

The Data Together initiative explained - Simon Hodson interview by Laura Molloy, Paris, 2021-07-29.

LM: Can you tell us about Data Together - what actually is it?

Simon Hodson: Data Together is basically an agreement between four international data organisations the [Research Data Alliance \(RDA\)](#), CODATA, [GO FAIR](#) and the [World Data System \(WDS\)](#). The distinctive areas of focus of the four organisations are not entirely discrete, and so although they're overlapping in some places, they're nevertheless complementary.

In the news section of our website, you can find [the original announcement](#) from March 2020 that contains a short document detailing the distinctive areas of focus of the four organisations, and there's a nice diagram that has these quadrants and areas of focus, ways of working, etc., that show the distinctiveness and the complementarity of the four organisations. There's also a statement of intention to collaborate on areas relating to the COVID pandemic. There has also been [a second statement](#) released by Data Together in March 2021, which again covers the wish to collaborate on global open science or research clouds, platforms or commons.

LM: Is Data Together focused on COVID-specific projects?

SH: It's not COVID-specific. It's intended to be broad, covering a number of areas of collaboration. We were already working on the original Data Together agreement, and then it became urgent when the pandemic [happened].

LM: What is Data Together working on right now?

SH: RDA on the one hand and CODATA on the other hand are doing work on global open science, research clouds, commons and platforms. Those activities have slightly different foci and they're complementary. We at CODATA have the Global Open Science Cloud initiative and RDA has the Global Open Research Commons interest group and working group. The Data Together agreement helps those initiatives collaborate. We can also see how WDS and GO FAIR can engage. For example, WDS is concerned with repositories globally, and things like metadata exchange are important to global Open Science activities; and the FAIR principles underpin a lot of what is going on. Another related activity is [OSCER, the Open Science Clouds Executive Roundtable](#), for which CODATA is providing secretariat support, and that also has Data Together input. OSCER is intended as a forum in which the leaders of the Open Science platforms - such as the European Open Science Cloud, the Australian Research Data Commons, the African Open Science Platform, the Malaysian Open Science Platform, the Chinese Science and Technology Cloud, and so on - can have free and frank discussions and, we hope, come to agreement about key areas of strategy, policy and other relevant issues.

LM: How is Data Together structured?

SH: The Data Together leadership group meets quarterly. It's composed of two of the high-level leadership from each organization - in CODATA's case that's two of our officers and a secretariat member - and is really there to discuss high-level alignment, collaboration, etc. That leadership group spawned some subgroups, which are designed to encourage collaboration in particular areas. One of those is the Global Open Science Cloud Research Commons activity which is a global initiative with as many countries and geographies involved as possible. The other area

where there's a subgroup for Data Together is on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which organised what I think was [a very successful session at the virtual SciDataCon 2021](#).

LM: What do you value most about the Data Together initiative?

SH: We recognised the need to avoid unnecessary duplication between the four organisations. We also recognised the need to clarify what the four organisations do, how they're complementary and distinct and where they can collaborate. And there was a need to communicate this to our various stakeholders, including funders, and where necessary national organisations and individual members. So I think this is a great way to do all that!

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