To begin using DMPTool, a user must set up an account and log in. There are two account types: an individual user and an institutional user. An individual user is someone who is not affiliated with an institution that has subscribed to an institutional account and must therefore create a user name and password, and register an e-mail address. If your institution has subscribed with DMPTool, you can select your institution in a drop-down menu and use your institutional credentials to log in. Once logged in, you can begin by either copying from an existing public data management plan or choose to create a new plan (Figure 2).

If you create a new plan, you will be prompted to select the funding agency you are applying to in order to ensure that your plan will meet that particular funding agency’s requirements. After you title your plan and provide a submission date and solicitation number, you are given the option of selecting who can view it (public, institutional affiliates, or private) and of adding co-owners. If you add co-owners,
an e-mail is automatically generated to those individuals alerting them that they are co-owners and providing them a link to the plan. They will be granted both read and write access, permissions that the owner can change at will, to enable collaboration on a plan.

Once these settings are decided, you are prompted to write individual sections of a five-section plan. You are given a text box to write in, instructions on what information to include in this section, prompt questions about your data, and links to additional resources that may help you write your plan, such as more detailed information about your funder’s requirements or best practices regarding data management (Figure 3).

After each section of the plan is complete, you are provided export options in PDF and RTF formats as well as a print button. Your plan is saved to your account which you can return to at any time to edit or to change visibility or co-ownership settings (Figure 4).

Critical Evaluation

STRENGTHS

The feature allowing researchers to publically share their data management plans will likely be attractive for other researchers looking for examples to follow.

An individual or organization does not have to remain current with a grant funder’s data management requirements. This is particularly helpful for when a funding agency’s data management requirements are difficult to locate or when a researcher is applying to a funding agency they are unfamiliar with.

Institutional subscriptions have several value-adding features above that of an individual account. Researchers using a DMPTool account with an institutional subscription may be offered university resources available only to those affiliated with it. Institutional repositories may be suggested as places to house the data after the grant; library and IT staff or resources may be utilized to aid in the curation process and data management plans may be sent to an institutional reviewer to
help craft the strongest data management plan possible.

The data management plan export options are easy to use. In general, the Web site is well designed, has a clean and intuitive interface with an overall pleasant user experience.

The DMPTool Web site provides additional resources such as data management primers, training materials, promotional materials, databases to find repositories, and an excellent set of recommendations on general data management guidance.

While the California Digital Library is responsible for its management, the code for DMPTool is open source and available for download on GitHub.

**WEAKNESSES**

The time it takes to set up an individual account and register an e-mail may be a barrier for adoption for some researchers, especially if their grant application is due soon and the data management plan is one of the last things to complete.

Clicking the News and FAQ links on the home page bumps the user out to a new site, and this is a navigability issue. While this isn’t damning in terms of usability, it is initially disorientating.

Lastly, if co-owners are to be added to a plan, they must have already logged into the DMPTool prior to being added; this requires a bit more organization and participation for all users involved.

**COMPETING PRODUCTS**

DM Ponline is supported by the Digital Curation Centre, though it is targeted to researchers applying to European funding agencies. DM Ponline has predictably similar features to DMPTool as the Digital Curation Centre became involved in developing DMPTool.

DM Builder from the University of Alberta attempts to perform the same functions as DMPTool; however, it fails to match or surpass DMPTool in any of its features and is not recommended.

Many universities are providing data management plan templates online. While the quality of their content is often good, they suffer from two potential shortcomings. First, they are general in nature so as to apply to the largest amount of grant funding agency’s requirements. If an agency has a non-standard requirement, such as data deposition into a particular repository, these templates will not address them. Secondly, grant funder’s requirements are likely to change over time. It is difficult for individual universities to keep abreast of these changes and update their templates to reflect those changes in a timely manner.

**Contract Provisions**

N/A

**Authentication**

Individual users must create a user name and password and provide an e-mail address to create an account. If your institution has a subscription with DMPTool, your institutional credentials will grant you access to an account via Shibboleth, LDAP, or whichever identity management system your institution supports. If you have an individual account, you can change your user name or password at will. For institutional subscriptions, your user name and password are dependent upon your institution’s policies. DMPTool also integrates with ORCID, a researcher identification system.

**Author’s References**


DMPTool Review Scores Composite: ★★★★ 1/2

Content: ★★★★ 1/2
Quality suggestions and guidance for writing a data management plan, provides good resources, and would be a valuable asset for those writing a grant application. Sign up and registration may seem onerous to some individual account users.

User Interface/Searchability: ★★★★ 1/2
It’s straightforward, easy to use, and aesthetically pleasing, though the News and FAQ sections should be kept under the main site.

Pricing: NA
Contract Options: NA


About the Author
Shea Swauger is a Data Management Librarian and Assistant Professor at Colorado State University. He received his MLS from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2013. Before he came to Colorado State University, he worked as an Assistant Data Curator for Dryad Digital Repository. His research interests are in data curation, open data, Open Access, and digital preservation.

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