Research Data Management Case Studies: Video Transcripts

# Dr Danielle Fuller

## Video 1: Beyond the Book Project

My name is Danielle Fuller. I work in the College of Arts and Law. The project I’m going to talk about was called Beyond the Book which is about non-academic readers and cultures of reading. And what I mean by cultures of reading is for me in particular the way that people share their reading, why they come together to share their reading, either informal ways through things like book groups and book clubs, on- and offline. Beyond the Book was a collaborative interdisciplinary investigation of what my research partner and I called mass reading events. This is the name that we gave to large scale public events that took the idea of the book group and then supersized it on to a city wide region wide or even nationwide scale.

So the first challenge perhaps with this project was the scale of it. We had eleven field sites in three countries on two continents. And we had about six types … six key research methods, most of which were qualitative, some of which were quantitative. So we had various kinds of data, some numeric and a lot of it was textual. So most of that was obtained by doing things like semi-structured interviews with event organisers or with groups of readers, focus groups with readers which were then transcribed and then coded using qualitative software, one-to-one interviews sometimes with readers, participant observations we did as well and we wrote those notes up using different kinds of protocols. We collected a lot of event artefacts because we were interested in the rhetoric and the marketing and promotion and branding of reading events because we were partly trying to trace the sort of ideology of them: whose interests they were intended to serve, who they were being pitched to and who was excluded from participating in them.

## Video 2: AHRC and data sharing

I don’t think there were any really stringent obligations actually on the part of an AHRC funded project to deposit the data. They were beginning to make encouraging noises - I would say – about that, so it was the early days of this sort of trajectory. They were very tight about technical plans to do with any sort of websites, online questionnaire, that side of things as part of the grant. In fact, that was the point at which I went to people in the library and asked for help because I needed to find people that knew about how to make sure the data side of that was put together properly. That was very helpful because then I knew who to go to really around data management issues about which I really didn’t know very much at all.

So we weren’t obliged to deposit but we, DeNel and I, always felt that we wanted to share as much of the data as was ethically possible because partly sort of feminist politics really of research and partly because we relied a lot on readers, book event organisers, librarians, all sorts of stakeholders involved in reading events and cultures of reading to give us their time for interviews or focus groups and so on. And so we felt that if there was a way of kind of putting the data back out there in different shapes and forms that other people might be able to use – whether they are researchers or non-academics but people who have an investment in those kinds of events – that would be a good plan.

## Video 3: Working with sensitive data

So we had slightly different protocols on the different data types because any interview data, any focus group data we decided from the beginning we would not put that in any kind of repository -that would be data that was only used by core members of the research teams. We would use it, code it, and quote from it in publication. Obviously we got informed consent from all the participants for those things. Everything was kept on password protected computers, we did back up that data, both the audio files and the transcriptions. We did have some people do transcription work for us but they were sort of under oath to destroy the files that they had once they were finished with them and in fact before we even sent the files we semi-anonymised them so every participant in an interview or a focus group could choose a pseudonym or if they wanted to use their own first name that was fine but they got that choice and then we obviously stuck to that. So we had a lot of qualitative data which from the get-go we decided we wouldn’t make public but the quantitative datasets were a little bit of different issue and we had 10 of these at various points for our own work we merged them, but for the sake of depositing them we decided to deposit them as 10 separate datasets so a certain amount of clean-up had to happen, and I should say that all along the post-doc whose name was Anouk Lang and my research partner DeNel Rehberg Sedo were very careful about keeping really good records about that data so whenever for instance we did any data clean-up a record was kept of what process had been undertaken, we had code books that explained the kinds of categories we had made to crunch our quantitative data. So we were fairly scrupulous about record keeping because it was a bit of a new experience for all of us and we just didn’t want to mess it up so we thought if we kept records about process there was always a way for a third party to make sense of what had happened with those sets.

## Video 4: ESRC and sensitive data

So now I am currently at the very beginning of an ESRC funded project on a very different subject it’s called Death Before Birth, and it’s on the very sombre subject of how people make choices and decisions about what to do with the disposal of foetal remains. So this is a project which involves collecting some quite sensitive data and at some stages will involve working with potentially vulnerable participants. So there is a lot of ethical issues and therefore there is a lot of data issues and those two things go hand in hand. At the grant application stage for the ESRC there is perhaps surprisingly few questions asked however you do have to account for and identify various ethical issues, you do have to say how you will treat data confidentially, whether or not you will anonymise it, and also whether or not you will deposit it – it is a requirement of the ESRC funding that you do, however if you are dealing with anything that is particularly sensitive in terms of topic or participants who may be vulnerable you can make a case for not depositing the data. In our situation we are actually working with a number of different research subjects ranging from midwives and funeral directors to the people who work as support agencies like SANDS and Miscarriage Association, through to women and their families who have actually had the experience of stillbirth and miscarriage and abortion. So we can take those datasets and treat them slightly differently in relation to depositing them and we have actually said that we potentially will not deposit some parts of that data, or deposit partial data transcripts for example.

<http://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/rdm>

<http://www.beyondthebook.bham.ac.uk>

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/edacs/departments/english/research/projects/death-before-birth.aspx>