Yes, but what is it that you do?

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**Lessons learned**

**Take a hike** – go to their office!
Just because we work in the digital world doesn't mean that an e-mail will make that all-important connection. Collaborate with the subject librarian and make an appointment. Face time really pays off.

**Eureka!** – look for the ‘aha’ moment.
Ask what it is they need: data location? Data archiving? Help with a data management plan? Look for their eyes to light up and then offer to help find answers on that topic, no matter if it’s in your job description or not.

**Under-promise - then over-deliver.**
Researchers understand about experiments and beta testing, so don't be afraid to say that you are at the beginning of the process.

**Admit ignorance** – It's OK not to know.
Admitting ignorance, while outlining the process for finding out the answer, engenders trust. The importance of generating credibility cannot be understated.

**Draw me a picture** - Communicate any way you can.
Verbally, visually, digitally, in print. If there is an opportunity to get up for five minutes in a meeting, take it. If there are the funds to distribute a brochure, make one. Since the first conversation is always absorbed by developing a common language, plan on following up.

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**Day of Data**

Brown University’s Day of Data featured twenty researchers from different disciplines. As each researcher spoke about their data, the audience drew or wrote comments that were transferred to a central whiteboard. It was an innovative (and non-digital) method of illustrating anonymous feedback. These images spoke eloquently about the relationship between the researcher and their data, and some are included here.

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**Introduction**

Despite carefully crafted job descriptions, e-science or data librarians find that there is little consensus on position responsibilities and required competencies. Consequently, these librarians tend to customize their positions around what their clientele require. Indeed, “Curation Service Models are driven by user requirements.” Therefore, it’s not just about the data – it’s about the people. Specifically, it’s about the different cultures of user groups and librarians and how to communicate effectively across these groups. The “elevator speech” for a scientist might be quite different from the one for your librarian colleague. It's no wonder that a recent survey of e-science librarian job advertisements found that communication is the most frequently cited personal skill. While each librarian, researcher and student may have different needs, there are usually broad disciplinary cultures that can guide interactions. Understanding some of these broadly-defined disciplinary characteristics can promote successful communication.

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**Conclusion**

No researcher can speak about their data without speaking about their research – the two are inseparable. So how can we handle the data without getting into very technical discussions? Just like we can catalog books without reading every one. We work with disciplines to develop processes and standards to meet their needs. We provide researchers with a structure where they are comfortable. We do this by acknowledging the intimacy of working with their data, listening to them, and designing our solutions accordingly. It’s about the people, not just the data.