Research Data Management plan checklist
(to get you started)

You might not have all the answers to these questions immediately but they are designed to get you thinking about Research Data Management in any research you might be doing

- What is the general subject discipline (domain, field) to which your research data relates?
  
  You might say mathematics, biology, or art history

- What is the exact nature (range, scope) of your research data?
  
  This can be pretty much anything…perhaps only you will know!

- Who will own the data arising from your research, and the intellectual property rights relating to them?
  
  This could be you, your organisation, or even your funder depending on how things have been agreed

- What format(s) will you store your data in the short term after acquisition?
  
  This can be as simple as a Microsoft Office 2010 Excel spreadsheet saved in compatibility mode, or something more specific such as specialist software. Either way, making sure that whatever format(s) you use can be opened successfully either a week from now or a year from now is really important

- Where will you store your data in the short term?
  
  This could be simply on your laptop or on an external hard drive. Think about whether this short term solution is appropriate (considering laptops can get stolen) and maybe take advantage of any server storage you might have access too as this is often backed up regularly, giving some extra security for your work

- Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?
  
  This might be you or if you’re part of a team, a designated person. Or you might just be responsible for your own data as part of an overall project. Just make sure you know who is responsible for what early on

- How frequently will your research data be backed up for short-term data security?
  
  This will depend on how you’re storing it and where. Some backups will be automatic; some will need to be done manually

- Where will your research data be archived for long-term preservation?
  
  This depends on your data and what requirements your funder and/or publisher might have. It’s often good practice to archive your data so other researchers can use it or request it if they want to verify your findings. There are lots of different archiving options out there
• When will your research data be moved to a secure archive for long-term preservation and publication?

Knowing when this will happen will help you plan especially if you have a long-term project that needs constant access to the data, or if it is ready to be stored immediately.

• Under what data-sharing license will you publish your research data?

Depending on why you’re archiving your data and how, you might also want to make it available for sharing with the research community. Creative Commons licences are a good way forward here, but your archive might have its own system as may your funder and/or publisher requirements.

• Who will decide which of your research data are worth preserving?

This depends on your project. You might make the decision or a project lead/person responsible for the data might. Just make sure these roles are defined early on.

• Who will be responsible for your data, once you have left your present research group?

Anyone can leave a research group at any time for any reason. Even if you think you’ll be with the group right until the very end, life can get in the way even if that means something as simple as you being ill with the flu for a few weeks. So have a plan in place so other people know where your data is stored, how it is stored and what software you might need to run it, so all your hard work isn’t lost.

These are just a few questions to get you thinking about your Research Data Management strategy. Some of the questions may be far too advanced for your specific needs or not advanced enough! For more guidance and information, check out the Digital Curation Centre’s website: http://www.dcc.ac.uk/

Don’t forget to talk to your librarian, IT Officer and other relevant people in your department. The University of Cambridge also has a Research Data Management website and team to help you: http://www.data.cam.ac.uk/

Adapted from the Oxford DMPonline Project blog