NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

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EXPLORING THE FEASIBILITY OF OFFERING RESEARCH DATA
MANAGEMENT SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE LIBRARY

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ABSTRACT

Research data management services are being established in academic libraries in response to the changing scientific research landscape. To this end, this study explored the feasibility of offering research data management (RDM) services at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) library. The study was guided by the Technological, Economic, Legal, Organisational and Schedule feasibility model and the UK Data Archive Research Data Lifecycle model. The study adopted the mixed methods research design and the case study research strategy. Data was collected through a questionnaire from 104 researchers who were selected using stratified random sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine (9) faculty librarians, the university librarian and the library ICT manager who were selected using purposive sampling. The study findings showed that the UZ library was not prepared to offer RDM services. It was also revealed that in terms of the technological infrastructure, the library can expand existing institutional repositories to incorporate RDM services. The study showed that the economic needs for setting up RDM services include staff training, costs of acquiring ICT resources and advocacy costs. The legal obligations for setting up RDM services include institutional RDM policy, copyright and data protection policies. It was also found that researchers at UZ need RDM services and the faculty librarians were optimistic to take up the new role given that they receive the necessary training. The researcher concluded that given the current technological, economic, legal and organisational capability, the library can begin with research data storage services. The researcher recommended that before implementing RDM services, the UZ library should ensure that faculty librarians are trained on RDM, necessary technology is in place, sustainable economic resources should be secured and enabling policies need to be developed and all the stakeholders at UZ need to be involved from the conception of the project.