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Big Data, Little Data, or No Data? Scholarship, Stewardship, and Interdisciplinary Research

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While the popularity of “big data” reflects the growth of data-intensive research, “little data” remains the norm in those many fields where evidence is scarce and labor-intensive to acquire. Until recently, data was considered part of the process of scholarship, essential but largely invisible. In the “big data” era, data have become valuable products to be captured, shared, reused, and stewarded for the long term. They also have become contentious intellectual property to be protected. Public policy leans toward open access to research data, but rarely provides the public investment necessary to sustain access. Enthusiasm for big data is obscuring the complexity and diversity of data in scholarship and the challenges for stewardship. Data practices are local, varying from field to field, individual to individual, and country to country. As the number and variety of research partners expands, so do the difficulties of sharing, reusing, and sustaining access to data. Until the larger questions of knowledge infrastructures and stewardship are addressed by research communities, “no data” may become the norm for many fields. This talk will explore the stakes and stakeholders in research data, in interdisciplinary research, and implications for policy and practice, drawing upon the presenter’s book, *Big Data, Little Data, No Data: Scholarship in the Networked World* (MIT Press, 2015), and subsequent research.

[Christine L. Borgman](#), Distinguished Professor and Presidential Chair in Information Studies at UCLA, is the author of more than 250 [publications](#) in information studies, computer science, and communication. These include three books from MIT Press: [Big Data, Little Data, No Data: Scholarship in the Networked World](#) (2015), winner of the 2015 American Publishers Award for Professional and Scholarly Excellence ([PROSE Award](#)) in Computing and Information Sciences; [Scholarship in the Digital Age: Information, Infrastructure, and the Internet](#) (2007); and [From Gutenberg to the Global Information Infrastructure: Access to Information in a Networked World](#) (2000). The latter two books won the [Best Information Science Book of the Year](#) award from the [Association for Information Science and Technology](#) (ASIST). She is a Fellow of the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) and of the [Association for Computing Machinery](#). At UCLA, she directs the [Center for Knowledge Infrastructures](#) with funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and other sources.