

Data organisation practices

Introduction to Data Management Practices course

NBIS DM Team

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<https://nbisweden.github.io/module-organising-data-dm-practices/>



- What to consider for maintaining data organization strategies in a project
- What to consider when settling for a file structure
- Understanding good practices for data storage, processing and documentation (**FAIR-ification**)



Credit: This image was created by Scriberia for The Turing Way community and is used under a CC-BY licence.

You have been recruited to the Famous lab!

Your research project is a continuation of previous work by PhD, Wang Fang (王芳).

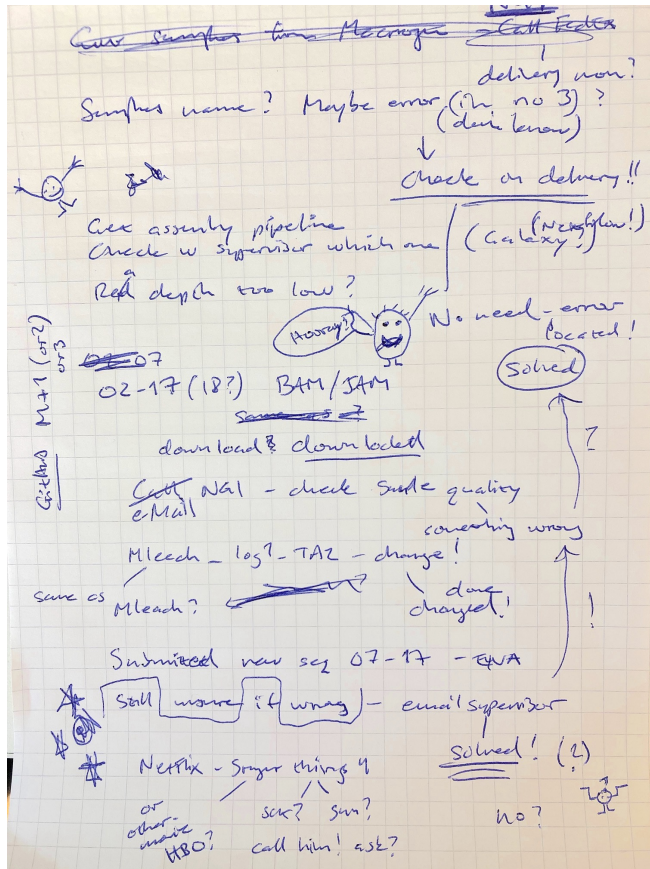
You inherit a zipped folder, and a digital copy of the lab notes.

The road to success is open!

... And this is what you get...

Exercise 1

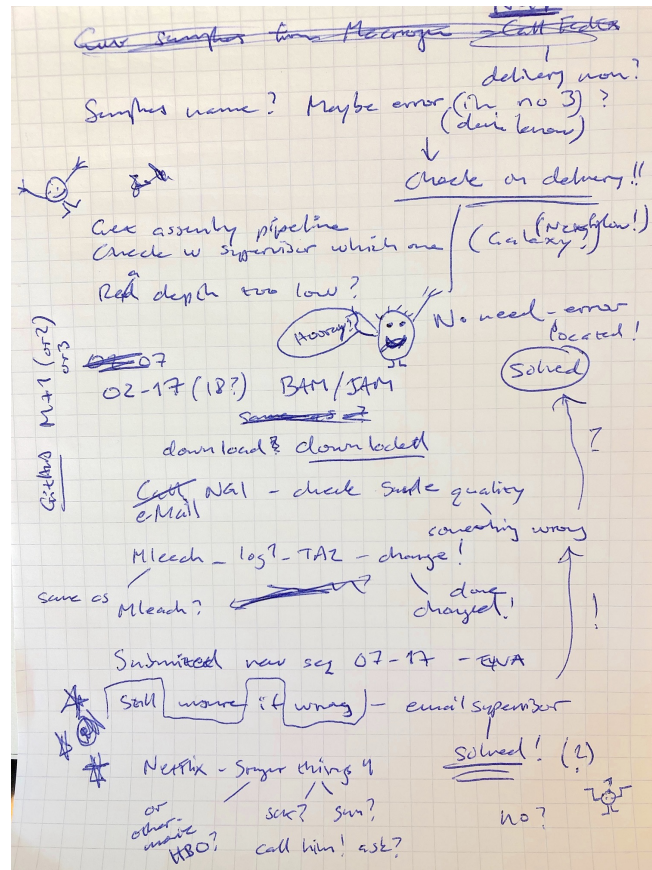
Can you list at least five major issues with the lab documentation in the image?



... And this is what you get...

Exercise 2

What kind of general questions does the information raise about the work done in the lab?

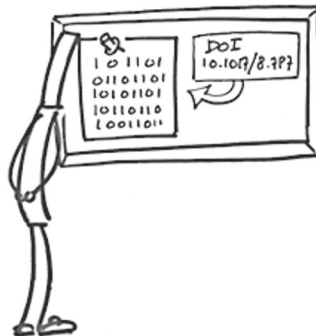


- Why do we need to keep good quality records?
- Ensures data, analysis and results to be transparent, reproducible and traceable – Accountability!
- Keeping good records prevents issues, misunderstandings, and quality of subsequent research
In cumulative science mistakes can result in cascade effects
- Reduces the risk of data mistakes, data manipulation and research fraud
- Promotes open science and safeguards integrity of science itself
- Good records promote data and documentation being ...

FAIR DATA PRINCIPLES



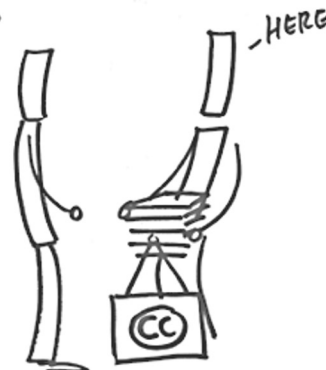
FINDABLE



ACCESSIBLE



INTEROPERABLE



REUSABLE

Adopting good practices for data organization, makes research data more **FAIR**

- Colleagues

People I collaborate with
must understand what I
do with the data

- Scientific community

Scientists wanting to reuse or
review my data can find and
understand the data

- Society

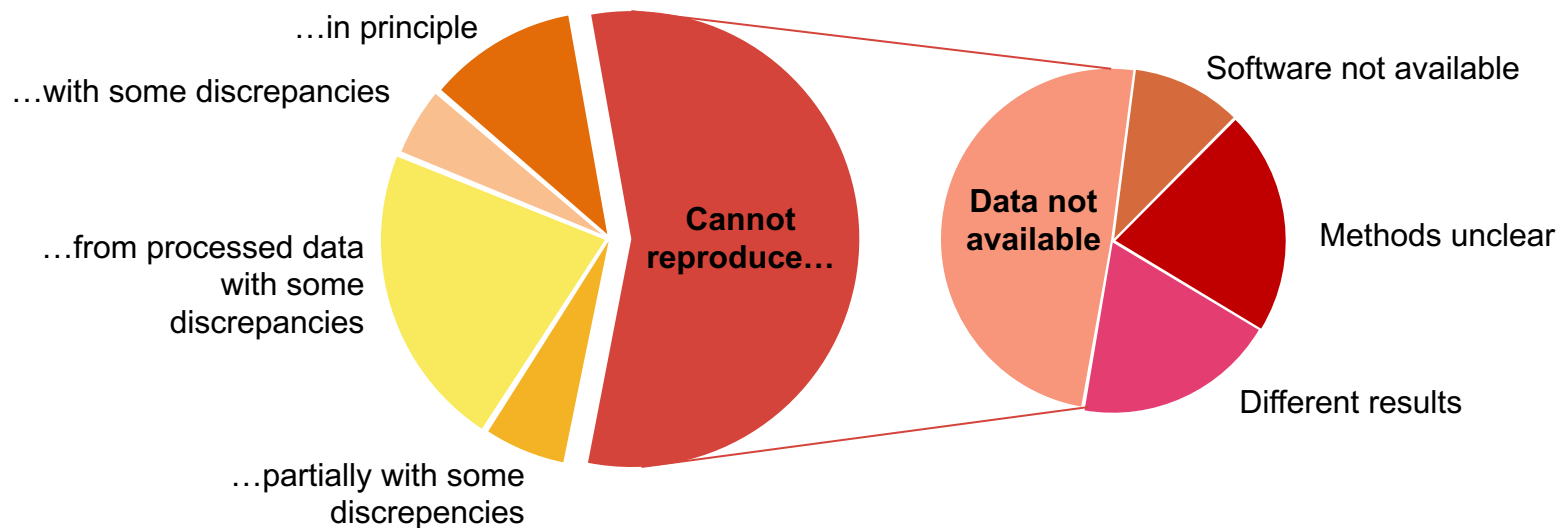
The society funding my
research have a right to know
what happens to the data

- Yourself

Your future You will not always
remember what Your present
You decided today

Reproduction of data analyses in 18 articles on microarray-based gene expression profiling published in Nature Genetics in 2005–2006:

Can reproduce...



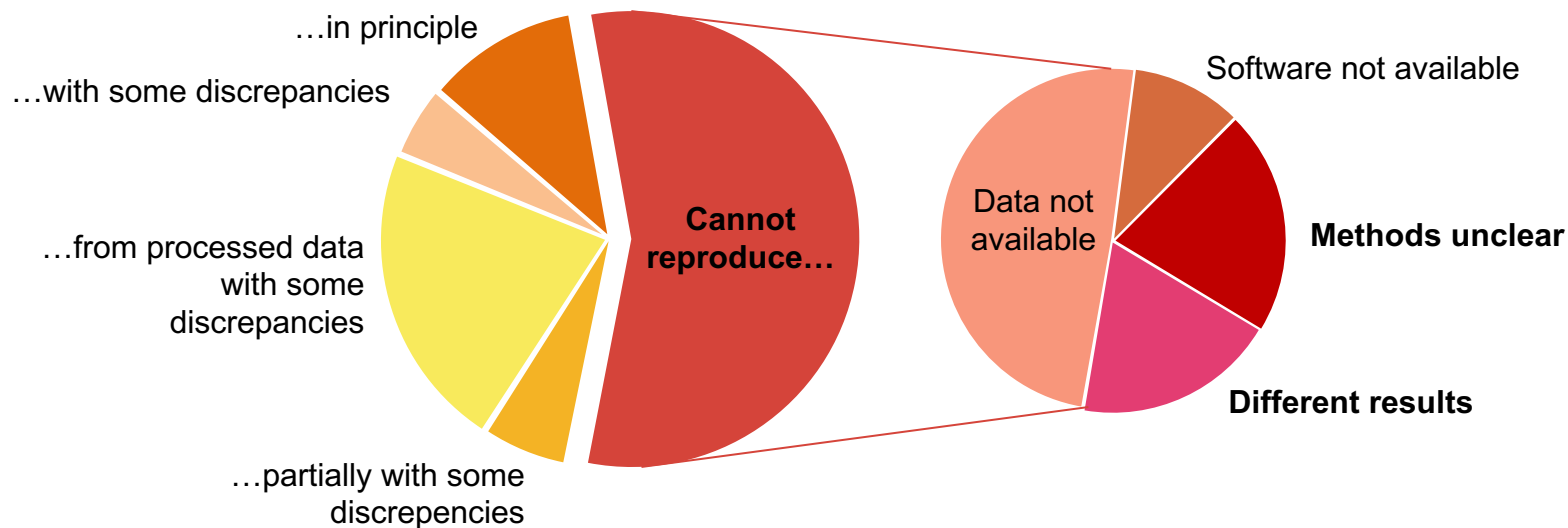
Summary of the efforts to replicate the published analyses.

Adopted from: Ioannidis et al. Repeatability of published microarray gene expression analyses.

Nature Genetics **41** (2009) doi:10.1038/ng.295

Reproduction of data analyses in 18 articles on microarray-based gene expression profiling published in Nature Genetics in 2005–2006:

Can reproduce...



Summary of the efforts to replicate the published analyses.

Adopted from: Ioannidis et al. Repeatability of published microarray gene expression analyses.

Nature Genetics **41** (2009) doi:10.1038/ng.295

Contents in **protocols** can include

Protocols and lab notes should both be...

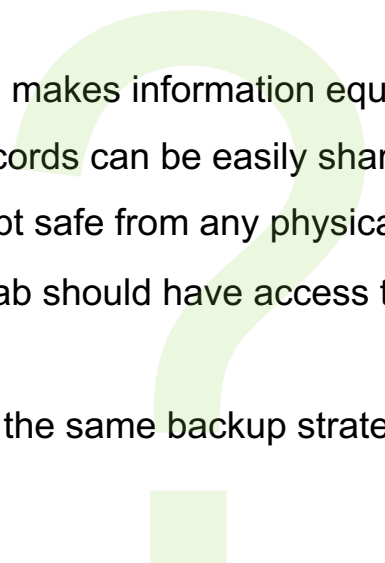
- Detailed
- Up to date
- Accurate
- Easy to understand

- Name, affiliation and contact information
- Originator of protocol (if not you)
- Information on why and how experiment was done
- Health and safety advice (and technical advice)
- Required software, materials and instruments
- Being self-explanatory
- Describe mistakes (for others to avoid repeating)
- Reference ethical application (if applicable)

Contents in **lab notes** can include

- Your name and affiliation
- Details on what, when and how
- What project the experiment is part of
- Lot and batch numbers for consumables
- Information on metadata collected
- Post-outcome treatment of data
- Interpretation of outcome and outlook/plans

Test yourself on record keeping statements

- 
1. Analogue and digital records makes information equally findable.
 2. New information in digital records can be easily shared with other users.
 3. Analogue records can be kept safe from any physical accidents.
 4. All researchers in a shared lab should have access to the same platform for keeping records and taking notes.
 5. Digital records should follow the same backup strategy as the data they describe.

Test yourself on record keeping statements

1. Analogue and digital records makes information equally findable. (F)
2. New information in digital records can be easily shared with other users. (T)
3. Analogue records can be kept safe from any physical accidents. (F)
4. All researchers in a shared lab should have access to the same platform for keeping records and taking notes. (T)
5. Digital records should follow the same backup strategy as the data they describe. (T)

A file usually defined as the starting point of information about something (attracts attention!)

FAIRify your research by using them as documentation files for:

Folder level – Explaining folder contents, naming, file history, organisation/structure etc

Data – Explaining file names and contents

README in Markdown (.md)

- Allows text and content formatting without interference
- Highly compatible with e.g. GitHub
- Allows inclusion of comments without having to visualize them
- Easily editable and versatile
- Does not require particular skills

Discussion

Think of an example where you would have benefited from having access to a README-file when working with data. Describe to your neighbor what you would have wanted such a file to contain.

Data and hardware failure is always a threat. Plan early for potential failure!

Good to know for backup planning purposes:

- Data sensitivity
 - Ease of access
 - File sizes
 - Overall data volumes
 - Data life cycle in project
-
- Nearly all data, metadata and project information necessary to understand your analysis and results require some sort of backup strategy.
 - Try to keep backup in three separate locations, on at least two different kind of media (server, portable hard drive, cloud). Consider off-site backups.
 - Never back up your data on portable drives only (SSD or ATA), and particularly not on USB sticks!
 - Robust backups need to be automated.

Discussion

Discuss in pairs the validity of the following statements on data backup:

1. I have my most important data backed up on my laptop. I have never experienced a hard drive failure, and my current laptop has a new state-of-the-art hard drive. Therefore, I don't need external backups.
2. All my data is stored in a cloud service.
3. My data is on a portable hard drive. There is a backup of the most important files on a shared USB stick in my research group.
4. My data is on a departmental backup administered by my University. Additionally we have a server for all the data stored in our project.
5. We have no shared backup at all. All members in our research group are responsible for their own data.

Discussion

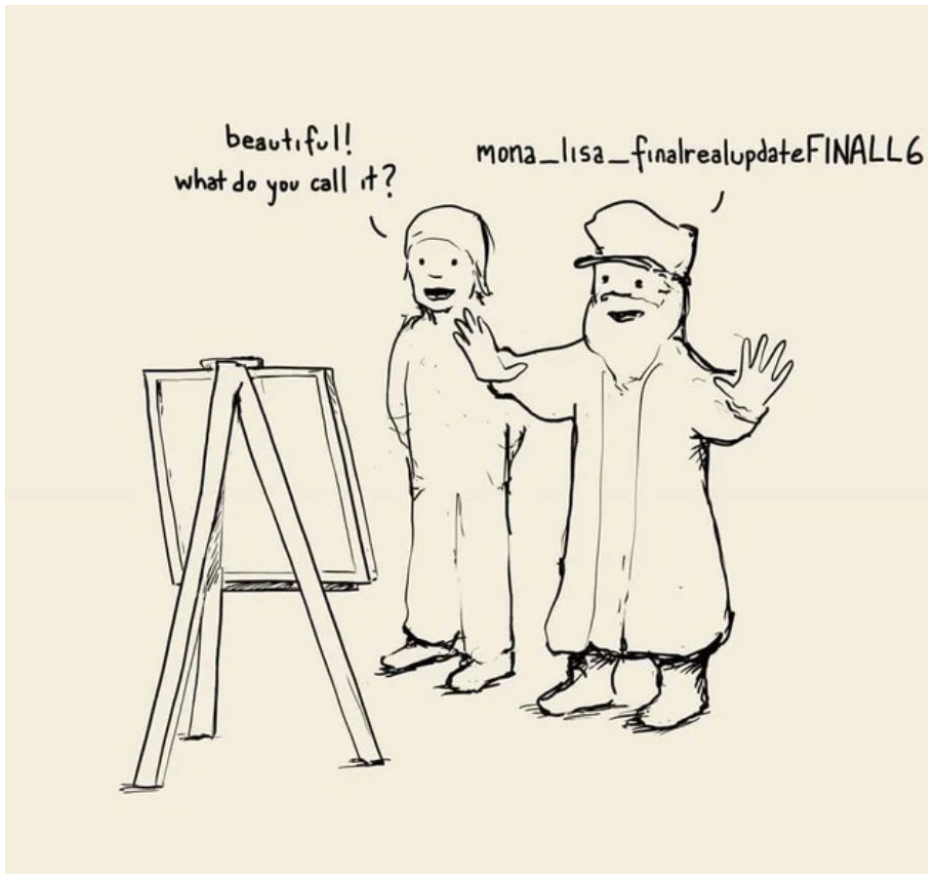
Discuss in pairs the validity of the following statements on data backup:

1. Unsafe and not recommended. All hard drives can be subject to failure. In case of failure, all data will be lost.
2. Cloud services can be sufficient as backup, but are not fail safe. It can be sufficient in combination with a secondary backup on e.g. a shared server. For certain types of data (e.g. sensitive information), a cloud service may be outright inappropriate.
3. Not a good solution. Both portable hard drives as well as USB sticks are prone to failure.
4. A good solution in general. Data is stored independently in two separate systems. Centrally administered services are usually organised in such a way that partial failures does not affect the users.
5. Worst possible alternative. A disaster waiting to happen.

Creating a backup strategy in 10 steps

1. Find out whether your institution has a backup strategy
2. Determine what you want to back up
3. Decide how many backups you will need and how frequently to back up
4. Decide where backups will be stored
5. Determine how much storage capacity will be needed
6. Determine if there are tools you could use to automate backup
7. Determine how long backups will be kept and how they will be destroyed
8. Determine how personal data will be protected
9. Devise a disaster recovery plan
10. Assign responsibilities

Why is file
organisation
important for
data
management?



What level of
data
organisation will
work for me and
my project/
team?

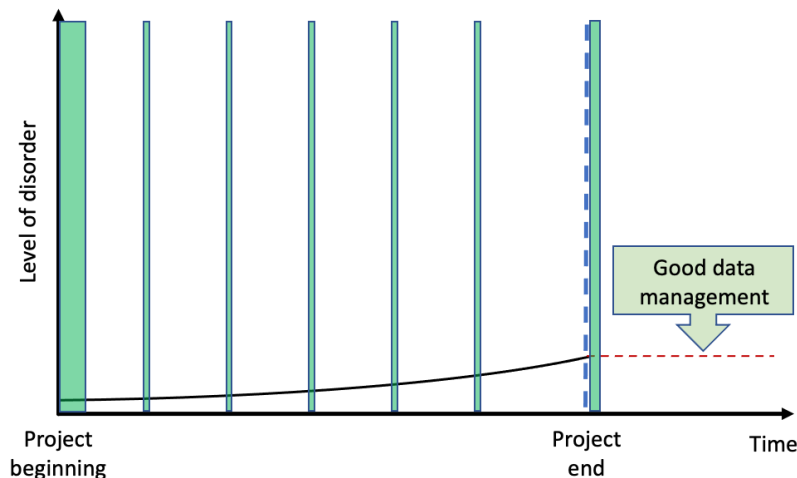
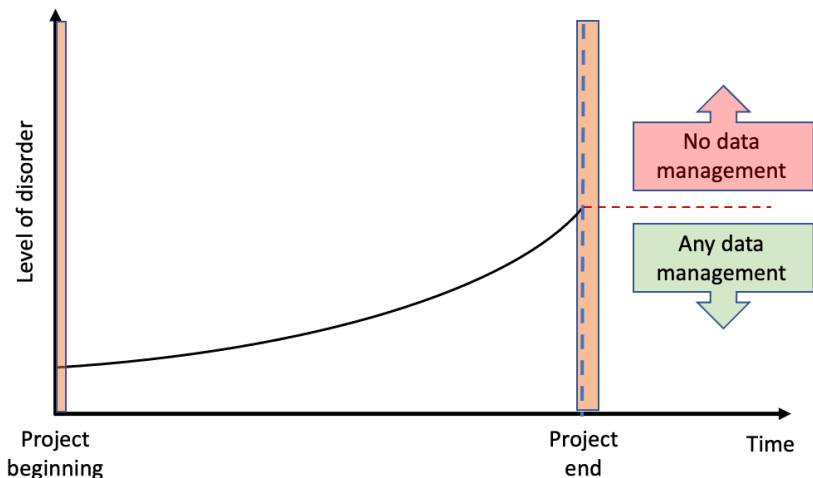
Benefits of systematically organising research and data files:

- Easier to locate a file
- Find similar files together
- Moving files becomes much easier
- Easy to identify which files you want to back up
- Keep organised in the long-run
- Increases productivity
- Helps you to keep and maintain a record of the project
- Projects can easily be understood by others (including your future self)

Files will become unorganised over time (particularly downloads and/or desktop folders)

Files can multiply across folders and versions, decreasing findability

Organising will reduce clutter and maintenance requirements over time



Names for files and folders should be *consistent* and *meaningful to yourself and collaborators*, allow for *easy tracking/searching*, and be *somewhat descriptive of content*.

Example:

LD_phyA_off_t04_2020-08-12_norm.xlsx

Based on the name, the file could contain information about:

- | | |
|------------|-----------------------------------|
| LD | - Long day sampling, of the |
| phyA | - Phytochrome A genotype, in a |
| off | - Medium without sucrose, at |
| t04 | - Time point 4, |
| 2020-08-12 | - Sampled on Aug 12th, 2020, with |
| norm | - Normalised data |

But! Not obvious from the letters and words alone. Explanation is required - README.md

Group discussion

The following example contain files from an imaginary project

- *phyA/phyB* - genotypes
- *sXX* - sample number
- *LD/SD* - light conditions (Long Day, Short Day)
- *on/off* - different growth media (on sucrose, off sucrose)
- *date format* - sample date
- *tXX* - sample timepoint
- *raw, norm* - raw or normalised data

2020-07-14_s12_phyB_on_SD_t04.raw.xlsx
 2020-07-14_s1_phyA_on_LD_t05.raw.xlsx
 2020-07-14_s2_phyB_on_SD_t11.raw.xlsx
 2020-08-12_s03_phyA_on_LD_t03.raw.xlsx
 2020-08-12_s12_phyB_on_LD_t01.raw.xlsx
 2020-08-13_s01_phyB_on_SD_t02.raw.xlsx
 2020-7-12_s2_phyB_on_SD_t01.raw.xlsx
 AUG-13_phyB_on_LD_s1_t11.raw.xlsx
 JUL-31_phyB_on_LD_s1_t03.raw.xlsx
 LD_phyA_off_t04_2020-08-12.norm.xlsx
 LD_phyA_on_t04_2020-07-14.norm.xlsx
 LD_phyB_off_t04_2020-08-12.norm.xlsx
 LD_phyB_on_t04_2020-07-14.norm.xlsx
 SD_phyB_off_t04_2020-08-13.norm.xlsx
 SD_phyB_on_t04_2020-07-12.norm.xlsx
 SD_phya_off_t04_2020-08-13.norm.xlsx
 SD_phya_ons_t04_2020-07-12.norm.xlsx
 ld_phyA_ons_t04_2020-08-12.norm.xlsx

1. Should dates be put first, and if not, why?
2. What is the difference between using leading 0 (zero) and not?
3. Is there a difference between using upper and lower case letters?
4. What is the difference between using two letters for *on* compared to three letters *ons*?
5. What are the effects if we, as in the above example, mix naming conventions?

- *phyA/phyB* - genotypes
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2020-07-14_s12_phyB_on_SD_t04.raw.xlsx
 2020-07-14_s1_phyA_on_LD_t05.raw.xlsx
 2020-07-14_s2_phyB_on_SD_t11.raw.xlsx
 2020-08-12_s03_phyA_on_LD_t03.raw.xlsx
 2020-08-12_s12_phyB_on_LD_t01.raw.xlsx
 2020-08-13_s01_phyB_on_SD_t02.raw.xlsx
 2020-7-12_s2_phyB_on_SD_t01.raw.xlsx
 AUG-13_phyB_on_LD_s1_t11.raw.xlsx
 JUL-31_phyB_on_LD_s1_t03.raw.xlsx
 LD_phyA_off_t04_2020-08-12.norm.xlsx
 LD_phyA_on_t04_2020-07-14.norm.xlsx
 LD_phyB_off_t04_2020-08-12.norm.xlsx
 LD_phyB_on_t04_2020-07-14.norm.xlsx
 SD_phyB_off_t04_2020-08-13.norm.xlsx
 SD_phyB_on_t04_2020-07-12.norm.xlsx
 SD_phya_off_t04_2020-08-13.norm.xlsx
 SD_phya_ons_t04_2020-07-12.norm.xlsx
 ld_phyA_ons_t04_2020-08-12.norm.xlsx

1. Should dates be put first, and if not, why?
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1. Using dates as leading information in file names makes finding data quickly harder as the more interesting information may be samples or timepoints (unless date is crucial to data).
2. Without leading zeros, sorting will make 10 and 11 appear before 2.
3. Upper and lower cases may sort differently
4. Comparing files is easier if the file name lengths are uniform.
5. Mixed naming conventions can make it difficult to locate particular files, and/or sort a large number of files.

2020-07-14_s12_phyB_on_SD_t04.raw.xlsx
 2020-07-14_s1_phyA_on_LD_t05.raw.xlsx
 2020-07-14_s2_phyB_on_SD_t11.raw.xlsx
 2020-08-12_s03_phyA_on_LD_t03.raw.xlsx
 2020-08-12_s12_phyB_on_LD_t01.raw.xlsx
 2020-08-13_s01_phyB_on_SD_t02.raw.xlsx
 2020-7-12_s2_phyB_on_SD_t01.raw.xlsx
 AUG-13_phyB_on_LD_s1_t11.raw.xlsx
 JUL-31_phyB_on_LD_s1_t03.raw.xlsx
 LD_phyA_off_t04_2020-08-12.norm.xlsx
 LD_phyA_on_t04_2020-07-14.norm.xlsx
 LD_phyB_off_t04_2020-08-12.norm.xlsx
 LD_phyB_on_t04_2020-07-14.norm.xlsx
 SD_phyB_off_t04_2020-08-13.norm.xlsx
 SD_phyB_on_t04_2020-07-12.norm.xlsx
 SD_phya_off_t04_2020-08-13.norm.xlsx
 SD_phya_ons_t04_2020-07-12.norm.xlsx
 ld_phyA_ons_t04_2020-08-12.norm.xlsx

Two starting points for your file naming strategy are:

- A file name is a principal identifier of a file

Good file names contain useful clues to the content, status and version of a file, uniquely identify a file and help in classifying and sorting files. File names that reflect the file content also facilitate searching and discovering files. In collaborative research, it is essential to keep track of changes and edits to files via the file name.

- File naming strategy should be consistent in time and among different people

In both quantitative and qualitative research, file naming should be systematic and consistent across all files in the study. A group of cooperating researchers should follow the same file naming strategy and file names should be independent of the location of the file on a computer.

Group discussion

What are examples of potential benefits of agreeing on a File Naming Convention for a project?

- Easier to process - Team members will not have to over think the file naming process
- Easier to facilitate access, retrieval and storage of files
- Easier to browse through files, saving time and effort
- Harder to lose!
- Having logical and known naming conventions in place can also help you with version control.
- Check for obsolete or duplicate records

1. Consider file name lengths – beware of OS limitations and full path names!
2. Make names human readable – name describes content of file
3. Make names machine readable – Avoid spaces, punctations, accented characters etc.
4. Explain file naming in associated info files (README.md)

Examples of a **poor** file name:

"Honeybee project, experiment 2 done in Helsinki, data file created on the second of December 2020"

File name	-	Runnew_again_2NDTRY.xls
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<i>Explanation</i>	-	N/A
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Explanation - Time_ProjectAbbreviation_ExperimentNumber_
Location_TypeOfData_VersionNumber

- For dates use the YYYY-MM-DD standard and place at the end of the file UNLESS you need to organize your files chronologically
- Include version number (if applicable), use leading zeroes (i.e.: v005 instead of v5). make sure the end-letter file format extension is present at the end of the name (e.g. .doc, .xls, .mov, .tif)
- Add a README.md (or PROJECT_STRUCTURE.md) file in your top directory which details your naming convention, directory structure and abbreviations

Keyword tagging

(Metadata.txt content)

20220115_MyFile_Project1_Location_Dataiteration1_V1.xml

First version of X data from Y, with additions of Z made by A and B on 20220110 including suggestions by C.

Keywords HumptyDumpty Genome_Assembly

20220115_MyFile_Project1_Location_Dataiteration2.xml

Contains X data from Y, with additions of Z made only by A on 20220111 not including suggestions by C.

Keywords Published

Associated metadata to increase findability of files over e.g. multiple projects

- Using spaces (use _ or - instead)
- Dots, commas and special characters (e.g. ~ ! @ # \$ % ^ & * () ` ; < > ? , [] { } ' ")
- Using language specific characters (e.g. óężé), unfortunately they still cause problems with most software or between operating systems (OS)
- Long names
- Repetition, e.g if directory name is Electron_Microscopy_Images, and file ELN_MI_IMG_20200101.img then ELN_MI_IMG is redundant
- Deep paths with long names (i.e. deeply nested folders with long names), as archiving or moving between OS may fail

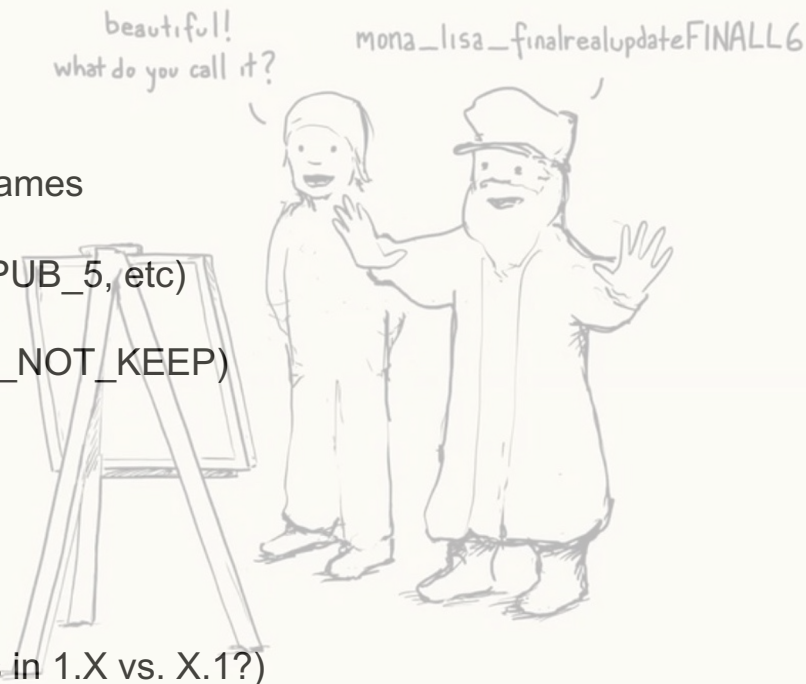
The simple yet powerful Dont's and Do's of file versioning:

Dont's

- Add suffixes like FINAL, THIS_ONE, or PUB, to file names
- Add numbers to already bad suffixes (e.g. FINAL_2, PUB_5, etc)
- Add negative information (e.g. DELETE_THIS, or DO_NOT_KEEP)

Do's

- Explicitly include versioning in file naming convention
- Use version numbers, preferably consistently (What is in 1.X vs. X.1?)



Want to create your own File Naming Convention? Consider...

1. What group of files will this naming convention cover?
2. What information (metadata) is important about these files and makes each file distinct?
3. Do you need to abbreviate any of the metadata or encode it?
4. What is the order for the metadata in the file name?
5. What characters will you use to separate each piece of metadata in the file name?
6. Will you need to track different versions of each file?
7. Write down your naming convention pattern
8. Document this convention in a README.md (or save this worksheet) and keep it with your files

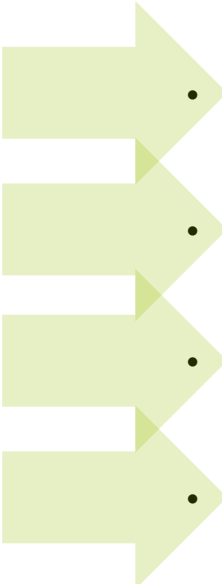
Spreadsheet data is very common, and equally misunderstood

Tabular data is not a data *type*, but ...

- a way to *organize data*
- designed for machine readability

Long term storage, exporting, archiving and FAIRification by concerting to .CSV or .TSV

Good practice for structuring tabular data is to...

- 
- Adopt good metadata and column header formats early in the data collection phase (Pre-adapting to publication of data)
 - Think about how you want your data both from a data entry and data analysis point of view
 - Consider how to document your work
 - Separate raw data from the data used in analysis

- Column = Variable
- Row = Observation
- Cell = Value

Open Access training					
Date	Length (hours)	Registered	Attended	Delivered by	Canceled
16/01/17	1	26	23	JM	N
05/02/17	1	38	26	JM	N
17/02/17	1	19	25	PG	N
07/03/17	1	27	17	JM	N
29/03/17	1	32	15	PG	N
02/04/17	1	41		PG	Y
24/04/17	2	44	44	JM	N
25/05/17	1	43	37	PG	N
16/06/17	1	15	15	JM	N

✓ Raw means raw!

✓ Tidy data tables

One cell—one value

One column—one variable

One row—one observation

✓ Beware of Excel “features”

Misguided “auto-corrections” of dates,
casing, numbers etc.

Misaligned formulas

Limited numerical precision

Limited number of rows/columns

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	data							analysis			
2	id	biomarker1	biomarker2	biomarker3	biomarker4			variation	ave	problem	
3	81	0.08502	0.07002	0.07735	0.07746			0.008	0.0775		
4	82	0.0658	0.06859	0.06958	0.06799			0.002	0.068	no	
5	83	0.07757	0.07497	0.0801	0.07755			0.003	0.0775		
6	84	0.07185	0.06957	0.07474	0.07205			0.003	0.0721	yes	
7	85	0.06959	0.07361	0.07113	0.07145			0.002	0.0714	maybe	
8	86	0.09291	0.10439	0.09425	0.09718			0.006	0.0972		
9	87	0.07878	0.08143	0.07203	0.07742			0.005	0.0774		
10	88	0.07907	0.077	0.08227	0.07944			0.003	0.0794		
11	89	0.07299	0.07616	0.08131	0.07682			0.004	0.0768		
12	90	0.07487	0.0664	0.0671	0.06946			0.005	0.0695		
13											
14	mean	0.076845	0.076214	0.076986	0.076682						
15								biomarker QC			
16	notes							b1	b2	b3	b4
17	* patient id86 may need removing due to missing notes							0.46336967	0.875281336	0.918250702	0.14953926

Zero vs. Missing data

-

How do you make explicit something that do not exist?

Table 1. Commonly used null values, limitations, compatibility with common software and a recommendation regarding whether or not it is a good option. Null values are indicated as compatible with specific software if they work consistently and correctly with that software. For example, the null value "NULL" works correctly for certain applications in R, but does not work in others, so it is not presented in the table as R compatible.

Null values	Problems	Compatibility	Recommendation
0	Indistinguishable from a true zero		Never use
Blank	Hard to distinguish values that are missing from those overlooked on entry. Hard to distinguish blanks from spaces, which behave differently.	R, Python, SQL	Best option
-999, 999	Not recognized as null by many programs without user input. Can be inadvertently entered into calculations.		Avoid
NA, na	Can also be an abbreviation (e.g., North America), can cause problems with data type (turn a numerical column into a text column). NA is more commonly recognized than na.	R	Good option
N/A	An alternate form of NA, but often not compatible with software		Avoid
NULL	Can cause problems with data type	SQL	Good option
None	Uncommon. Can cause problems with data type	Python	Avoid
No data	Uncommon. Can cause problems with data type, contains a space		Avoid
Missing	Uncommon. Can cause problems with data type		Avoid
-,+,,	Uncommon. Can cause problems with data type		Avoid

Do not:

- Spatially distribute data
- Combine values in cells
- Split compatible data in tables
- Use colors
- Use cells for comments
- Mix metadata and data
- Use special characters

[illegible]

We are going to take a messy version of some data and begin cleaning it up using the information, tips and tricks.

- Not important to finish the entire exercise
- Work at your own speed, preferably in pairs or groups
- Discuss the pros and cons of different ways to organise data in the spreadsheet
- Consider the Human vs. Machine readability factors

We are back in the Famous lab!

- Considering the very limited metadata we have access to, and the inherited files, what can we do in order to increase the level and quality of data organization?
 - Download the zip-file containing the inherited data structure

- Consider the following:

- File names
- Folder structure
- Documentation

- Work in pairs or in smaller groups.
- Focus on the discussion more than finishing the exercise.
- Consider your own data and files from a third-person-view

Exercise 10