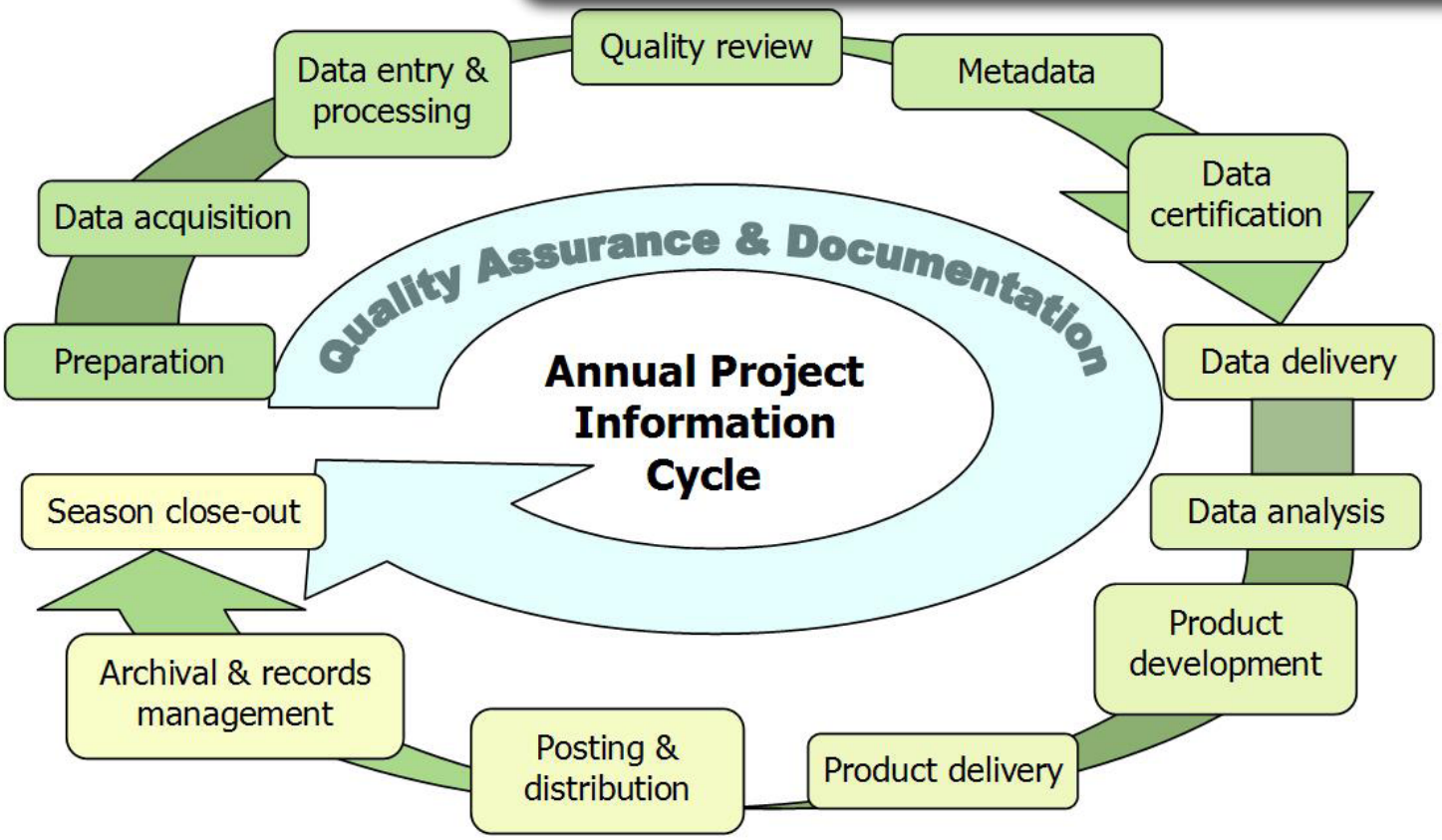
Making Research Relevant

The PACN Data Management Plan: Information is the common currency among the activities and staff involved in the stewardship of natural resources for the National Park Service. The PACN Data Management Plan is a guide for current and future project leaders and PACN staff to ensure the continuity and documentation of data management methods and procedures over time. The Data Management Plan, in turn, refers to other guidance documents and standard operating procedures which convey the specific standards and steps for achieving the network's data management goals.

Project data management may be best understood as an ongoing or cyclic process, as shown in the figure below.

The stages of this cycle are summarized as follows:

- **Preparation** – Training, logistics planning, print forms and maps
- **Data acquisition** – Field trips and data mining to acquire data
- **Data entry & processing** – Data entry and uploads into the working copy of the database, GPS data processing, etc.
- **Quality review** – Data are reviewed for quality and logical consistency
- **Metadata** – Documentation of the year's data collection and results of the quality review
- **Data certification** – Data are certified as complete for the period of record
- **Data delivery** – Certified data and metadata are delivered for archiving and uploaded to the master project database
- **Data analysis** – Data are summarized and analyzed
- **Product development** – Reports, maps, and other products are developed
- **Product delivery** – Deliver reports and other products for posting and archiving
- **Posting & distribution** – Distribute products as planned and/or post to NPS clearinghouses
- **Archival & records management** – Review analog and digital files for retention (or destruction) according to NPS Director's Order 19. Retained files are renamed and stored as needed.
- **Season close-out** – Review and document needed improvements to project procedures or infrastructure, complete administrative reports, develop work plans for the coming season



Idealized flow diagram of the cyclical stages of project data management, from pre-season preparation to season close-out. Note that quality assurance and documentation are thematic and not limited to any particular stage.

For more information, the PACN Data Management Plan can be accessed online at: http://www1.nature.nps.gov/im/units/pacn/data.cfm