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# EconData

## What is EconData?

In July 1996 NIWI's Steinmetz Archive started the project EconData to establish a Dutch data service for economic data. This service will be integrated with the current activities of the archive. EconData builds on previous feasibility studies conducted by the Economic and Social Institute (ESI) in Amsterdam and the Economic Institute Tilburg (EIT). Both of these studies have been funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). For EconData the Steinmetz Archive receives additional funding from NWO. This grant follows a recommendation by the Social Science Council (SWR) of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW).

## Aim

EconData aims at broadening the scope of the Steinmetz Archive. New services will be established to support economic research, including macro-economics, business economics and economic modeling. In addition to the more traditional functions of a data archive, EconData puts strong emphasis on data brokerage. The data service will act as an intermediary between suppliers of economic data and data users. This will include suppliers of international data and users of Dutch data abroad. For this purpose the project plan includes the establishment of an online register of available data sets, irrespective of whether these data sets are available from the Steinmetz Archive or from other sources. EconData will be evaluated in September 1998.

## Registration

EconData will establish a public register of economic data files. Owners of data are invited to register data files which are suitable for secondary analysis. In addition to actual information on the data files, including information on the data owners and the conditions for use, special attention will be given to key information which will allow users to quickly and efficiently locate relevant data files. Furthermore, summaries on the contents of data files will be given to provide users with quick impressions of the possible uses of the data files. The register will be offered to users in two forms: a publication (from the Steinmetz Archive) and an online database (accessible through the Internet) which will be updated and expanded on a regular basis.

*by Albert Bots \**

## Mediation Service

The public register of economic data files will serve as a starting point for EconData's mediation service which will facilitate negotiations between data owners and users. EconData will not only promote contact between these two groups but also represent users in negotiating data access with data owners.

Furthermore, through mediating access to Dutch economic data files, EconData also hopes to expand its archive. In addition to mediating the acquisition of economic data files in the Netherlands, EconData aims to play a role in negotiating access to international economic data files. For this, EconData utilizes the extensive experience of the Steinmetz Archive in the field of international data archive cooperation. The Steinmetz Archive represents the Netherlands as coordinator within the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), the managing body for the world's largest collection of scientific data files which include many economic data files. The Steinmetz Archive is also an active member of the Council of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA) which oversees a cooperative network of European data archives on the Internet.

## Data Guide

The Data Guide is the first inventory of economic data files from a number of important archives. This inventory also includes approximately 100 relevant files which are available from the Steinmetz Archive. Other archives covered by the Data Guide are those in the United States (including ICPSR), Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Sweden. From these archives, a selection was made of data sets which would be of interest to Dutch economists. The Data Guide provides key information on each file as well as references to information on economic data files available on the Internet. Furthermore, the Data Guide contains information on micro economic data files of Statistics Netherlands which are, in part, available through the Scientific Statistics Agency (WSA). Finally, the Data Guide provides information on Belgian and German panel data files. The Data Guide can be ordered from the Steinmetz Archive (price: 25 Dutch Guilders plus shipping). Please post or fax orders to the address listed at the end of this paper.

### **Further Possibilities**

EconData aims to stimulate data owners of registered data files to place their data in the care of EconData's archive. Such an arrangement offers the following advantages for data owners:

- secure storage of data and corresponding documentation
- description and documentation of data according to international standards
- systematic collection and documentation of publications based on secondary data analysis
- exposure of the research to the national and international scientific community
- increase of the yield of data collection through secondary analysis
- handling of inquiries from users and administrative management

### **Results So Far**

Up until April 1998 more than 200 economic data sets have been registered. Descriptions of most of these data sets are available in the on-line database. Since the beginning of the project more than 40 economic data sets have been deposited at the Steinmetz Archive. These data sets are available under standard conditions to users of the Steinmetz Archive.

### **NIWI/Steinmetz Archive**

The EconData project is carried out by NIWI's Steinmetz Archive. The Steinmetz Archive currently manages approximately 2700 data files in the field of social science research and has 30 years of experience in collecting and providing access to social science research data files.

Standard procedures have been developed by the Steinmetz Archive for the acquisition, protection of privacy, storage, provision of access and the documentation of data files. The Steinmetz Archive has an extensive network of contacts with data suppliers who can also supply economic data files. The archive has exchange contracts with data archives outside of the Netherlands. On the Web site of NIWI one can find links to diverse archives for extended search and access possibilities. Furthermore, search facilities are available for data file users at the archive. Each quarter, the Steinmetz Archive issues Data News, a newsletter which among other subjects, announces new additions to the archive. Three databases are available free of cost, of which the most important database is STAR. This database contains descriptions of the studies from the main collection of the Steinmetz Archive. STAR is accessible both at the Steinmetz Archive and on the Internet. There is also an order form for data files available at the Web site.

### **Contact Person**

Since July 1996, Albert Bots has been appointed by the Steinmetz Archive as project manager for EconData. In addition to supervising the activities of EconData, Albert Bots is also active as a lecturer at the Faculty of Economics of the Free University in Amsterdam. Albert Bots can be reached at the Steinmetz Archive for further inquiries.

### **Address**

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## IASSIST - CAPDU

17-21 MAY 1999  
TORONTO CANADA

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The International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology (**IASSIST**) and the Canadian Association of Public Data Users (**CAPDU**) announce their joint 1999 conference, "*Building bridges, breaking barriers: the future of data in the global network*".

The conference will be held May 16-21, 1999 on the University of Toronto campus in Toronto, Ontario and will address issues of computing and information services in social science research, teaching, and data management.

This is IASSIST's 25th annual conference, and the ninth CAPDU conference.

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