

## RDAP16 Sustainability panel

1. Title - Sustaining Research Data Services
2. I will be speaking about sustainability with reference to medical librarianship. I have been employed as a data librarian for almost 3 years now, although I worked with data as a biomedical librarian before that. I think we can learn about sustainability by looking at the changes in medical librarianship.
3. We can consider sustainability from the individual and the organization point of view. Elaborate
4. So first from the organizational level. What are the administrators thinking of as they consider sustaining the organization, obviously they need to keep the building and collections, the physical things up and running, but there are other considerations.
5. Usually, organizations of all types want to grow and expand, which puts pressure on everyone to do more.
6. And things change and transform. Think of all the technology changes that have taken place, and the transformation to data intensive science that has fueled our profession.
7. And mission change over time because of growth and outside changes.
8. Administrators are looking for flexibility. They want to have a group of people with varied skills so no matter what happens, they have the skills to deal with it.
9. And of course money. The bottom line is always an issue, and when you are talking about skilled workers, such as medical librarians or data specialists, the costs are more than an entry level position working the reference desk.
10. So we have one view of sustainability, but there is a more personal side to this as well.
11. I worked with a department chair who wanted to collect up all the slide decks faculty were using to teach anatomy classes and preserve them in case somebody died or, in his words, got hit by a bus. Teaching anatomy for 5 different health science schools was a big thing and brought in funds from all the schools because they contracted out to the department, and there were quite a few old faculty teaching so I guess he was justifiably nervous. But I never really liked the "what if somebody dies" scenario, so I'm going with: what if you were abducted by aliens?
12. So consider the scenario of a team of three specialists, if we have to replace a person, we need to think about what is most important, any unique skills that person brings to the position or the personality.
13. And if we have to bring in a new person, it looks more like this. Success will depend on the skills and flexibility of the group. The important thing to remember is that while there may be some change in the coverage of job duties, with a new person, there is the possibility of new tasks. Same with retaining a person by encouraging them to try new things. There is an increase in what can be done.
14. On the other hand, retaining people but moving them into new roles can lead to a different change. Maybe people become so specialized that they no longer work together. But they could work with new people, and maybe the organization is happy because they haven't had to go through a job search and onboarding but they still have some growth and transformation to keep up with change.
15. I think we all need to remember that we all aren't the same.

16. We all have different skills and backgrounds to bring to any position or organization. We are still all data specialists, just like these are all plants, but there are differences. So that means that there are common skills amongst data specialists in different areas and disciplines, the skills that will keep the service going, and there will be other skills in areas where it is okay to be doing something different.
17. I really love the next few slide, which I have used from an amazing wrap up session given by Jamene Brooks-Kieffer at MDLS15 back in October. She asked us to think about all the ideas we had learned during the symposium that we were thinking of taking back to our libraries. Then she compared those libraries to gardens, each one different, but still beautiful. So I've changed it a little and instead of thinking of the plants as ideas to grow, the plants are now us.
18. And we were reminded that not everything will fit or grow in every garden. And maybe there are some places that won't need every skillset.
19. But each garden should be adapted to the local environment.
20. Local
21. questions