Slide 1:

Hello everyone, and thank you for coming to my talk! My name is Hannah Gunderman, and I am a Research Data Management Consultant at Carnegie Mellon University Libraries. My pronouns are she/her. Today, I will be talking about our research to identify opportunities for inclusive language in research data management support in academic libraries.

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To start off this presentation, I want to frame why we are even having this conversation. Since starting my job as a RDM Consultant at CMU Libraries, and being involved in open science education, I've noticed several instances where language around "best practices" could be seen as introducing barriers to diverse researchers. As a neurodivergent researcher myself (neurodiversity is a viewpoint that brain differences are normal, rather than "weird" or a deficit), I was very aware how much of the language we use to teach research data management concepts can be dismissive of the real fears that neurodivergent researchers may have around open science concepts, such as openly sharing data. Around the time of starting my job, I found a Medium article that is titled "Open Science is Really Scary, Y'all" and it was so affirming to read it! The author talked about a lot of these fears, and it made me happy to know that someone else understood and shared their story.

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Here's an image from the beginning of that article.

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At this point, I did what you should never do when consuming any content on the internet - I made my way to the comments section! My happiness and comfort from reading the article quickly disappeared very quickly as I read the top comment, which is shown here. As you can see, there's a lot of dismissive language (underlined in red) where the commenter completely dismisses the fears addressed by the blog author.

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Around this same time, maybe through serendipity, as I started to follow more and more librarians and researchers in the data world on Twitter, I saw a few instances where folks were sharing their experiences with RDM librarians as being condescending, leaving them feeling like they were not effective researchers, or not understanding their research by pushing them to use software that didn't fit with their data needs. This led me to think: what kind of language is most effective for researchers that I engage with at CMU? Do I push "best practices" on them, or is there a more inclusive way to have these consultations?

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First, I want to note that in this presentation, I'm not saying that we shouldn't teach the concepts found within "best practices." In many of our RDM consultations, we're dealing with Federally-funded research and there are mandates that the researchers must meet in order to satisfy the requirements of the grant, and continue to receive funding. Further, by having a set of "best practices," it introduces standards to our profession that help new librarians, such as myself, learn how to provide the right information to our researchers. Finally, the term "best practices" is used in multiple settings outside of LIS, and is a standard vocabulary often seen to represent accepted practices to effectively accomplish *something.* However, we believe there is a better way to frame "best practices" to our researchers.

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"Best practices", as a term, may not truly capture all abilities, institutional access, socioeconomic statuses, etc. of our researchers we are supporting. Since this is just a short presentation, I'm going to talk about three areas of opportunity where we can unpack "best practices" and frame the conversation towards inclusivity in our consultations. These three areas include: (1) talking with researchers about when to start using RDM in their research, (2) data storage, and (3) data sharing.

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The first area I'll be talking about is when we communicate with researchers about *when* to start thinking about data management in their projects. Most of the "best practices" around research data management will note that it is best to start as early as possible, and while this is completely, 100% true, it can sometimes leave the researcher feeling as though if they don't start it early, then it is useless to implement it later in the project. An inclusive RDM consultation would meet the researcher where they are at, understanding that there are many barriers to implementing RDM early on in a project, such as access to needed software, lack of education on RDM, and a lack of time. In a consultation, the most inclusive and compassionate thing we can do is reassure the researcher that even if they are coming to us at a later stage of the project, we are there to help.

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The next area I will talk about is storage, particularly the 3-2-1 rule. The 3-2-1 rule states that you should have 3 copies of your data, with 2 copies on different storage media, with one located offsite. In theory, this is an excellent way to ensure that your data are properly backed up and accessible. However, in practice, institutions, labs/research groups, and individual researchers may have uneven access to these resources, and trying to adhere to a 3-2-1 rule may pose a significant financial burden to researchers whose institutions do not have licenses for cloud storage, servers for research data, etc. We can't assume all researchers can take on

this financial burden, particularly considering the competitiveness of grants. In consultations, try to understand what the researcher has access to, supplementing any gaps with potential library services to help support their backup strategy. In the cases where a researcher cannot fully meet the 3-2-1 expectations, help them devise a “good enough” strategy given the resources that they have, supplemented by resources you can provide as a librarian.

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Finally, I’m going to talk about data sharing. Data sharing is compulsory with many funding agencies and journals, but for many researchers, particularly neurodivergent researchers, it can be scary to put data out there for the public to see. Common fears a researcher may have include:

What if I made a mistake?
What if someone misinterprets it?
What if someone finds issues in my code?

In an inclusive RDM consultation, acknowledge these nervousness or fears around data sharing! Frame a README file as a way to address some of those fears. Don’t dismiss the researcher’s emotions!

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In conclusion, we suggest a future of RDM that is framed towards inclusivity, which understands that “best practices” may not be the most inclusive language to use in RDM education and support services. We suggest using “good practices” or “recommended practices” in place of “best practices” to recognize the diversity of researchers at your institution. We also encourage meeting the researchers where they are at - if they are not meeting the standards shown in “best practices,” it does not mean they are bad researchers. Further, as librarians, if we use inclusive, open language in our consultations, we can create more trust and continued partnerships with our campus communities. For the future, we will be creating an online Inclusive RDM Toolkit which provides suggested language for consultations at each stage of the research data lifecycle.