Managing Access to Restricted Data in Universities: The Johns Hopkins Experience

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JHU Landscape and Restricted Data

• Extremely decentralized university
• Enterprise IT departments unable to provide deeply customized systems and watchdog services.
• Primary data vs. secondary data
• Lots of grant money
• Typically departments and individual projects come up with own solutions for data housing/storage.
Library Restricted Data Room Proposal

- Proposed to Dean of Libraries during call for special funding
- Primarily for graduate student researchers
- Access control methods
- Hardware availability and allowances
- Consulting vs. facilitating
Policies and Procedures

• The whole policy can be viewed here

• Nutshell
  – Researcher responsible for own paperwork.
  – Researcher responsible for own equipment.
  – Must follow specific security requirements. E.g. raw files stay in room.
  – No visitors!
  – Keep your ID card with you.
Funding and Maintenance

• All initial funding to build the room and equipment came from the Dean of the Sheridan Libraries.
• One library IT technician and I serve as computing admins.
• Sheridan Libraries support services manages card swipe access.
In Sum....

The Good

• Graduate students with no secure space now have space.
• Serves as education/training in how to properly access and use restricted data.
• Gets people thinking that data is just another form of information, so the library is a logical place for help.

The Not So Good

• Needing specialized - aka expensive - software (e.g Mplus or MATLAB).
• Limited size of room.
• As a consultant rather than facilitator not always knowing when something should have been done.
• Other assumptions...

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Where we *hope* to be

• This is a starting rather than stopping point.
• To go larger, we would need more staff.
• Potential partnering across library IT for server development (even that is decentralized).
• Potential support from particular schools (e.g. JHU Bloomberg School of Public Health).
• Stay tuned....