

Curation is Communal: Transparency, Trust, and (In)visible Labour

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Abstract

Research about trust and transparency within the realm of research data management and sharing typically centres on accreditation and compliance. Missing from many of these conversations are the social systems and enabling structures that are built on interpersonal connections. As members of the Data Curation Network (DCN), a consortium of United States-based institutional and non-profit data repositories, we have experienced first-hand the effort required to develop and sustain interpersonal trust and the benefits it provides to curation. In this paper, we reflect on the well-documented realities of curator and labour invisibility; the importance of fostering active communities (such as the DCN); and how trust, vulnerability and connectivity among colleagues leads to better curation practices. Through an investigation into data curators in the DCN, we found that, while curation can be isolating and invisible work, having a network of trusted peers helps alleviate these burdens and makes us better curators. We conclude with practical suggestions for implementing trust and transparency in relationships with colleagues and researchers.

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Introduction

Research about trust and transparency within the realm of research data management and sharing typically centers on accreditation and compliance. This type of transparency is interlinked with accountability, particularly in technical systems and services. Missing from many of these conversations are the social systems and enabling structures that are built on interpersonal connections. While demonstrating compliance and accruing trust in technical systems is valuable, developing and sustaining trust between people, networks, and communities brings its own rewards. In particular, data curators benefit from the trust they build with researchers, end users, and other curators. This interpersonal trust leads to better curation and provides a way for the often-invisible work of curators to be seen and recognized, which leads to better overall job satisfaction.

As members of the Data Curation Network (DCN), a consortium of United States-based academic and non-profit data repositories, we have experienced first-hand the effort required to develop and sustain interpersonal trust. Through our unique community, we regularly collaborate to curate datasets and expand our skills through information sharing and peer comparisons. This labour is slow,¹ and requires thoughtfulness to cultivate and retain community cohesion. Crucially, this interconnectivity cannot exist only on an organizational level; it needs to live between individuals (Hadley & Narlock, 2023).

In this paper, we explore the trust and connectivity among our DCN colleagues from a human-centred perspective, which focuses not on outward-facing accountability, but instead on vulnerability, collaboration, and respect between people. We build on previous research around trust in repositories, qualitative studies of data curators, and conversations about ‘radical collaboration,’ meaning engaging with people from other domains in ways that might be unfamiliar or uncomfortable but that allow us to ‘achieve more together than we could separately’ (McGovern, 2018, p. 6). Through an examination of interviews with data curators in the DCN, we found that our members experience areas of tension reported in other studies of curators, particularly between invisibility and visibility, but we experience them differently. Curation work is often invisible to the outside world, but in the DCN we see each other, and this seems to change our experience of curation. The differences can be attributed, at least in part, to the community and connectivity we can access outside of our institutions through the DCN where we share our struggles (and our joys) in curation, collaborate to improve our services, and ultimately have reliable connections with other curators. Lastly, we provide practical suggestions for implementing trust and transparency in curatorial relationships. While our analysis is informed by our perspectives as institutional repository data curators, we believe our findings will resonate with other digital preservation professionals and digital curators, and that this people-forward approach to building community could be adapted by other communities of practice.

Literature Review

Below we review previous works on how invisibility, community, and trust play into data curation with a focus on data curators. Within the DCN, we use ‘data curator’

¹ For more on the Slow movement in data curation, see Thielen et al. (2023).

interchangeably with 'member' to refer to the wide variety of people in our Network who curate data as some part of their professional role, but in the literature and the real world the individuals who perform this work go by many different titles. Previous research has noted that data curation is often conflated with other research data management services (Hudson Vitale et al., 2017). Similarly, Tammaro et al. (2019) found that 'data curation positions are frequently advertised under a wide variety of titles often with additional data-related responsibilities, such as data science or data references services, that [do not] directly constitute data curation per se' (p. 96). As the Association of Research Libraries demonstrated in *Research Library Issues* 296, the human labour of research data management comes from professionals in a wide variety of fields, and this diversity is a strength (Ruttenberg & Waraksa, 2018). Although they may come from libraries, archives, repositories, museums, and other institutions, throughout this paper, we take a functional approach and use the term 'data curator' to describe individuals who spend a portion of their professional time curating data. By this we mean someone who is doing the work that 'enables data discovery and retrieval, maintains data quality, adds value, and provides for re-use over time through activities including authentication, archiving, metadata creation, digital preservation, and transformation.'²

(In)visibility

In 2003, as digital repositories were starting to proliferate, Lynch offered a service-oriented definition of the institutional repository as 'a set of services that a university offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials' (p. 2). By focusing on services over technological infrastructure, Lynch set the stage for a people-forward approach to repository work that highlights the importance of curation services. Despite this people-forward beginning, the human components of repositories have remained largely invisible. In the early years of digital repositories, even curators themselves struggled to see and name the wide range of services they were providing (Rieh et al., 2008). Since then, numerous studies have mapped curation services, roles, and responsibilities (including Bishop et al., 2022; Lafferty-Hess et al., 2020; Lee & Stvilia, 2017; Perry & Netscher, 2022; Tammaro et al., 2019; Tenopir et al., 2017 & 2019), but curators themselves have been less visible.

There are many potential reasons why this critical work often fades into the background. Except for recent efforts in the biocuration community, curators are normally not openly named or credited for their role in data publication (Hatos et al., 2021). A few qualitative studies shed light on this typically invisible work (Darch et al., 2020 & 2021; Nadim, 2016; Plantin, 2019 & 2021; Thomer et al., 2022).³ Plantin (2019) argues that, like other professional cleaners, curators erase themselves from the final data, and that 'presenting data as a pristine product conceals all the work needed to process and prepare such data for publication' (p. 57). The focus is on the data. Similarly, repositories themselves fade into the background as they 'continually refer to an elsewhere: submitter, phenomenon, user, community' (Nadim, 2016, p. 499). Thomer et al. (2022) in particular draw together the findings from these previous qualitative studies and connect curation to other kinds of invisible work that is often perceived as magical and mysterious. All of these studies demonstrate that data curation

² Data Curation Network 'Mission and Vision': <https://datacurationnetwork.org/about/our-mission/>

³ Although these studies employ a range of terms, for simplicity's sake, we refer to all their participants as 'curators' and to their workplaces as 'repositories.'

is part of our shared information infrastructure, and when information infrastructure is working well, the user only notices the information, not the work that went into gathering, structuring and presenting it (Star & Bowker, 2000).

One of the advantages of qualitative research is that it can reveal interpersonal complexities, and the studies reviewed here demonstrate the tensions between visibility and invisibility that curators experience. Although curators are often invisible to the outside world, when multiple curators work together, there can be a hyper-visibility internally among colleagues. In the studies by Plantin (2019 & 2021) and Thomer et al. (2022), meticulous curation logs create visibility but strictly within the workplace. Logs are used to ensure quality and consistency across teams of curators, but are not included in the publication, making the curators visible for critique and control but not for credit.

These investigations illuminate the work of data curators focused on a particular domain. Our study adds an additional perspective: that of curators at institutional repositories who work with data from any discipline. It also offers a contrast to the tension between visibility and invisibility these studies revealed. DCN curators are visible to each other, but primarily for support rather than critique. This is explored further in the Results and Discussion.

Community

Community also emerged as a common theme in qualitative studies of curators. Although curation can be isolating work, curators often see themselves as contributing to a broader community or as striving to do so. Nadim (2016) identified community service as an 'absolutely central feature' in interviews with curators (p. 508). In Plantin's (2021) experience, curators resisted feelings of isolation resulting from the invisibility of their labour by creating community amongst themselves. Thomer et al. (2022) propose a 'craftful' model of curation rooted in community and visibility, in which curation is 'not just a rote following of standards and protocols but rather a creative, ongoing conversation with the data, with one's colleagues, and with one's community' (p. 23). This people-forward 'craftful' model echoes how DCN members describe our community, which requires trust in individuals not just in processes or standards.

Trust

In 2000, Lynch observed that "virtually all determination of authenticity or integrity in the digital environment ultimately depends on trust...yet it is elusive," and the human element of it remains elusive (Roles of Identity and Trust section). Previous studies of repositories and trust have shown that, historically, the trusted digital repository movement conceptualized trust at the repository level and did not sufficiently account for end user conceptions of trust (Bak, 2016; Donaldson & Conway, 2015; Prieto, 2009; Yoon, 2014). Contemporary standards- such as the TRUST (Transparency, Responsibility, User focus, Sustainability, and Technology) Principles and the CoreTrustSeal- still measure trustworthiness through assessments of technology, infrastructure and policy, and only address interpersonal aspects indirectly (Lin et al., 2020; CoreTrustSeal Standards and Certification Board, 2022). Similarly, the data publication workflows and data management lifecycle models that inform repository policies are usually designed from a data-centric viewpoint that fails to recognize the interpersonal aspects of data curation like establishing trust with stakeholders (Kross & Guo, 2021).

In order to work with data, curators first have to establish trust with data producers, which requires a combination of technical skills and social capabilities. Curators must

strike a difficult balance: they need to demonstrate enough technical prowess to engender trust in their recommendations, while also making space for and welcoming the domain expertise of data producers. Curators do this by drawing from their own research experience to find common ground with data producers (Tammaro et al., 2019), and by demonstrating a ‘caring curiosity’ when common ground is hard to find (Nurnberger, 2018). This balance of expertise, curiosity, and social grace helps to ‘bridge the gap’ and build effective working relationships between data curators and data producers (Kross & Guo, 2021). Studies of job descriptions show how essential these bridge-building skills are. In job postings for digital curation positions, interpersonal skills were valued as highly as technical skills (Tammaro et al., 2019).

In addition to actively establishing trust with data producers, curators also indirectly build trust with the end users who access and reuse published data. End users depend on curators and the curatorial process to feel confident that data is accurate, well-documented, and usable. Since curation work is usually invisible, it is difficult to measure how curators impact end users’ conceptions of trust. However, studies do show that two areas curators typically focus on- data documentation and metadata- are key to end users’ evaluations of data trustworthiness (Yakel et al., 2013; Yoon, 2014, 2017; Yoon & Lee, 2019). Furthermore, human connections to a repository seem to increase end user trust. Interviews show that data repository end users place more trust in data when they can evaluate the people responsible for it. In interviews with data repository end users, Frank et al. (2017) found that end users trust data more when they feel a sense of closeness to it through connections to individual people like data producers and repository staff. Yoon (2014) likewise found that while many end users did not know how repository staff were involved in data publication, those who did identified staff expertise as important to repository trustworthiness. Overall, end users associated trustworthiness with a ‘lack of deception’ about the data and the decisions made throughout the data management process, which includes curation, whether end users were aware of it or not (Yoon, 2014). Although they do not directly measure trust between curators and end users, this research suggests that end users are more likely to trust a repository when they have some visibility of the curation process and of the people involved.

Methodology

In order to further understand curators’ experiences of their work and the tension with curation visibility, we turned to our community of practice: the Data Curation Network. At the time of this writing, the DCN has 19 member institutions, 17 academic repositories and 2 non-profit repositories, and currently has a total of 59 individual members representing those institutions. Most of our members represent institutional repositories, and therefore provide a valuable complement to the qualitative studies discussed above that focused primarily on curators at disciplinary repositories. While there have been extensive works on the structure and function of the DCN (e.g., Carlson et al., 2023; Hadley & Narlock, 2023), here we focus particularly on the experiences of individual curators.

Our research asks two questions:

1. How does the people-forward approach of the DCN impact the people in the Network?

2. Can this approach and membership in the DCN make us better, more trustworthy curators?

In pursuit of answers, we conducted a qualitative analysis of Curators' Corners, semi-structured peer-to-peer interviews conducted by curators with curators and published on the DCN Blog. The DCN began the Curators' Corner interview project in 2019, and as of August 2023, 35 have been completed and published. Interview pairs are formed using a process akin to the snowball sampling method wherein the interviewee becomes the next interviewer. Interviewers have agency in the selection process. Each interviewer picks an interviewee from a list of available curators, occasionally with input from the DCN Director. Interviewers are provided with a list of 10 standard questions and select those that are of most interest to them. The questions are presented as prompts. Pairs are encouraged to build on the standard questions and allow the conversation to flow organically. The interviews themselves are scheduled by the interview pairs and conducted over Zoom or email. Afterwards, interviewers submit a blog post summarizing their conversations in a question-and-answer format, which interviewees are invited to read and edit prior to publication.

For this study, we examined 34 of the 35 interviews that were published between August 15, 2019 and August 22, 2023. We excluded one interview with one of the authors of this paper. The 34 interviewees in our sample represent 18 institutions. Participants were primarily employed at R1 institutions⁴ that operate institutional repositories for sharing and archiving original research data generated at the university. The DCN does not systematically collect demographic information about curators, and it was therefore not considered for this study. Although Curators' Corners were created for publication and are openly available on the DCN website, we contacted each participating curator to inform them of our research project and our use of this publicly available data.

We focused on responses to two interview questions about the value of curation, which were answered by nearly all interviewees⁵:

1. Why is data curation important to you?
2. Why is the Data Curation Network important?

In answering these questions about value and impact, curators identified the aspects of curation and the DCN that are most important in their view. Although they were not explicitly asked to provide definitions, what interviewees chose to speak about reveals what they believe to be defining characteristics of both data curation and the DCN. Responses to both questions were compiled in a spreadsheet in random order and each participant was assigned a number. Using an inductive approach, we read through all responses multiple times to identify recurring themes. We then refined the most prominent themes into codes and applied those codes to the responses. All decisions for defining and applying codes were agreed upon by all three authors.

While the Curators' Corners provide valuable insights into how curators think and speak about curation, they have limitations as an object of study. First, the Curators' Corner interviews are public, and the interviewees are clearly identified, which naturally may have led interviewees to focus on positive feedback and suppress critiques. Second, the interviews were not designed to address research questions. This research provides a starting place, but more targeted questions may reveal more nuanced insights. Lastly,

⁴ Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education: <https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/>

⁵ One of the 34 interviews did not include Question 2.

DCN curators primarily represent institutional repositories at U.S. institutions with very high rates of research activities. By contrast, the qualitative studies examined here for comparison focus on curators working with data from a particular domain. Differences observed between the two groups may be due to the DCN, inherent differences between different types of repositories, or both. Furthermore, curators from institutional repositories outside the DCN and from other parts of the globe are not represented here. However, there are so few published accounts of curators' reflections on their work, that the Curators' Corners give voice to perspectives not otherwise represented in the literature.

Results

Qualitative analysis of curators' answers to these two questions revealed three key themes. First, the people-forward approach of the DCN was clearly reflected in how members talk about curation as a service provided by and for people. Building off that people-forward approach, members placed great value on the community of curators, especially in times of stress and uncertainty. Finally, we found that members believe the DCN improves curation at both the individual and institutional level. Individual members become better curators through shared knowledge and standards, and institutions expand their capacity through shared labour and leveraged resources. Overall, this people-forward community approach has the potential to fundamentally change curation from an isolated to a communal process.

People-Forward Approach

When asked why data curation is important, most curators (23 of 34) talked about curation in people-forward terms. Their discussions centred on people who work with data more than the data itself, and 'the humaneness behind data management' (Participant 32). They spoke about educating researchers, helping them get credit for their work, and saving the time and energy of end users reusing the data. They also spoke about the joy of working with others: 'When I think about why curation is important to me personally and why I like to do it, I think it comes down to the idea that we're helping the researchers' (21). Several also defined curation in terms that emphasize the human in the loop; terms like 'peer-review,' providing a 'human touch,' and seeing data through 'different eyes' were emphasized by multiple curators. This emphasis on the 'humaneness behind data management' (32) shows that the people-forward perspective of the DCN really is reflected by and a reflection of our members.

Value of Community

Considering this people-forward perspective, it is no surprise that members placed great value on the community aspect of the DCN. Nearly every interviewee (27 of 33) spoke about community when asked about the value of the DCN. Their answers show that curators personally feel seen and supported by their fellow members. DCN members recognize that curation can be lonely, invisible work, and they appreciate the opportunity to connect with others in the field.

'Data is a scholarly product that is increasingly important, and curation is important maintenance work, and both are often overlooked...Data curation tends to be very individual and isolated work. It's good to create a social network so people can collaborate.' (2)

For members, the social aspect of the DCN runs much deeper than a typical networking opportunity. Members develop a level of interpersonal trust that allows for shared vulnerability.

'[My colleague] and I are just two people working in a really big library here at [our institution], so the DCN has given us a really wonderful, lovely circle of colleagues to talk to— and be vulnerable with— about our work. It's been a great resource when we don't know what we're doing or we are trying to think through a problem. We learn from one another and have built this community. It's a really positive influence in our lives and helps us realize that we're not the only people who are really interested in this kind of thing.' (29)

Multiple members mentioned turning to their DCN colleagues for support in times of stress or uncertainty because it is the kind of community 'where you feel like you can ask for things that might be a little bit sticky or tricky and know that you'll be getting advice from somebody who's been through something the same or similar' (14). That shared vulnerability and trust creates a support network that really works.

'It's such a thoughtful community. And it's so functional, it seems like such a basic word to use, but it's amazing how functional it really is. I love that it's just a community of people providing expertise and guidance, enabling growth, and providing emotional support. It's really unique and wonderful.' (28)

Better Curation

This 'thoughtful community' leads to individual professional growth. 'Everybody's very welcoming, very friendly. I feel super supported and I think a lot of my growth is due to the DCN' (32). Most members talked about how belonging to the Network leads to better curation. Two clear themes emerged in terms of improved curation: individual curators expanded their own knowledge through educational resources and shared best practices; and institutions benefited from increased capacity and access to a pool of curators with a range of subject-matter expertise not available to any single institution.

When asked about the value of the DCN, most respondents (22 of 33) spoke about educational resources and learning opportunities such as workshops, primers, and the benefit of sharing knowledge with other members, especially in a field with seemingly constant technological churn.

'I do think that it is essential to share knowledge about how to curate, particularly as things change— we're dealing with new sizes of data, new genres of data, more interdisciplinary use of data which has new documentation requirements— all these things require constant knowledge sharing among the community of people that are responsible for curation.' (6)

One member explicitly tied this knowledge sharing to improved curation: 'On a personal level, I love the community itself, and the fact that DCN members are my peers. The way in which expertise is shared across the community makes me a better curator' (21). In addition to the individual benefits experienced by curators, half of respondents (17 of 33) also mentioned how the DCN expanded the capacity of their institution by pooling resources and allowing members to ask for help curating datasets outside their areas of expertise.

'I think the DCN ultimately improves the quality of the data curation that's possible by facilitating a community-wide division of labor that allows all of us to curate datasets that are broadly within the domain of our methodological or substantive expertise.' (23)

Apart from shared curatorial labor, the DCN also expands the capacity of member institutions by sharing processes, so each institution does not have to spend time and resources inventing the same workflow. 'If we can create a successful proof of concept it could be applicable to any institution that does this work. The Data Curation Network is thinking beyond the institutional level, and we're exploring how to leverage capacity across institutions.' (18)

With shared knowledge, standards, labor, and resources, '[t]he level of curation and augmentation of data that we can provide as a network is greater than what we can do on our own' (11). It can also transform how we approach curation.

'What I've really gotten out of the DCN is that the process of curating data is communal and cultural; it doesn't have to be a solo enterprise...When curation is done well, curators are talking with each other and other people about the data they are encountering and workshopping decisions. Having that cultural model is important.' (20)

Discussion

The Curators' Corner interviews demonstrate that DCN members identify with the themes of visibility, invisibility, and community that appear in other qualitative studies of data curators, but that we experience them differently, and that the DCN community adds considerable value to our professional lives. DCN members recognize that curation work can be isolating. Most of our members work in small teams with perhaps a few people doing some form of curation. Like curators in previous studies, our members also recognize that this work is often invisible. We do not know of any repositories in our network that credit curators in data publications. However, the Curators' Corners interviews clearly indicate that DCN curators do feel seen and supported by other members of the community, and that they found the potential for collaboration to be transformative. Future research is needed to more deeply explore the communal curation process and its impact on quality and stakeholders' perceptions of trustworthiness, but DCN members' experiences suggest that one way to improve curation is for curators to see each other. The people-forward community of the DCN, based on interpersonal trust, allows curators to advance their own skills, scale up their services to researchers, and overall improve the quality of data curation services.

With this in mind, we suggest that a key draw of the Network is the opportunity for data curators to see and be seen. There is an opportunity not only to learn how colleagues are curating and how your own work can be improved, but also to demonstrate your expertise by curating datasets for colleagues. We identify this as a people-forward approach to curation, in that we lead with our humanity and vulnerability to foster meaningful connections between members and use that to guide the work of the DCN broadly. In all our efforts, we recognize that we are our best when we bring our entire selves: when we accept and embrace our individual perspectives, skills, and shortcomings. We often describe this as our 'radical interdependence,' in which we rely on each other, live our values, and embrace our own vulnerability (Carlson et al., 2023).

This people-forward approach to curation extends beyond our work with one another to our work with our researchers and with the larger society, and this approach does not come at the expense of efficiency or technical capabilities. Data curation requires trust in essential human infrastructure: academics and depositors, data reusers, as well as each other.

In order to cultivate a people-forward ethos, help manifest invisible labor, and build trust in communities of practice, we recommend the following based on our experiences:

1. **Highlight curators and their efforts on public-facing websites, such as your institutional repository or department website.** Putting names, pictures, and biographies of curators on a website goes a long way in literally making visible the human infrastructure in data curation and can help researchers know more about their collaborators.
2. **Create avenues for engagement with other curators at your institution or in your area.** At the DCN, we hold bi-weekly check-ins with curators in our community. These meetings consist of discussions on specific topics, and open, unstructured conversation. This gives us dedicated time to engage with one another as well as the space to address short-term issues, or even just chat. If regular check-ins are not possible, creating a shared workspace, like a Slack channel or mailing list, can foster connection. We use both. While data curation is often envisioned as a primarily technical task, it is also important to support the personnel. As Tammamaro et al. (2019) argue, data curation is 'not only about technology and curating data but also about 'curating people' who create data' (p. 102).
3. **Develop outward-facing documentation describing the steps your institution's curators take when curating data.** The process of data curation can be confusing for those not fully entrenched in the activities. Highlighting the steps curators take when approaching a dataset helps demystify a curator's role and reinforces better data management habits for researchers. Open documentation also helps foster a community of trust: researchers will know what to expect when they submit their data for curation and end users can see what steps the institution typically takes to ensure data quality.
4. **Reframe how curation is described to researchers and depositors.** 'Curation' can mean different things, even within the field of information science. Therefore, it is important to create a sense of shared language and understanding. As mentioned in several Curators' Corner interviews, curation can be thought of as a type of peer review. By reframing curatorial activities as a process already familiar to most researchers, we are able to better express the

importance of curation to open research, help justify curatorial recommendations, and clarify our roles as data stewards.

We recognize that some of these tasks may feel simple or obvious. However, it is important to make the ‘obvious’ explicit, and sometimes the best course of action is a simple start. While the above steps can be taken within smaller groups, such as in a region, an academic institution, or a specific repository, we also have recommendations for the curation community aimed at revealing invisible labour and fostering trust:

1. **Seek out and include curator opinions and perspectives when creating new technological infrastructures, certifications, recommendations, or guiding principles.**
2. **Create, maintain, and utilize clear, cross-subject definitions regarding the expectations and responsibilities associated with various roles in the data curation process.** As a community, we still have work to do to develop and publicize definitions and an ontology related to data curation that outlines the roles of users, producers, and stewards.
3. **In documentation and research, create space to discuss both the technological and human-centred aspects of curation.** Best practices and guiding principles for repositories and curation should emphasize both the technological infrastructure and the humans driving it.

These recommendations are one point in what we hope will be a continuing conversation with the curation community. The Curators’ Corners interviews demonstrate the value in recognizing our individual limitations and working through complex challenges together. In that spirit of radical collaboration, how can we make curation more visible to our researchers and our communities? How can we leverage community expertise to assist each other as well as upskill ourselves? How do we want to define our own cultural models of curation?

Conclusion

Through an investigation into data curators, using existing research, original qualitative data, and our own experiences, we contributed evidence to the study of curation work and how it intersects with notions of visibility, community, and trust. Our analysis of the Curators’ Corner interviews builds on previous studies of the tensions in data curation work, particularly between visibility and invisibility, and isolation and community. The experiences of DCN curators suggest that one way to alleviate these tensions is for curators to see each other in a people-forward and supportive network, and that this community approach can transform and improve the way we curate. In order to further explore the impact of community on curation, discussions around repository trustworthiness should give more consideration to the kind of interpersonal trust that DCN members have found to be so transformative. Although we focused on data curators, we believe these findings will resonate with the diverse group of professionals in the broader curation community because our primary focus was the people not the data. We concluded with concrete suggestions for nurturing communities of practice between curators, with stakeholders, and within the greater community.

As curators, we have often felt invisible, isolated, or even misunderstood. We have found it difficult to straddle the line between technical prowess and professional curiosity, while also incorporating humanity and relationship-building into our workflows. We may be librarians, archivists, or data scientists, but in the DCN we are all curators, and we have found that curation practices are not successful or sustainable in a vacuum. We need to rely on others, on that cultural model referenced in the Curators' Corners, to use others' expertise to help 'bridge the gap' (Kross & Guo, 2021). After all, as one DCN curator reflects, the 'process of curating data is communal...it doesn't have to be a solo enterprise' (20).

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