

Editor's Notes

Welcome to the second issue of the IASSIST Quarterly vol. 29. This issue contains three articles from the IASSIST conference in Edinburgh in May 2005.

At the session called "Using National Data" the paper on "Economic data as snapshots in time" was presented by Katrina Stierholz from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. They are into names at this bank, their data is called FRED (Federal Reserve Economic Data), and they have a FRASER, that is an image archive of economic statistical publications, and an ALFRED that is a machine-readable archive with access for researchers to pull real-time data. Katrina Stierholz explains in the paper that while the FRED data is a revised time-series, ALFRED and FRASER contain the historical real-time data. With FRASER and ALFRED the ability to reproduce other economists' work becomes possible. "Looking back at decisions made, it is important to be aware of what the data at the time said, not what they say now". The article describes the systems FRED, ALFRED, and FRASER and what they contain and what functionality they offer.

At the session "Discovering a Profession: the Accidental Data Librarian" a presentation "Looking for data directions? – ask a data librarian" was given by Stuart Macdonald (Edinburgh University Data Library) and Luis Martinez (London School of Economics Data Library). This presentation has been turned into the article presented here: "The Local Data Support Landscape in the UK". The article focuses on specialized national data centres. They start with a tax assessment from 7th century, mentions the Domesday Book from 1086, but quickly moves on to the establishment of the start of UK Data Archive in 1967, and others to follow. The Office for National Statistics produce many key statistics used in policies as well as in research and so does "the cousin" The General Register Office for Scotland. The article describes the centers UKDA, ESDS, EDINA, MIMAS, AHDS and several more. Connections between these centers exist such as the "Data Information Specialist Committee-UK" (DISC-UK) that is a sort of national IASSIST for data librarians and data managers.

In the session on "Enriching Metadata: the Lifecycle Perspective" the presentation "Providing context for understanding: the data life cycle" was given by Elizabeth Hamilton from the University of New Brunswick, Canada. Elizabeth Hamilton has turned the presentation into the paper "Providing Context for Understanding: Insight from Research on Two Canadian Health Surveys". She uses the National Population Health Survey (NPHS) and the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) as cases for evaluation of documentation using the DDI-format (Data Documentation Initiative). The conclusion is that there is a need for placing the survey data in context, and that some

information (metadata) from the earliest part of the data life-cycle is "integral contextual information and as such should be identified, described and preserved, in addition to the formal data collection itself". Can we say we can trust the data? Elizabeth Hamilton want to be able to give a clear positive answer with the addition: "We have a complete record of evolution of that question, from concept to analysis."

The IASSIST website is constantly evolving so remember to pay a virtual visit to <http://iassistdata.org> and to the IASSIST weblog (blog) - IASSIST Communiqué – at <http://iassistblog.org>. At the IASSIST website you can find information on previous and coming conferences as well as easy access to the articles of the IASSIST Quarterly in the form of PDF-files.

Papers for the IASSIST Quarterly are most welcome. Papers can be from IASSIST conferences, from other conferences, from local presentation, discussion input, etc. Contact the editor via e-mail: kbr@sam.sdu.dk.

Karsten Boye Rasmussen, February 2006