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Data Management Plus: Organizing Data and Program Files for a University-Community Partnership

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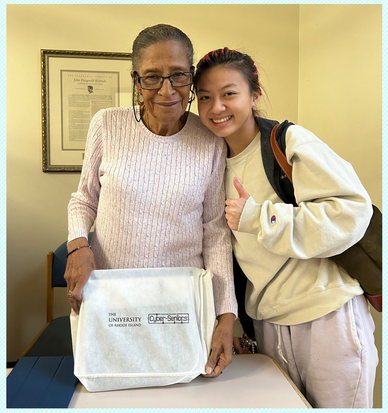
Introduction

While research data management focuses on the organization, documentation, and storage of the data itself, less attention is paid to non-data files that complement research projects.

Non-data files include training materials, presentations; agreements/contracts with community partners; budget documents; update reports; research reports, grant proposals and contracts



DIGIAGE
Bridging the digital divide for older Rhode Islanders

RHODE ISLAND OFFICE OF HealthyAging

Case Study

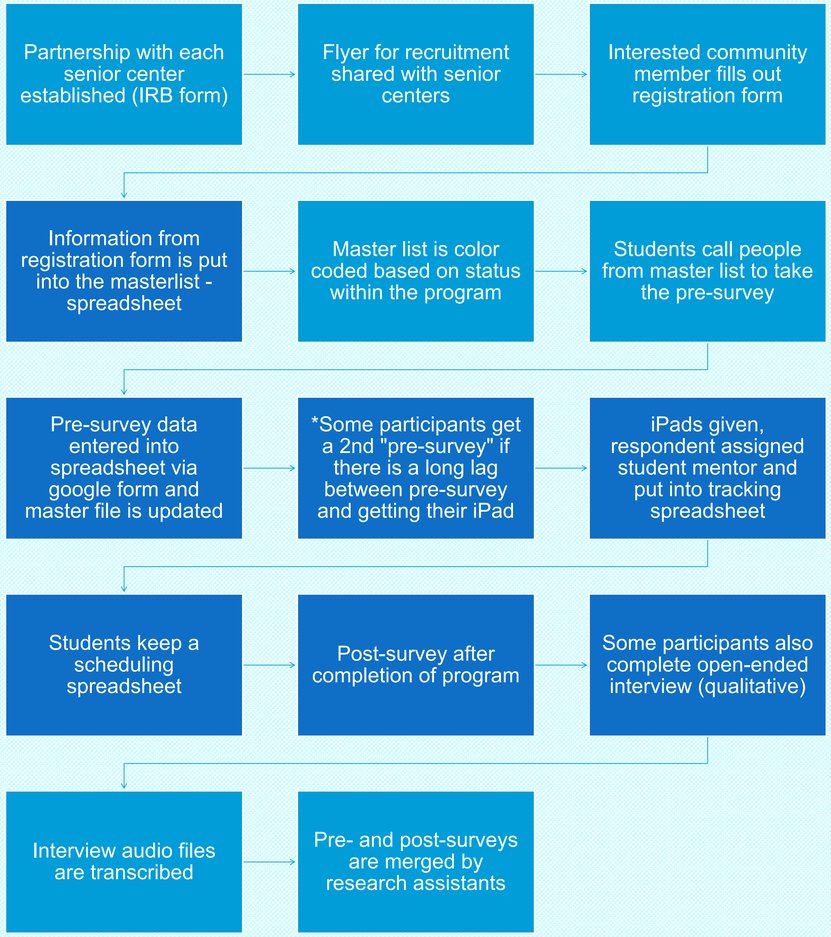
The University of Rhode Island Engaging Generations Cyber-Seniors (URI eGen Cyber-Seniors) Program is an intergenerational program that serves to teach older adults about technology, increase digital use and digital competence, and increase social connectedness among older adults. The program uses reverse mentoring and a service-learning approach, where university students help older adults learn about technology for experiential education while also developing communication and leadership skills.

The PI stated that her goals for the program files and data were: 1) data security 2) ease of use & efficiency 3) create clean dataset with all 3 years of participants for internal use. We can think of ease of use and efficiency not just referring to the data files themselves, but also all the files used to run the program and being easily able to locate these materials.

Since beginning of program, we have been implementing best practices in workflow for data analysis and research:

- Data documentation - codebooks and explanation of data cleaning
- Data registry - to keep track of different versions of the data
- Using syntax files to keep track of changes to datasets
- Creating multiple versions of the dataset as it was cleaned

Figure 1: Older Adult Data Collection Steps



Challenges Identified

- Complexity of the program - multiple community sites, students from different classes/internships, multiple grants, serving older adults and students, outreach and research program
- Different types of files and information to keep track of - including training materials, iPads, hotspots, appointments, hours, survey data
- Many people involved, including students who are involved for multiple semesters in different roles, idiosyncratic habits
- Multiple points along the way when data is collected (see figure 1) and multiple ways data is collected
- Collecting data over time - keeping track of when individuals started and finished the program

Connecting Generations Cyber-Seniors™

Actions taken so far

1. Numbering files in order of importance/actionability - helps with efficiency and ease of use
2. Creating README files for the top folder and important sub-folders
3. Combined and renamed folders. Condensed 33 folders into 19 folders
4. Put inactive files/folders into a folder named “archive”
5. Created data timeline document (see figure 1) and identified names/locations of data files to be used in a data index
6. Added notes (metadata) to important spreadsheets
7. Went through google drive and made sure file access/ownership was appropriate

Discussion

- Balance between working with a PI hands-on, seeing what works for them, implementing some best practices in data management. To what extent is this personal, idiosyncratic?
- Time well spent - PI said that numbering folders and “decluttering” has been helpful, but other researchers might not feel that they have the time to spare
- Different choices people might make when program is still running vs. completed
- Folder organization was ad hoc from the beginning, complicated by how many students and staff have worked with the program.
- The file/data management work is ongoing. Future tasks include documenting the workflow for student data, create an index for existing data, creating READMEs for other important folders
- Considering applying DDI metadata standards to the most important datasets - at both the study and variable levels

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