Educating the data user: the role of bibliographic instruction

by Kristin McDonough¹ Baruch College, City University of New York

The program of credit courses in research methods and materials offered by the Library Instruction Division at Baruch College, CUNY, has been in existence since the early 1970's. With the exponential growth of information and the advancement of technology the courses have shifted dramatically from a practical "how to use the library" approach to a more conceptually based one that integrates process and product, tools and techniques, traditional print and electronic information sources. What were pioneered as library research courses two decades ago have come to bear the titles "Information Research in Business" and "Information Research in the Social Sciences and the Humanities", testimony to the fact that the site of research is now just as often an online laboratory or a personal computer in the office or home as a library.

Of course, research involves much more than just a choice of site or form/media in which a body of disciplinary evidence or a synthesis of opinion, or string of raw numbers is stored. As research methods have evolved and changed, so has the content of these basic courses over the vears. One of the most dramatic changes in the substantive content of the courses has been the increase in emphasis on access to, evaluation. and use of public data. Our team of six bibliographic instruction librarians has a special commitment to alerting students to potential sources of data because of the nature of the institution in which we teach. Baruch College is, arguably, the largest business school in the world. As such, it attracts students who are, or are quickly trying to become, quantitatively oriented, and offers business and social science courses that are, in the main, quantitatively based. By junior year a student can reasonably expect in one semester to be working on a demographic analysis for a market plan, an econometric projection for a finance course, and the comparison of a fictitious company's data with that of a national sample for an industrial management class.

What is perhaps surprising is that emphasis more often is on the manipulation and application of numbers, using increasingly sophisticated statistical and spreadsheet software. than on identification and retrieval of the sources of these figures. By and large, students are provided with the numbers that they are expected to "crunch." Our goal in the information research courses is to go a step further and tie the identification of authoritative sources of data to the secondary data analysis. We teach students how to identify and recognize potential sources of data from ever-growing core of government, institutional, corporate and private generators of data on both domestic and international levels because we are loathe to make them dependent on data derived from out-of-date textbooks and recycled classroom lectures.

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If our courses as now constituted succeed in the important task of convincing students of the relative availability of published data relevant to their particular needs, it is because we have made a conscious effort to integrate this notion into the fabric of the courses. This was, unfortunately, not always so, at least not for those sections of the courses taught by a humanities-oriented, numbers-shy librarian such as myself. In fact, it is only within the past six or seven semesters that I have stopped treating statistics as a separate entity to be introduced toward the middle of the semester and confined to a fairly cursory treatment of standard sources, such as the specialized statistical indexes.

There are several reasons for my former approach to statistics as a self contained unit broached halfway into a course. The first is simply that the material on statistical sources forms chapter 11 in each of the two in-house textbooks that we use in these courses: Access Information: Research in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, and Access Information: Research in Business. The position of this chapter, following a chapter on government documents, meant that an instructor following the chronology of the text waited to focus on statistical sources until the students had wrestled with government documents - that bibliographically unwieldy type of material daunting even to the most experienced of librarians. The reasoning behind this order of presentation seemed to be that since so many of the important statistical series are, in fact, government publications with complex corporate authorship and involved series added entries, it was best to deal with these later in the semester when the students would be more knowledgable. Linking statistical sources with government documents not only reinforced the notion that statistics could be complicated to identify — as anyone who has searched under 'United States. Bureau of the Census' as author can attest but, in a non-depository library like ours, difficult to actually locate.

Another reason for this artifical approach toward teaching public data sources was the use of the search strategy as a conceptual framework upon which to structure the presentation of instructional material and the completion of assignments. A search strategy is a suggested sequence of steps to be followed in conducting research on almost any subject. The order is, of course, approximate, and the object is to dispel the notion that relevant knowledge and information on a subject are acquired serendipitously rather than through a orderly process using standard bibliographic tools. Using this approach, for example, librarians have students choose a topic of their choice and then introduce them, first, to the notion of background reading, sthen to the definition of terms using a thesarus, thirdly to the identification of a bibliography of previous research, fourthly to books using the catalog, fifthly to periodicals for current information. and finally, the icing on the cake, to RECENT STATISTICS. One was lucky to have guided the students this far through a search strategy by the midterm point!

Below are selected examples of the approach adopted over the past few years in an attempt to underscore the centrality and virtual omnipresence of quantitative evidence in the sort of contemporary social science research in which students are expected to engage or with which, at minimum, they are expected to be familiar. Though I continue to use a modified search strategy framework, my goal is to stress the fact that there are a number of ways to identify and access significant collections of published data. The focus of these examples is child day care, a timely and interesting topic for our largely working class students at Baruch.

Very early in the semester students are taught to immerse themselves in a subject as they start their research. This initial immersion is referred to as background reading and yields a definition and condensed history of the subject, an overview of the major issues involved, as well

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as the identification of major associations and researchers who have contributed to the formation of the body knowledge in the field.

A specialized encyclopedia, such as in this case the Encyclopedia of Social Work, is often an ideal source of background reading. It features an expanded definition of the modalities of child care, with references to both individual and teams of researchers, as well as government agencies which have gathered data relating to "neighborhood care for several million families" (illus. 1). An additional point about the time lag inherent in data collection and analyis can be made by noting how relatively dated are the references in, for example, the latest 1987 edition of an authoritative reference book. (illus. 1)

In explaining the parenthetical citation form used in the encyclopedia, it is necessary to refer to the list of references appended at the end of each article. Focusing on the organizations represented in the entries is an ideal way to underscore the number and variety of groups involved in data collecting. (illus. 2) Profiles of these groups in the Encyclopedia of Asociations indicate those which have data gathering central to their mission. (illus.3)

Guides to the literature or research guides are a generic family of library tools that students are encouraged to use early in the semester. It seems relevant to introduce the latest edition of Wasserman's Statistics Sources at the same time as Webb's Sources of Information in the Social Sciences and Friedes' Literature and Bibliography of the Social Sciences. As the illustration (illus, 4) suggests, students should be alerted to the fact that to maximize retrieval of information, flexibility of approach is essential. Important series of statistics on day care can be found by looking either under "CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS" or under "CHILDREN -MOTHERS WORKING." That many of the publications identified in this guide are available on magnetic tapes as well as in paper is a point made again and again.

This very question of research terminology is one best tackled right at the start of search strategy, with LC Subject Headings introduced as an example of a thesaurus. Its function is to provide an authority list of terms to be used in searching the catalog for books on a topic. One of the key points is that once the researcher determines the correct heading or search term, quantitative data on that same subject can be found by employing the standard subdivision—STATISTICS immediately following the heading, e.g. DAY CARE CENTERS—UNITED STATES—STATISTICS. (Illus. 5)

Another type of reference tool with which students should fairly quickly become familiar is the handbook. The Statistical Abstract of the United States is introduced as an example of the type of handbook that is a compilation of tables, as well as the first recourse a student has when confronted with the task of "finding statistics". But rather than emphasize only the technical features of this single volume wonder, with its tabular titles, headings and notes, contents tables and subject index, it is more effective to present this as a first step which offers a "snapshot" of the full range of statistical series available from various government agencies. In the illustration below (illus, 6), for example, the crucial part of the table is the source note which identifies a Current Population Report by series number. That these periodic census updates are relatively easy to find and are available in machine-readable form are points that can be made immediately and re-emphasized later in the course of reviewing the concept of series entries as one of the elements of the catalog. (illus. 7)

By this very early point in the semester, then, students have been shown that a key publication such as <u>Current Population Reports</u> can be located in a variety of ways, through references in a bibliographic guide (<u>Statistics Sources</u>), or

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those in a handbook (Statistical Abstract of the United States), or through the subject or series approach to the library's catalog. That there is more than one route in no way diminishes the key importance of American Statistics Index or the Statistical Reference Index, which are now routinely introduced along with other periodical indexes. The power of these relatively sophisticated bibliographic tools and the level of detailed analysis they provide of statistical publications is impressed on the students. One effective way in which to start students thinking about the degree of complexity of a social issue such as day care is to have them simply scan the index volume of either ASI or SRI and note the various aspects of the subject on which data are generated and collected for subsequent analysis and policy implementation. This pair of bibliographic tools are no longer only viewed as access tools alone but also as a record or mirror of the perspectives from which day care can be viewed: a service to working mothers, a fast growing service industry, a tax benefit to individuals and corporations, an employee benefit, a unit in the health and nutrition delivery system and so on. (Illus. 9)

One reason why it is important to familiarize students with a number of other indexes that can lead to statistical series is that the wealth of material identified by ASI or SRI, either online or in print, can be overwhelming and ultimately disappointing, especially to students using a non-depository library of moderate size which may not subscribe to all the publications indexed. Other indexes that are profitably introduced as adjuncts to, if not substitutes for, the above are Monthly Catalog of the United States (illus. 10) and the PAIS Bulletin (illus. 11). The latter identifies quantitative studies in two ways: with the subdivision "Statistics", or by means of a note in the citation indicating that the material contains graphs, tables, charts. Each of these indexes generally employs subject terms identical to LC Subject Headings, with which, by this time, the students feel familiar.

References to public data can also be used effectively when the class discusses the protocol of documentation, which is a concept that undergraduates often find difficult to grasp. "What kind of facts do I have to cite?" is one of the most frequently asked questions, to which for years I had been responding, "Any opinion not your own, controversial ideas, facts that are not generally known." Since adding to that not very helpful list "figures or data that are subject to change" I have begun to sense that at least a few of the students now comprehend. They are beginning to understand that a statement such as "Albany is the capital of New York State" is both generally known and relatively stable but that a reference to the population of New York state should be documented since demographic figures change. In fact, as the students now realize, reference to statistics that are woefully in error is one of the surest signs that the sources on which a paper is based are either out-of-date or unreliable.

Then, too, even the most reliable and authoritative of sources is never entirely bias-free, and is certainly subject to misinterpretation, an observation that surfaces continually in class discussions on the importance of evaluating material. In response to an assignment to identify at least one publication or report the data in which have susequently been questioned, several students located accounts in the popular press or scholarly literature about surveys whose results had been either misrepresented or misinterpreted. A New York Times article reported an assertion by one researcher that the number of latchkey children in the U.S. is far greater than suspected, since the estimate of their numbers has largely been based on the self-reported responses of the parents. Many working couples who are surveyed may not admit that their young children are left alone at home while they are at work. A union newspaper published by the AFT contained an editorial repudiating the results of an NIE report on school crime on the grounds that the

national survey had made virtually no distinction in the category "incidents of crime" between pranks, minor vandalism and armed assualts on teachers! As each student reported on the assignment orally to the class, it became clear that for the majority of students, this exercise really made the notion of data come alive.

Undoubtedly, the fact that Bliss Siman, the ICPSR coordinator for all units of the City University of New York, is a dyanmic member of our teaching team has contributed to our determination to make awareness of potential sources and uses of survey, census, and time-series data a vital part of our credit courses. For several semesters she has been presenting sessions on the secondary analysis of data to all sections of the social sciences and business information research courses, using an approach that she describes elsewhere in this issue. The prime motive for the emphasis we place on the interdependence between data identification, retrieval and evaluation on the one hand and manipulation on the other, is to give the students the skills necessary to locate sources of authoritative data

There is yet another impetus behind our thrust toward familiarizing even our beginning, non-specialist students with sources of available data. We want, over the course of the undergraduate's career, to turn the student into a discerning and demanding consumer who will incorporate use of data into subsequent business and professional life. Without a developed group of educated and expectant users coming out of our colleges, universities and professional schools, who will join with librarians and scholars to protest, for example, the Bureau of the Census' intent to make certain of their series available in electronic form only? In the future, when dollar values are put on information and access becomes a matter of economics and political will, we hope that our efforts in the classroom will have had some effect =

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older brothers and sisters, grandmothers, other kin, and householders to the extent possible, or even on the children themselves (Werner, 1984).

Increasingly, however, families are turning to care outside the home. It is estimated that this was the case by 1980 for about half of all children under 6 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982). Smaller families and increased rates of maternal employment have gone hand in hand, and most families using out-of-home care are purchasing care for one child (Emlen, 1974, 1982; Hayghe, 1984).

Family Day Care. The care of shildren in a relative's home is less common than to used to be (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982). Day care is more likely to be nearby with a neighbor. Family day care is provided by women who are not in the labor force, who have child care responsibilities of their own (usually involving larger families), and whose experience and motivations are suited to providing a child care service, typically involving three or four children-less than the limits imposed by regulation. Family day care is the predominant resource used outside the home for infants and toddlers. It is also a major resource for school-age children. Care in family homes affords flexibility in the ages of children accommodated and in the hours that care is provided. Concern has been raised about the use of family day care in deteriorated neighborhoods, about the isolation of caregivers from social support and training. and about their inaccessibility to regulation or to I & R programs. Family day care persists, however, as a viable system of neighborhood care for several million families (Collins & Watson, 1976; Emlen, 1974; Emlen & Koren, 1984; Fosburg et al., 1981; Werner, 1984).

Cenfer Care. Although nonprofit day care centers continue to provide a significant amount of subsidized care for lower-income 500 percent in 5 years (Kinder-Care, 1983) and has the largest market share of the center care business. The second-largest chain, La Petite Academy, has over 400 programs in 24 states, and Children's World serves more than 20,000 children in 160 centers (Friedman, 1985). These chains have been profitable, in part by achieving efficiencies from large numbers of children per center and minimum labor costs, as well as by marketing their discount programs to employers.

Irealment In Day Care Settings. In any community, child care is recognized as occupying an important, though often neglected, position on a continuum of specialized services to families at risk of dissolution. Whether for mental health or child welfare, child care is one of the least restrictive services that can be supportive of family functioning and of a child's treatment program. Child care services play a part in the "reasonable effort" required as alternatives to placement in foster care or residential treatment facilities (Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, P.L. 96-272).

Employee Assistance. Of wider scope. however, are two kinds of services to families to help them cope with their child care responsibilities. One is the employee assistance program (EAP), which began as a corporate approach to problems related to alcoholism and has been broadened to address the individualized child care needs of employees. Employee assistance programs have expanded in scope as more attention has been paid to how employees manage child care, how it affects their work, and how company policies, in turn, facilitate or adversely affect the ability of employees to combine working with family responsibilities. The flexibility of policies concerning sick leave, maternity and paternity leave, flexible work hours, and absenteeism are being modified by companies,

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Section 7 — SOCIAL WELFARE OF

10212 CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND (CDF) 122 C St., N.W. Phone: (202) 628-8787 Washington, DC 20001 Marian Wright Edelman, Pres. Founded: 1973. Staff: 60. Budget: \$4,000,000. Provides systematic, longrange advocacy on behalf of the nation's children. Engages in research, public education, monitoring of federal agencies, litigation, legislative drafting and testimony, assistance to state and local groups, and community organizing in areas of child welfare, child health, adolescent pregnancy prevention, child care and development, family services, and child mental health. Works with individuals and groups to change policies and practices resulting in neglect or maltreatment of millions of children. Advocates: access to existing programs and services; creation of new programs and services where necessary; enforcement of civil rights laws; program accountability; strong parent and community role in decision-making; adequate funding for essential programs for children. Maintains speakers' bureau; compiles statistics. Rublications: (1) CDF Reports (newsletter), monthly; (2) Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Clearinghouse Reports, bimonthly; also publishes series of books and handhooks on issues affecting children. Formerly: (1978) Children's Defense Fund of the Washington Research Project, Convention/Meeting; annual confer-

★10213★ CHILDREN'S RIGHTS GROUP (CRG) 693 Mission St. Phone: (415) 495-7283 San Francisco, CA 94105 Vicki Strang, Deputy Dir. Founded: 1974. Staff: 33. Organization working primarily in the western and southwestern U.S. to help communities and parents utilize, upgrade, and exnand available services for children. Offers workshops, training seminars, and technical assistance to parents who seek to bring federally funded child nutrition programs into their community. Makes a special effort to aid organizations that work with migrant farmworkers' families. Sponsors Project Save, an energy conservation/youth employment program providing free home weatherization for low-income households in Daly City and San Francisco, CA. Conducts analyses of issues and legislation that affect children's services, particularly tax limitation proposals such as California's Proposition 13. Lobbies for Fair Housing for Children ordinances (making it illegal for landlords to refuse rental to families with children) in California. Operates an employerrelated child care project to promote child care services for employees of major Bay Area employers. Compiles data on federal food program participation. Focuses research on children's services including health, nutrition, and child care. Publications: Community Services Bulletin, monthly; also publishes

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(in thousands, except percent. As of winter 1984-1985, Data were obtained for the three youngest children under 15 years old (including any adopted or stepchildren in their care) in the household. This represents approximately 90 percent of all children under 15 years old of working women. Based on the Survey of Income and Program Participation, see text, section 14]

USUAL WEEKLY CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENT	CHILDREN UNDER 15 YEARS			CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS						Chi
	Total	Mother employed		Total	Mother employed		Under	1 and	3 and	dren 5-14
		Full time 1	Part time	(CUAL	Full time !	Part time	And	Angra 5	years	years
Total	26,455	16,812	9,643	8,168	5,060	3,108	1,385	3,267	3,516	18,287
Care in child's home	2,496 712 804	2,480 1,133 423 539 385	2,219 1,363 289 265 302	2,534 1,282 487 306 479	1,235 542 259 183 251	1,300 740 209 123 228	516 252 102 44 118	1,068 528 208 147 185	950 502 157 114 115	2,164 1,214 244 496 206
Care in another home	3,601	2,675 743 285 1,647	1,126 395 182 549	3,020 833 368 1,819	2,135 633 212 1,390	884 300 155 429	563 174 70 319	1,368 361 130 877	1,089 298 167 624	782 305 100 377
Organized child care facilities	2,411 1,440 971	1,830 1,067 763	581 373 208	1,688 1,142 748	1,415 835 580	473 307 166	195 116 79	563 401 162	1,131 625 506	523 298 225
Kindergarten/grade school	13,815 488 1,245	8,978 354 497	4,839 134 748	81 (x) 663	21 (x) 252	41 (x) 412	(x) (x) 112	(x) (x) 267	61 (x) 285	13,753 488 581
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION			,	-2						
Total	100.0	100.0	100 0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Care in child's home	17.8 9.4 2.7 3.0 2.8	14.8 6.7 2.5 - 3.2 2.3	23 0 14 1 3 0 2.7 3.1	31.0 15.7 5.7 3.7 5.9	24.4 10.7 5.1 3.6 5.0	41.8 23.8 6.7 4.0 7.3	37.3 18.2 7.4 3.2 8.5	32.7 16 2 6 4 4 5 5 7	27 0 14 3 4.5 3.3 5 0	11.8 6.6 1.3 2.7 1.1
Care in another home By grandparent By other relative By nomelative	14 4 4 3 1.8 8 3	15 9 4 4 1 7 9 8	11.7 4.1 1.9 5.7	37.0 10.2 4.5 22.3	42.2 10.5 4.2 27.5	28 4 0 7 6 0 13 8	40 8 12 8 5 1 23 0	41 9 11 0 4 0 26 8	31 0 8 5 4 7 17 7	4 3 1.7 .5 2.1
Organized child care facilities	9.1 5.4 3.7	10 8 8 3 4 5	5.1 3.9 2.2	23 1 14.0 9.1	28 0 16 5 11.5	15 2 9 9 6 3	14 1 8.4 5.7	17 2 12 3 5 0	32 2 17 8 14 4	2 d 1 d 1.2
Kindergarten/grade school Child cares for self Parent cares for child ^x	52 2 1 8 4.7	53 4 2.1 3.0	50 2 1 4 7 8	.8 (x) 8 1	.4 (x) 5 0	1 3 (x) 13 3	(x) (x) B.1	(x) (x) 8 2	1.7 (x) 8.1	75.2 2.7 3.2

X Not applicable | Fish-time jobs comprise 25 hours or more pur week, | I frictivities woman working at home or away

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TABLES:

[Tables 1-6 show data for Dec. 1984.

Caretakers of children include parents, adult siblings, other adult relatives, unrelated adults, nonadults, and self-care.

Data by type of household are shown for all, married couple, and female-headed households.)

CHILDREN

[Tables show number of children aged 5-13 years old enrolled in school.]

- 1-2. [By] after-school caretaker of children,age of child, type of household, labor force
 status of mother, and race. (p. 7-12)
- [By] after-school care [caretaker] of children whose mothers work full time by occupation and education of mother, family income, and race. (p. 13)
- [By] hours of care for children who regularly spend time not under parents' supervision, type of caretaker, and period of day. (p. 15) HOUSEHOLDS

[Tables show number of households with children aged 5-13 years old enrolled in school.]

5. By whether fully cared for by parents after school and whether any child was regularly not in adult care, by type of household, labor force status and education of female householder, and family income. (p. 16)

 By number of children and whether any child was not in adult care after school, by labor force status of female householder and race. (p. 17)

TRENDS

7. [Number of children by] after-school child care arrangements [caretaker] for children 5-13 years old [and] labor force status of mother: Oct. 1974 and [Dec.] 1984. (p. 17)

described below. Part A is described in ASI 1986 Annual (or 1986 Monthly Supplement 11) under this number. The remaining 4 parts have not yet been issued.

A similar report was issued for the 1970 census (see ASI Retrospective Edition and 1st-3rd Annual Supplements under 2557-1).

2555-2.2: Part B. Chapter 4. Census Promotion Program. Chapter 5. Field Enumeration

[Dec. 1986. 16+103 p. PHC80-R2-B. Price not given. ASI/MF/4]

Contents

Chapter 4. Includes narrative discussion of census promotion program objectives and activities; supporting organizations and program participation; facsimile advertisements and other promotional materials, and program evaluation. (p. 4.1-4.16)

Chapter 5. Includes narrative discussion of census field operations, organization structure, logistics, personnel and training, and mailing and interviewing procedures; lists of district offices and publicand field-use forms; facsimile reporting forms; staffing calendars; and 6 methodological tables. (p. 5.1-5.103)

2555-2.3: Part C. Chapter 7. Sempling and Estimation. Chapter 12. Population and Housing Content Items

[Dec. 1986, 9+75 p. PHC80-R2-C. Price not given. ASI/MF/3]

Contents:

Chapter 7. Includes narrative discussion of sample design and features, estimation procedures, and sampling variability and errors; and list of references. (p. 7.1-7.9)

Chapter 12. Includes narrative discussion of each population and housing question-naire item, its purpose and history, user instructions, and computer editing and processing specifications; facsimile survey forms; computer edit sequence; and lists of instructional and classification codes. (p. 12.1-12.75)

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