librarianship* the [Coburn and Johnston](#) article discusses the collaborative and transformational work being done through the Data Curation Network (DCN) in data curation and data repositories. [Cook et al.](#) pen an EScience in Action article about their pilot researchERS (Emerging Research Scholars) program for undergraduates from all disciplines to learn data management skills. This data literacy program was developed to meet the needs of undergraduates partaking in undergraduate research, but with little research data management education included in the experience. Like researchers and graduate students, undergraduates need education in how to resurrect and transform their raw data into data that makes sense and is shareable. [Roark’s](#) article describes the collaborative development of a qualitative data curation curriculum in graduate education and the impact of requiring library-faculty to teach credit-bearing courses on the sustainability and impact of developing this type of curriculum.

Academic libraries librarians know [that] all disciplines create data. The [Klenke et al.](#) article discusses importance in understanding the types of data being produced and determine how liaison librarians can support their assigned disciplines in data literacy, especially in the areas of understanding and managing data. Assuring that the liaison librarians can provide the support necessary for all disciplines will enlighten researchers and their students to the importance of developing solid research data management practices.

The life sciences create and accumulate massive amounts of data, both historical and current. [Williams](#) describes a study looking at openly available data sets in life science articles in the Illinois Data Bank and the importance of data repositories and open access problems due to publisher paywalls. Social justice issues like paywalls, lack of access to the Internet and other resources, restrictive funding, non-inclusive data policies, etc., illuminates the work that must be done in order to provide inclusive and equitable research data management and open data policies.

It's a social thing and [Henderson](#) gently reminds all data librarians, no matter where you work in research data management, that soft skills such as relationship building, listening, reference skills, and facilitation continue to be important when collaborating with researchers, students, and each other. Librarian Kindergarten 101 is important.

So, to get back to *A Tale of Two Cities*—during times of stress, uncertainty, and volatility, access to open, shareable, and curated data can mean the difference between the development of inclusive policies and decisions or bad and restrictive policies and decisions. Data librarians can make a difference in times like these: resurrecting data, transforming how students, researchers, or the public think about and use data; unearthing and bringing to light historical data that will give context and meaning to an issue; and that accessible data can help address, and perhaps solve, social justice issues.

The Editors of the *Journal of eScience Librarianship* wish you peace and light—the “spring of hope” is around the corner.

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