Rethinking 'Good' Data

Power, Vulnerability, and Queer Data Care

Sherman Centre for Digital Scholarship

Monday, February 9, 2026

12:00pm - 1:00pm **(Online)**

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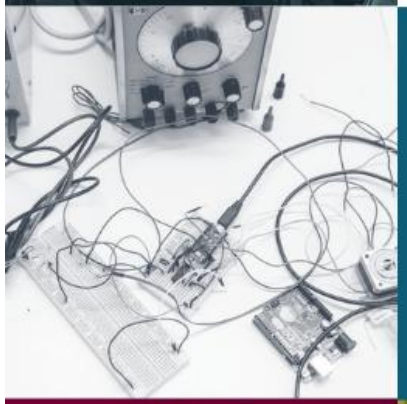


In order of appearance:

Alexis-Carlota Cochrane, Digital Scholarship Coordinator

Subhanya Sivajothy, Data Analysis and Visualization Librarian

Danica Evering, Research Data Management Specialist

February 9, 2026

A joint initiative of McMaster’s Faculty of Humanities and McMaster University Libraries

McMaster University

Land Acknowledgement

McMaster University is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee Nations. Settlers have responsibilities under the Silver Covenant Chain Wampum, part of the 1764 Treaty of Niagara.

Georgia Kirkos, “Campus Winter Snowfall 2023,” January 23, 2023, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada https://brand-resources.mcmaster.ca/asset-bank/action/viewAsset?id=58512&index=199&total=939&view=viewSearchItem

Positionality and Context

Alexis-Carlota Cochrane, MA

Subhanya Sivajothy, MI

Danica Evering, MA

Outline


setting the table [10 mins]


1. treating data as a site of critique [10 mins]


2. caring for data that is queer in form [10 mins]


3. caring for data about queer people [15 mins]


case study + discussion [15 mins]

Code of Conduct, Session Recording, & Privacy

Code of Conduct: The Sherman Centre and the McMaster University Libraries are committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for its presenters and participants. Please refer to our code of conduct webpage for more information: **scds.ca/events/code-of-conduct**

Session Recording: This session is being recorded with the intention of being shared publicly via the web for future audiences. In respect of your privacy, participant lists will not be shared outside of this session, nor will question or chat transcripts. Questions asked via the chat box will be read by the facilitator without identifying you. Note that you may be identifiable when asking a question during the session in an audio or visual format.

Certificate Programs

The Sherman Centre for Digital Scholarship Certificate of Attendance

The Sherman Centre's certificate program recognizes attendance at our workshops. It complements degree training, supports the development of critical competencies in data analysis, research data management, and digital scholarship, and formalizes core skills fostered by our workshops.

Participants are invited to collect **seven** workshop points to receive a certificate of attendance. To verify your participation in today's workshop, we will provide a code and additional instructions at the end of the session.

You can learn more about the certificate program at **scds.ca/certificate-program**

The Canadian Certificate for Digital Humanities

This workshop is also eligible for the Canadian Certificate for Digital Humanities. To learn more about the certificate, visit **ccdhhn.ca**. You can also contact local liaison Alexis-Carlota Cochrane at scds@mcmaster.ca.

Love Data Week at SCDS!

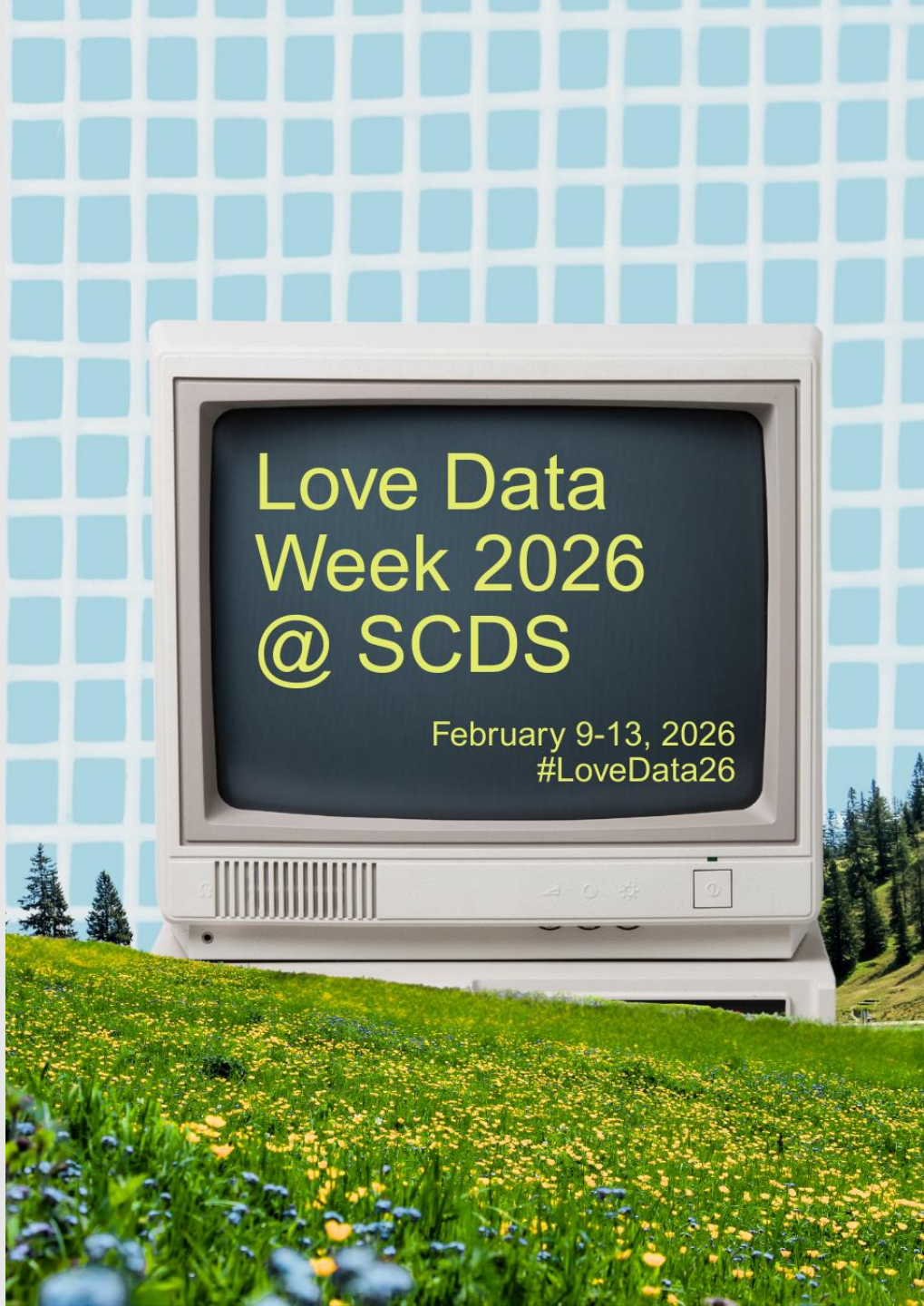
Finding, Accessing, and Adding GIS Data to Your Project
February 10 from 11:00am - 12:00pm (Online)

Visualizing Bibliometric Networks with VOSviewer
February 11 from 11:00am - 12:00pm (In-Person)

Introduction to Python Programming
February 12 from 1:30pm - 3:30pm (Online)

Register at scds.ca/events

More Events at ICPSR:
https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/sites/icpsr/about/news-events/international-love-data-week



Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop, you will be able to:

- Analyze how social, political, and disciplinary contexts might shape data practices.
- Identify how data practices can reinforce or resist structural power dynamics, particularly in relation to marginalized communities.
- Develop ethical, accountable, and community-centered approaches to data collection, maintenance, and access.
- Apply these methods and principles to your own research projects, and/or case studies.

Data organizes social relations, shapes what counts as knowledge, and generates material consequences.

- What is considered “gold standard” or “good” research is shaped by disciplinary norms that define rigor narrowly, often marginalizing queer epistemologies and research questions (Compton, 2018).
- Data is never entirely "raw" because, from the moment it is collected, it undergoes some form of processing, selection, or interpretation.
    - ❖ “Data need to be imagined as data to exist and function as such, and the imagination of data entails an interpretive base” (Gitelman & Jackson, 2013, p. 3).
- Feminist epistemologies reframe bias not as a methodological flaw to be eliminated, but as an unavoidable condition of knowledge production that must be critically accounted for.
    - ❖ “All knowledge claims are located, partial, and embodied, produced through (and productive of) gender, race, class, and other axes of difference” (Mikhail, 2024, p. 157).
- Data systems are not neutral: built within inequitable social worlds, they reproduce and legitimize harm through cis-heteronormative classification, unsafe visibility and the weaponization of queer and trans data via surveillance and algorithmic discrimination.

Now You See Me, Now You Don't: Queer Data Methodologies

Queer data methodologies grapple with a persistent tension: the desire to make queer lives visible and the resistance to visibility grounded in histories of extraction, commodification and harm.

- “If you appear on the form, it is harder to claim you do not exist” (Guyan, 2022).
- "[P]aradox of exposure: the double bind that places those who stand to significantly gain from being counted in the most danger from that same counting (or classifying) act" (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020).

Queer Data Care is "a practice of nurturing, tending to, protecting, maintaining, supporting, and advocating for data in three interconnected ways:

1. **caring for data about queer people:** attending to the ethical and political stakes of handling information about communities who face heightened risks of exposure, surveillance, and erasure

2. **caring for data that is queer in form:** embracing non-normative, messy, incomplete, and alternative forms that data can take, such as zines, memes, exhibitions, and oral histories

3. **treating data as a site of critique:** unsettling normative frameworks by revealing how systems maintain legibility and control to serve institutional interests in governance, surveillance, and profit, as well as imagining alternatives that privilege ambiguity, relationality and justice over segmentation and quantification."

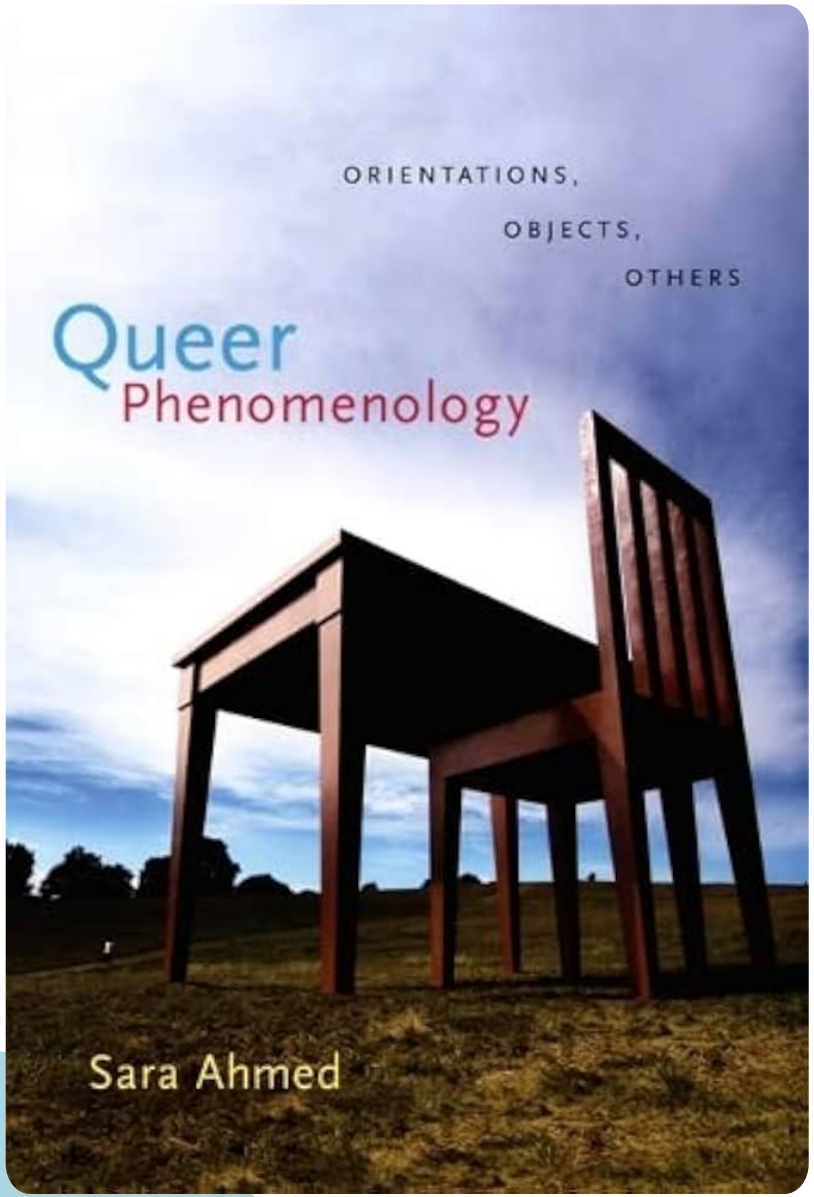
(Cochrane, Evering, & Sivajothy, under review)

Data As a Site of Critique

unsettling normative frameworks by revealing how systems maintain legibility and control to serve institutional interests in governance, surveillance, and profit, as well as imagining alternatives that privilege ambiguity, relationality and justice over segmentation and quantification.

- Questions about risk, accountability, power and the underlying assumptions built into systems as active refusal to reproduce the sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism that permeate normative processes (Sara Ahmed).
    - ❖ Demand rigorous engagement with the uneven distribution of intersectional vulnerability in digital spaces, particularly when what appears routine for some users carries profound stakes for others.
- Imagining infrastructures that privilege justice over neutrality, and care over extraction.
- Critique as care, and care as the groundwork for dismantling harmful defaults and enacting alternative data worlds grounded in ambiguity, relationality, and justice.

Caring for Data That is Queer in Form



In Queer Phenomenology, Sara Ahmed writes on the “failed orientation” of queerness. How it exists in the way things appear, “how they gather, how they perform” to ultimately “create the edges of spaces and worlds."

Queer Mess and Messy Data

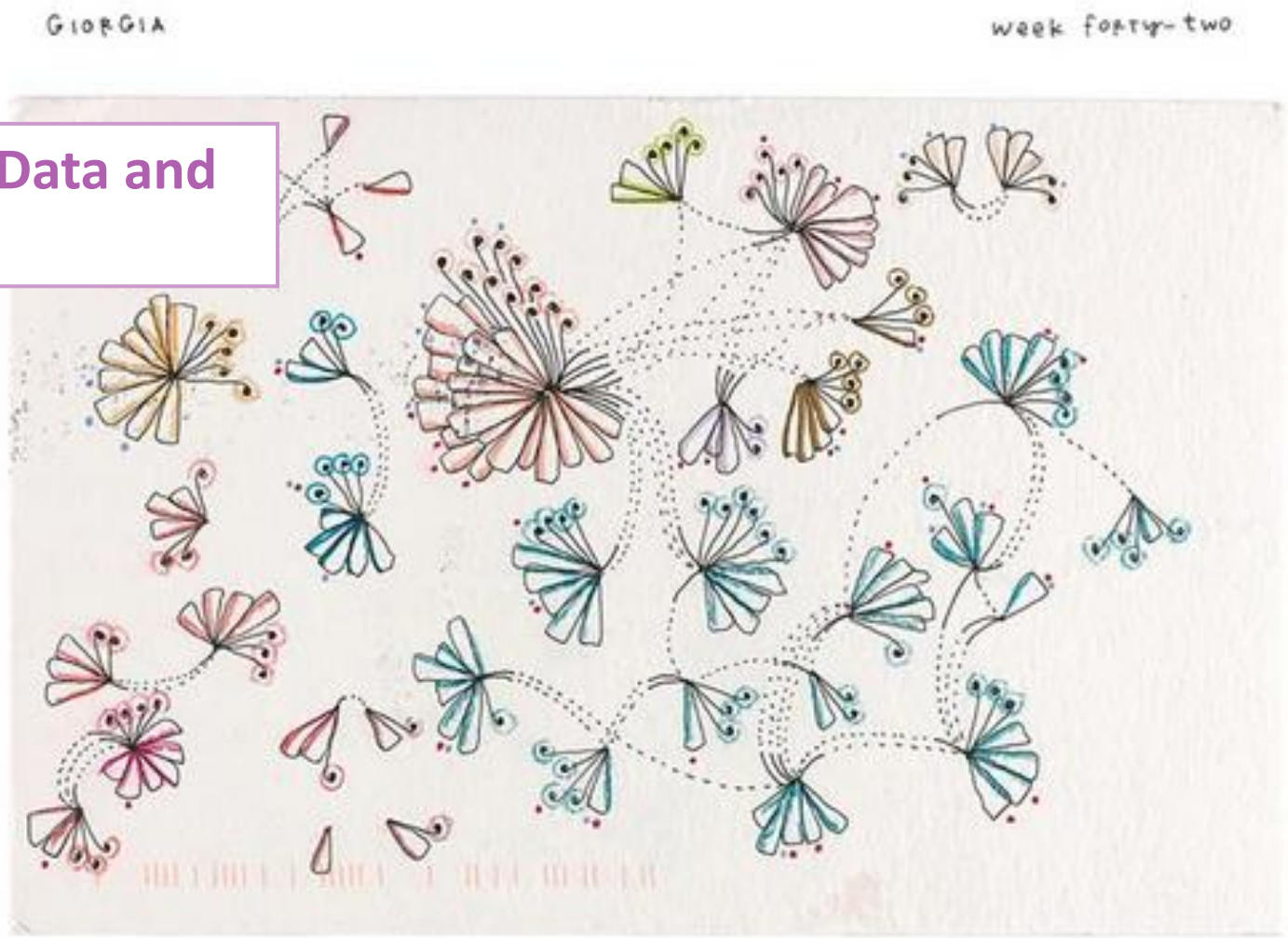
"Queer mess is to do with asserting the value and pleasure of formations of knowledge that sit outside long-standing institutional hierarchies of research." (Campbell & Farrier, 2015)

“...queer approaches to data are messy, non-innocent, contradictory, and nevertheless crucial for autonomy, reinvention, survival, and critique of a material-data world.” (Keilty, Herzig and Subramaniam, 2024)

source: https://flic.kr/p/9gunxg

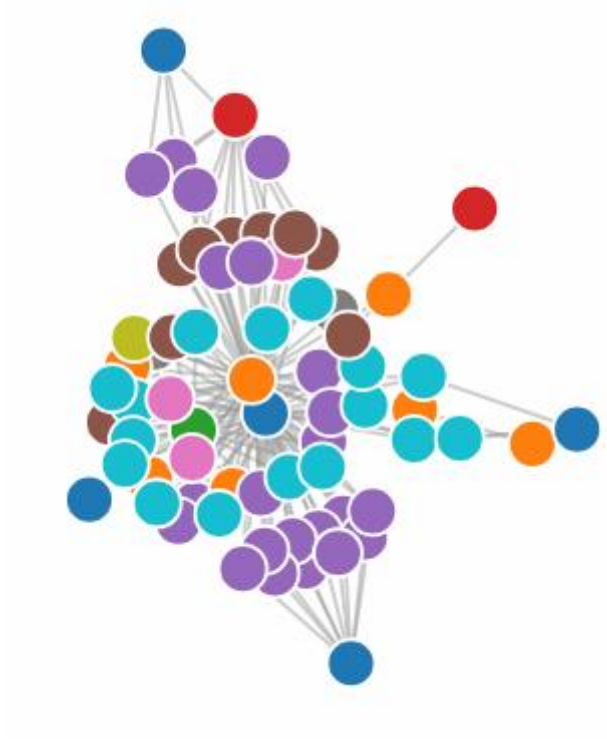
Making Visible the Labour of Data and Queer People

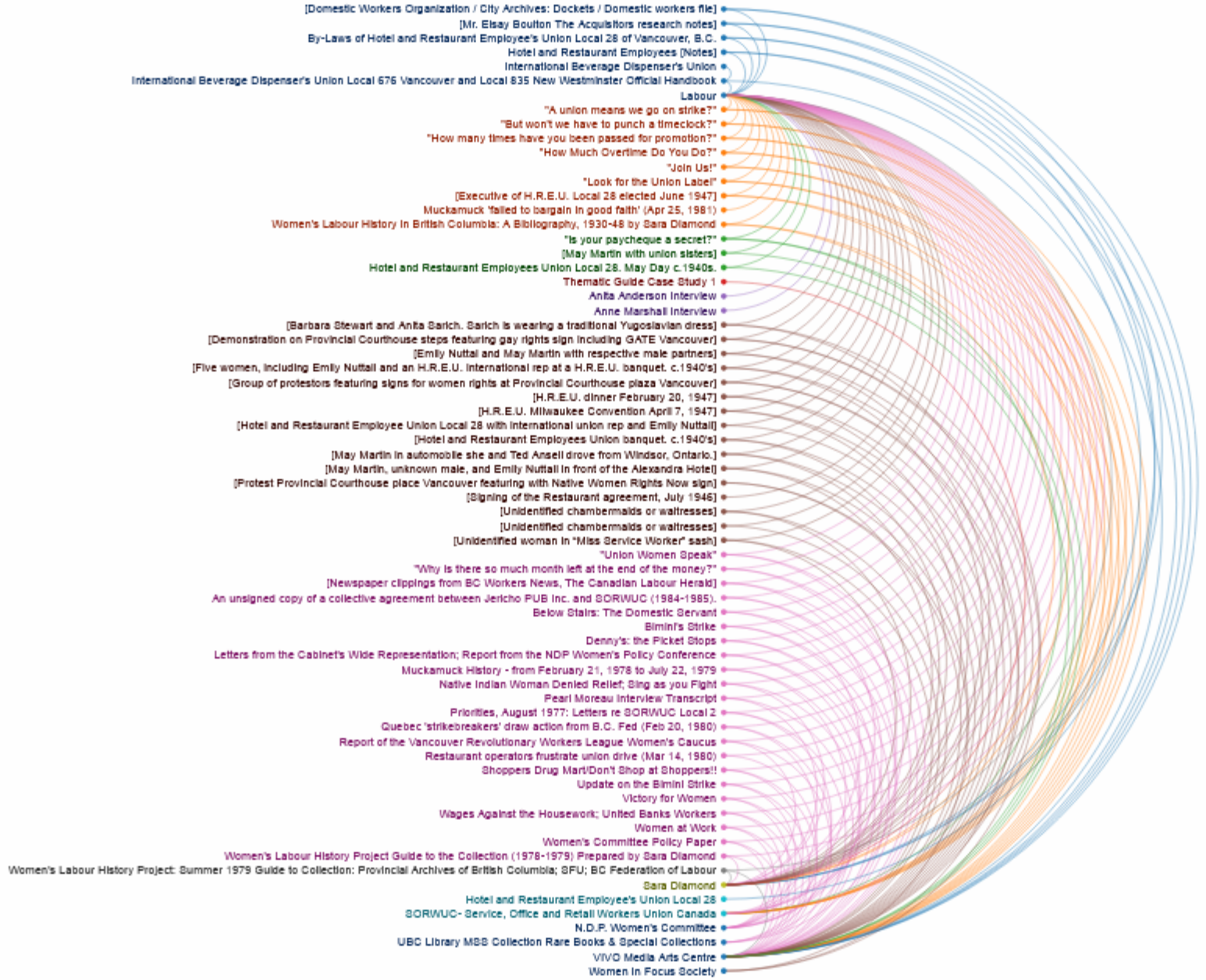
Source: Human Touch Clothing Line https://www.goodgoodgood.co/articles/human-touch-clothing



Source: https://www.dear-data.com/theproject

Crossing Fonds – Relational Arc Diagram





Caring for data about queer people.

Data Management Plan: Danica Evering, Alexis-Carlota Cochrane, Subhanya Sivajothy, *Queer Data Management Plan Example* (McMaster University, 2026).

Template: Isaac Pratt, Anneliese Eber, Cathy Paton, Kaelan Caspary, Template for Building a Data Management Plan through Conversation (McMaster University, 2025), https://doi.org/10.71548/MZH6-A877.

1. Data collection + consent

Left: Rachel Glaves, "Collage party at Million Fishes," CC-BY 2.0, https://www.flickr.com/photos/pepperlime/3227196507/
Right: Eberhard Grossgasteiger on Unsplash.

1. Data collection + consent

Data Type	Data Sources	File Formats	Software	Size
Audio	Interviews with trans and gender diverse staff	.MP4 (oral histories), .txt, .docx (transcribed), .txt (archival)	Zoom (interviews/ transcription), Taguette (analysis)	10 interviews, 30 minutes each, 15 GB
Survey	Community participants	.xlsx (for data review), .csv (archiving)	LimeSurvey (collection)	200 KB
Text and image	Zines created during Trans Day of Visibility event	PDF scans	Tropy (analysis)	30 zines, 6 MB
Audio	Field recordings collected at soundwalk	.wav (active research), FLAC (archival)	Audacity	10 GB
Archival	LGBT2SQ+ Community Archive at Hamilton Public Library	PDF scans	Tropy (analysis)	1 GB
Spreadsheet	Secondary public data from Statistics Canada	.csv (active research archiving)	OpenRefine (data cleaning), Excel or R (analysis)	200 KB

1. Data collection + consent

Consent: In addition to McMaster's Research Ethics Board, we will also request review from the Community Research Ethics Office. We will ask participants for consent as part of interviews and surveys. Because oral histories could be relevant to the next generation of queer folks in Hamilton, we will also ask for consent to also opt in to deposit audio files in a community collection using consent language from the Alliance's Sensitive Data Toolkit. This archive will be stored encrypted and accessible to queer researchers and community members. Recordists and zinesters will voluntarily contribute field recordings and zines. Final locations for each data object will be explained in consent forms and conversations, as outlined in 5 | Sharing, ownership, and reuse.

Reuse: Archivists will work with us to access archival data from the HPL collection. While the archives are technically public, our research team and collaborators will also consider the sensitivity of archival data in what we store and share. Because these archives hold photos of crowds from bars, clubs, dinners, and marches, this work could inadvertently out someone. It's not possible to fully remove this risk, given the nature of the archival material. However, we will approach the work in conversation with our community, with awareness and care, remaining attentive to this possibility throughout the research process. We will be reusing Statistics Canada data from their public open data platform.

s Notebook

Sticky Notes

Share

Meeting Details

Copilot

2. Documentation

Research Materials vs. Data

Friday, May 5, 2023 12:40 PM

c. How are research materials related to research data?
Research materials serve as the object of an investigation, whether scientific, scholarly, literary or artistic, and are used to create research data. Research materials are transformed into data through method or practice. Examples of research materials may include bio-samples for a geneticist, primary sources in an archival fonds for an historian, or a school of zebrafish for a biologist.

Examples of research data corresponding to these materials include gene sequence data, chronological analyses of ideas and contributions, and data on the behaviour of the zebrafish under certain conditions, respectively. "Research material" is a general concept that spans disciplines and may be digital or analogue. (link)
https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/interagency-research-funding/policies-and-guidelines/research-data-

2. Documentation

We will use the following documentation to ensure we are on the same page in collecting and analyzing data. All team members are responsible for recording decisions they make or influence.

Data Management Plan: We will finalize this draft with key community collaborators. Once the plan is roughed out, we have budgeted for an evening review and workshopping session with research participants over Zoom. Participants will be invited to adjust the plan, which will be sent to them in advance for changes and comments. This lets us as researchers do the labour of creating the DMP, while making sure our community is involved. Because this work happens before data collection, it will inform our ethics application. We will update this regularly as a "living document."

Notetaking: Notes and decision logs will be maintained in a OneNote accessible to all members of the project team. We are inspired by Tristan Bomberry's presentation "A story that carried me with it" to have a "Decisions Log" – relating to what we did and why and "Field and Feeling Notes" which add context to statistical information; everything the data can't hold. These notes will include variables (if relevant), interview logs, changes to data collection or analysis methods, consent and ethics updates, file naming conventions and metadata standards; all noting dates we did things. Entries will identify a responsible team member to ensure clarity and accountability.

3. Storage and security

Left: Taylor Vicks on Unsplash
Right: Neal Jennings, “First ever Trans March at Pride Toronto,” CC-BY-SA 2.0, https://www.flickr.com/photos/sweetone/3663853521/

3. Storage and security

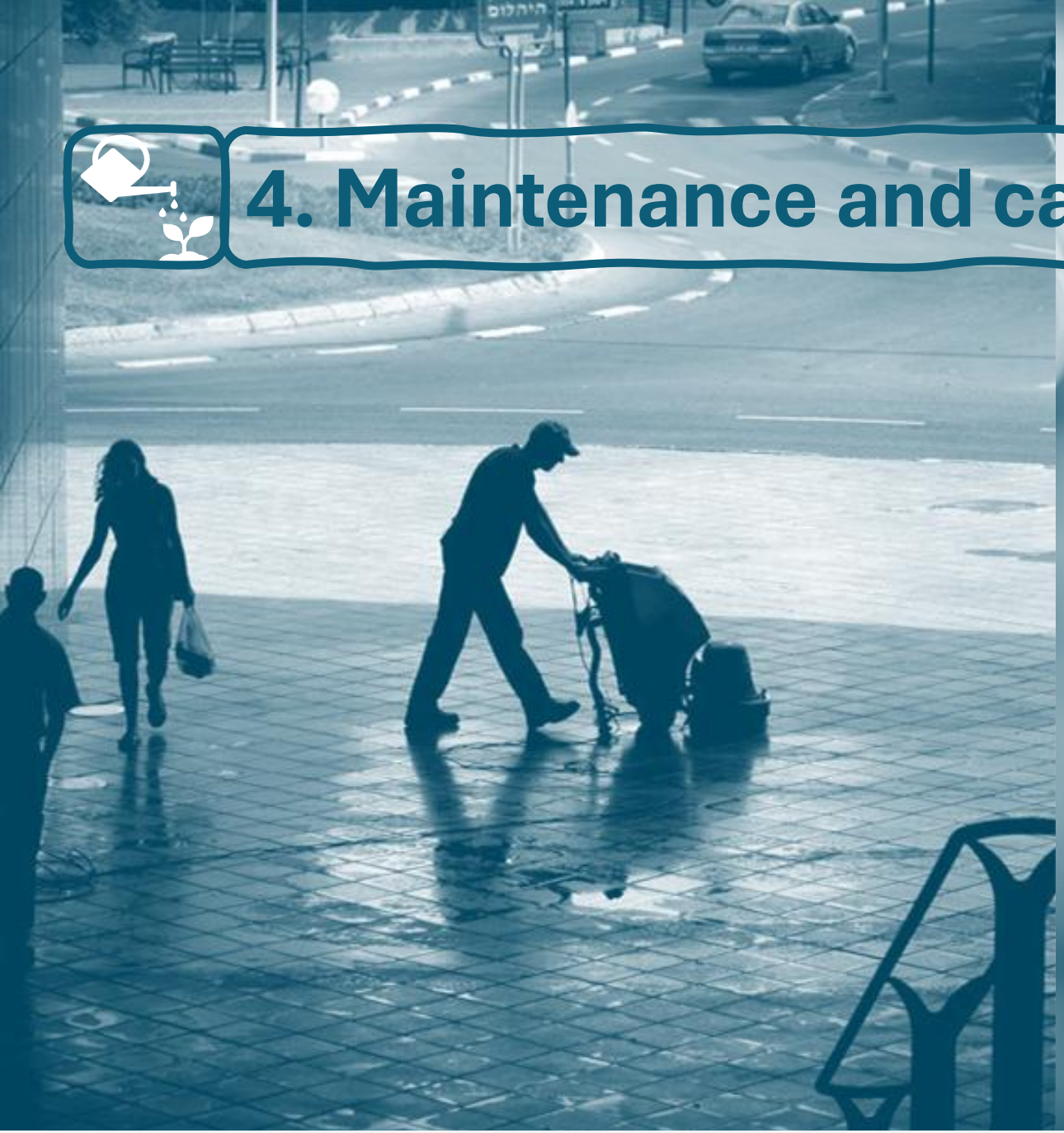
Because the community does not have storage or an IT department, we will use McMaster campus infrastructure for cloud storage. Both platforms have version histories, and our team will ensure duplicates of less-sensitive files across both platforms.

Sensitive Storage: We will set up an encrypted library in MacDrive (an instance of Seafile with servers located on the McMaster campus) for sensitive storage with up to 1 TB of space. This data will only be accessible by the PIs. Our university PI will create a Person of Interest account for the community PI to access McMaster's infrastructure. Raw interview data (MP4) files will be encrypted manually using VeraCrypt (an open-source encryption software). MacDrive allows for in-app review of audio files, which we will check against Zoom's built-in transcription for errors. These oral histories will be retained as double-encrypted files until they can be safely deposited; keeping them accessible to community members while being conscious of the potential harms associated with this being openly-accessible outside of community spaces. A spreadsheet identifying the research participants will be stored separately in an encrypted folder. Survey data will be collected anonymously using LimeSurvey, and the survey administration will only be accessible by the community PI, who will de-identify data and transition it to central storage. Archival data (PDF) will be stored here until it has been reviewed by the team for sensitivity.

3. Storage and security

Central Storage: For less sensitive data, we will use the university PI's OneDrive folder as central storage, with 1 TB of space and set up access for authenticated community partners and team members when relevant. This decision weighed corporate interests, server location, government overreach, and institutional agreements. Although OneDrive is owned by Microsoft, we determined that for now this was preferable to Google Drive or DropBox given the server location in Canada and agreements between McMaster and Microsoft. We will revisit this annually. Once the co-PIs process the transcripts (docx) and survey data by removing both direct and indirect identifiers, we will move files to central storage to be accessible by the larger project team. Zines, field recordings, public data from Statistics Canada, and other less sensitive files will be stored here too.

4. Maintenance and care



Left: Ghenady, “A janitor cleaning up the sidewalk.” CC-BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons

4. Maintenance and care

Co-PIs: As Co-PIs, we are responsible for ensuring the entire project team (including key community collaborators) is trained in our data management practices. We will ensure files are stored securely and that documentation is complete, up to date, and accessible to team members. We will initiate annual community reviews of the data management plan. Once the research project is complete, the community organization PI will allocate a small amount of their time to reviewing data access requests. If one of us moves into a role where this will not be possible, the other will ensure a succession plan is created and followed.

Community Research Coordinators (CRCs): These staff will be jointly hired and paid out of grant funds distributed through the university. CRCs are responsible for reviewing data management plans, collecting data, and upholding the interests of the community. CRCS will also serve as Data Champions on the project and manage and advocate good data practices. We will recruit collaborators interested in being paid on an ad-hoc basis after the project.

4. Maintenance and care

Research Assistant: This team member paid out of the grant will be responsible for day-to-day maintenance of files, documentation, and organization. This member will digitize zines, organize audio files, and scan archival records.

Participants: Community partners will be informed about project status biweekly via email, and monthly in team meetings. Participants may be responsible for their zines if they would like to keep them. Participants will have a role in contributing data, determining how they would like it to be handled, and reviewing data for resonance or accuracy.

5. Sharing, ownership, and reuse

Diagram by Tracy Sallaway, "Data Access Committees," in *Community Research Data Toolkit,* 2025. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.71548/cjk4-gs68

Penny 12 ,"Eva & Adele being interviewed by ArtStars* TV host Nadja Sayej at Vienna Art Fair in 2011." CC-BY-SA 2.0, Wikimedia Commons

5. Sharing, ownership, and reuse

Low-risk data: We want this information to be available to future generations. Any data the community would like to have fully public (zine scans, field recordings, some de-identified data) will be shared open access with a CC-BY-SA license (Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 4.0) in the Community Organizations' collection in McMaster Dataverse, a trusted data repository with servers at the University of Toronto. We are considering donation to a zine library as well.

Medium-risk data: Some of our data—de-identified survey data and interview transcripts, and field recording files—may be reused under common terms. Our group's Data Access Terms follow the community's requirements: that someone has undergone an ethics review, they are a member of the community, they share their plans for data security and analysis, and that they will contribute findings and data back to us. Once the project is complete, we will confirm our Data Access Terms and Data Use Agreement as a project team and discuss it as part of our Community Review at the end of the project. With that in place, we will deposit data using Borealis' Restricted Access feature. Both Co-PIs will be listed as "contacts" on the collection to be alerted when requests come in. Once the Co-PIs confirm the user meets the access terms and has signed a Data Use Agreement, the Co-PIs will grant access to the data in Borealis.

5. Sharing, ownership, and reuse

High-risk data: Our community does not have the IT capacity to store this data currently. High-risk data will be kept doubly encrypted in MacDrive and accessible only to the Co-PIs. We will include a deposit in the McMaster Dataverse collection that only contains metadata about what the files are with information to help our community find them. Co-PIs will gather access requests and review them at the community's quarterly Data Access Committee Potluck. Both the department and the community organization will allocate part of our annual budgets for honoraria and supplies. At our potlucks, we will share food and revisit the project and make decisions around access to data for younger queer community members and researchers. Approved applicants will be granted temporary access to listen to the oral histories in the Sherman Centre for Digital Scholarship, our campus partner. If there is any sensitive survey data the community chooses to share, applicants may be granted access to the data in the Secure Empirical Analysis Lab (SEAL).

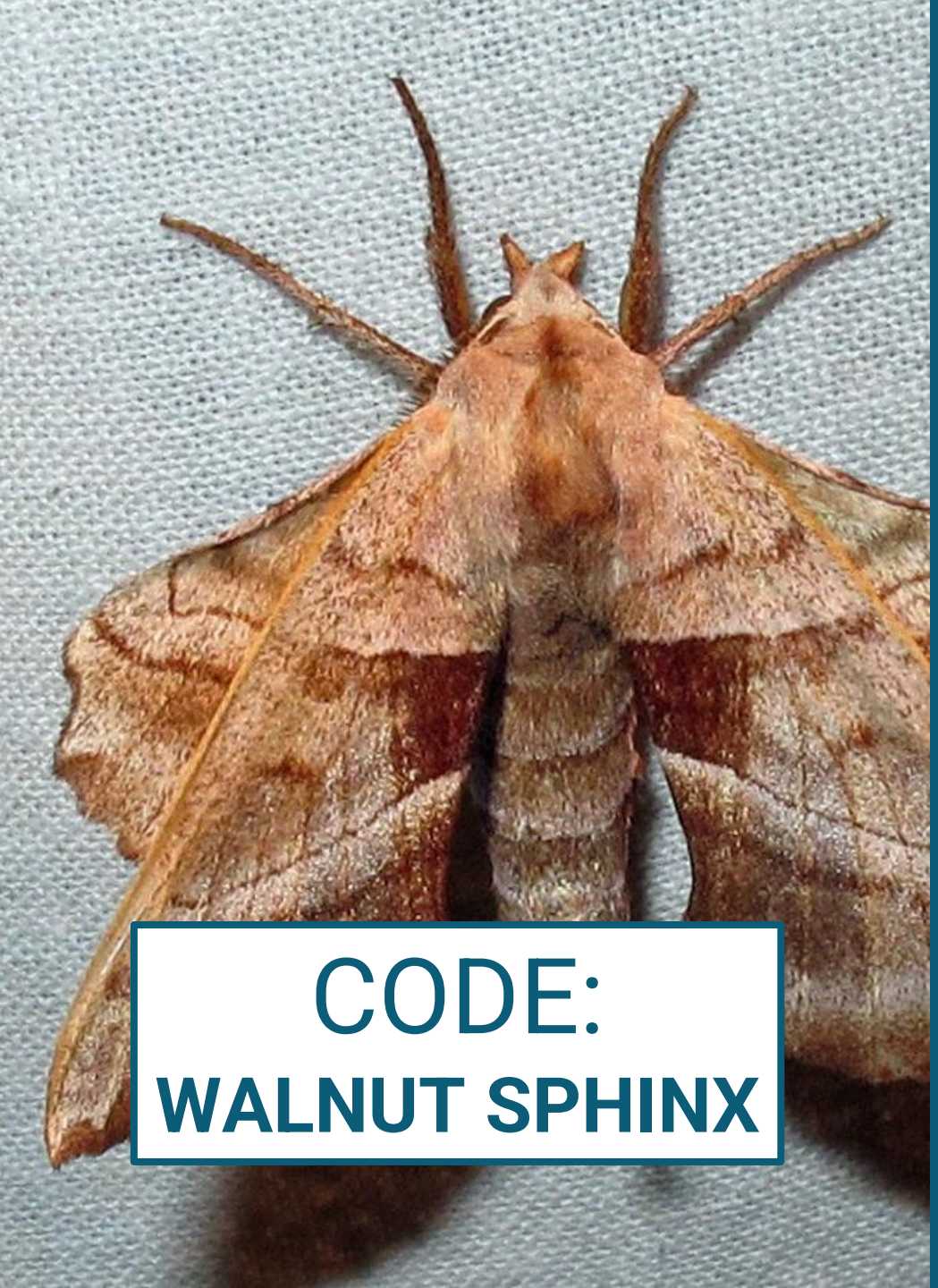
All deposited and archived data will be accompanied by a README file (created using the McMaster README Generator) and the survey logic file and codebooks to ensure the information is understandable and the data are usable in the long-term.

Case Study for Discussion

Data Sharing Consent

As part of a larger study on trans healthcare, researchers conduct interviews with 64 trans, nonbinary, and genderfluid people in two cities (Hamilton and Windsor, Ontario) across 4 years (2023-2026). Their consent document is designed at an 8th grade reading level and includes optional consent to share de-identified data. 59 respondents agree to data sharing and 5 do not (evenly across the two groups). However, 16 respondents demonstrate an incomplete or inaccurate understanding of data sharing despite attempts to describe it during informed consent.

- **What could have been done differently?**
- **What care measures and considerations are relevant to this example?**
- **How are participants impacted (what are some of the differential vulnerabilities in this case)?**
- **What are some ways to engage participants in the planning and post-research phases?**



Tell us what you think | Verify your attendance

Provide feedback on this session and verify your participation at u.mcmaster.ca/post-event

Jacy Lucier, “Amorpha juglandis, Wheatley, Ontario, Canada.”, CC-BY-SA, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amorpha_juglandis_3.jpg

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