

23 Things revisited

Field guides to research data management



National Coordination Point
Research Data Management

The organisation

Set up in 2015, the Dutch National Coordination Point Research Data Management (LCRDM; <https://www.lcrdm.nl>) is a national network of experts in the field of research data management (RDM), connecting over 200 data management experts from more than 60 organisations in the Netherlands.

The LCRDM is a joint, bottom-up effort that makes the link between policy and practical solutions. Within LCRDM, experts from various Dutch academic and research organisations and disciplines work on RDM subjects that are too big for one organisation to tackle alone and that need an actively coordinated national plan of action. To that end, LCRDM brings together, among others, research support staff, policy makers, IT specialists, and managers of various research institutes and research funding organisations. Experts typically work together in short term Task Groups, to deliver, within brief periods of time, products such as advice, inventories, guidelines, handouts, decision trees, and/or to organise national (expert) meetings.

This RDA Adoption Grant project was executed by a community-driven task group, via the LCRDM.

What was the challenge that you addressed?

Inspired by the 23 Things: Libraries for Research Data resource [<https://www.rd-alliance.org/group/libraries-research-data-ig/outcomes/23-things-libraries-research-data-supporting-output>] by the RDA Libraries for Research Data Interest Group, and as a joint effort of RDM stakeholders in the Netherlands, 23 Things versions for different audiences were created, to improve cooperation at the national level, and establish a common understanding of RDM among diverse practitioners.

We believe that these 23 Things versions can act as a shared reference tool for knowledge on research data management. Research support staff, such as data stewards, IT support staff or policy officers, often have different levels of understanding of research data management. However, they need to collaborate closely to offer state-of-the-art support for researchers wishing to do responsible data management. We believe that our audience-specific versions of the 23 Things are relevant to the international community as well. Furthermore, our processes of creating specific 23 Things versions may inspire other communities to create their own/additional versions of “Things”.

Which RDA recommendation or output did you adopt & why?

The original 23 Things: Libraries for Research Data was created in 2015 to help librarians find their way in the rapidly changing landscape of research data management. However, RDM policies and services rapidly evolved and expanded over the past years, and librarians are no longer the only ones involved in setting up and delivering RDM services. Other research support staff, such as data stewards, IT support teams, research software engineers and policy officers, often have different perspectives and different levels of understanding of RDM practices.

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Also, recent developments were not yet covered in the original 23 Things for libraries, such as FAIR data, Open Science policies and the new European privacy regulation (GDPR). Therefore, the Dutch National Coordination Point Research Data Management (LCRDM) applied in 2019 for an RDA Europe Adoption grant to update the 23 Things as well as to extend its scope to new audiences.

An LCRDM task group was set up to coordinate the nationwide adoption of the 23 Things, for which it specifically sought commitment and involvement from the Dutch RDM community. Sprints were organised to get input on a generic updated version, and target groups were invited to help draft audience-specific versions. In the end, these versions were integrated into an online 23 Things tool that is expected to enhance mutual understanding, improve collaboration and help develop training on RDM for all those involved in responsible RDM in the Netherlands.

The adoption process

Phase 1. Creating a nationwide commitment

An important goal of the project was to improve cooperation at the national level and establish a common understanding of RDM among diverse practitioners. To realise this, creating commitment to the project at the national level, was a relevant first step. The existence of a National Coordination Point Research Data Management (LCRDM) made this step relatively easy to achieve.

The LCRDM task group that drafted the RDA grant proposal was extended to represent the various research organisations and RDM stakeholders in the Netherlands, including the RDA Netherlands Node.

Deliverable: an implementation and adoption plan, including target audiences and preparatory steps for phases 2, 3 and 4. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3337869>

Phase 2. Adjusting the 23 Things content

Over the past few years, RDM policies and services have rapidly evolved and expanded. Therefore, the second phase consisted of updating the original 2015 version to reflect the current situation, including the need for additional audience-specific versions of the 23 Things. The text was also updated to include recent RDM developments, such as the FAIR principles, Open Science and the GDPR.

Deliverables: an updated, but interim, generic 23 Things version. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3465895>; and the updated, audience-specific versions of the 23 Things. These replace the interim version, as the audiences-specific versions are more up to date. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3773662>

Phase 3. Getting the 23 Things adopted

Getting the 23 Things adopted is an essential part of creating a common understanding of RDM among diverse practitioners. Including the 23 Things into existing and new training resources will contribute to the adoption by a larger community.

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Originally, the plan was to pair representatives from the different audiences with training coordinators, to see if they were willing to adopt the new versions of the 23 Things into their daily practices (audience representatives) and training activities (training coordinators). This was planned to be done in consultation with various stakeholder groups in the Netherlands. Along the way, another activity sprang up, i.e. using the information from the new, static audience-specific 23 Things versions in an interactive online tool.

Deliverables: online training resources to include 23 Things in RDM training; 23 Things tool: an overview of practical online resources. <https://www.lcrdm.nl/23things>.

Phase 4. Dissemination

Creating exposure helps to get the 23 Things acknowledged and implemented in the Netherlands. It also contributes to the acknowledgement of the RDA and LCRDM communities for providing input to the audience-specific 23 Things, creating yet another RDA hands-on output. We've published the deliverables on the LCRDM Zenodo community to broadcast information on the project, including a sustainability plan. For exposure, we used various national and international RDM oriented mailing lists, social media and the LCRDM website, also giving regular updates, webinars and (poster) presentations.

Deliverables: sustainability plan. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4110361>

Benefits of adoption and impact

Contextual 23 Things versions

An important element of the project was to get a global RDA outcome adopted by the Dutch community. In the Netherlands the original 23 Things was already in use and available in a Dutch translation, but it needed updating, and we anticipated that including typical Dutch resources and references would benefit the Dutch RDM community.

Audience-specific 23 Things

The next step was to turn the general recommendations into versions for different audiences. Sprint sessions helped to identify these audiences and create consensus on the required changes. Overall, the new versions have been inspired by the original 23 Things, but they were driven by the needs and wishes of the specific target audiences.

Online tool

Using an existing WordPress based tool as template, developed by the Utrecht University, the static audience-specific 23 Things were transformed into an interactive collection, allowing for future feedback and additions by the user community. The tool caters to the different audiences and their knowledge gaps, as users are able to select a preferred audience (e.g. data stewards, students, researchers, IT staff) and a theme (e.g. metadata, citing data, community of practice). In total, the tool includes over 250 Things.

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Training plan

Delivering a training plan was the final step in making the outcomes of the project available to the broader community. As pairing training coordinators with audience representatives to have them adopt the 23 Things into their daily practices (audience representatives) and training activities (training coordinators) was no longer possible due to the pandemic, we are convinced that the availability of online materials will also help getting the 23 Things adopted through existing and new training activities in the Dutch community.

What lessons did you learn from the adoption process?

Community

Conceiving this project as a community effort was motivating and we managed to get relevant stakeholders on board. Creating commitment at the national level was relatively easy due to the existence of a National Coordination Point Research Data Management. For the LCRDM as a national coordinator, the project proved to be a good (first) opportunity to liaise with a global organisation such as the RDA, while at the same time strengthening the Dutch community. Conversely, the adoption of an RDA output has generated exposure for the RDA in the Netherlands.

Tool

In the project, via an interactive, online tool with over 250 Things, we have created practical output that can easily be included in services of data experts. The project outcomes directly serve different audiences, from policy makers to researchers, and from students to IT people, even emerging professionals such as data stewards and research software engineers.

Most of the Things aren't typical Dutch, and therefore, the tool facilitates an international community as well, stimulating them to provide feedback and add their own Things to the tool. New audiences, themes and even disciplines could be added, and Things could be translated into different languages, thus serving the needs of the local RDM communities.

Method

The sprint sessions allowed us to dive deeper into the content. The sessions were stimulating, cooperative and inspiring. The idea of an online tool was raised during the sessions, and it was embraced with such enthusiasm that it couldn't be ignored, despite the extra time investment. Requesting input from the international community via a digital work-in-progress document was beneficial to the process as well, and easy to achieve via international mailing lists.

Initiatives

The 23 Things project has turned out to be a source of inspiration for other initiatives as well. The sprint sessions have facilitated the interaction among different people from many institutions over the Netherlands. An example is the recently started Dutch Network for Training on Research Data & Coding, which aims to coordinate efforts in the development and facilitation of research data, software and coding training activities, including a pool of trainers.

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The 23 Things project was presented at various conferences, which resulted in (plans for) co-branded workshops with other RDA nodes (among others Lithuania and Sweden).

* This adoption story is a condensed version of the paper submitted to the CODATA Journal RDA Special Collection on July 17, 2020.