PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON 1981
IASSIST—IFDO CONFERENCE

Alice Robbin

This is a report on a planning meeting for the 1981 IASSIST—IFDO Conference that I attended in my capacity as President of IASSIST. The report summarizes agreements on the objectives of the Conference, its contents, audiences, and IASSIST's role and responsibilities.

On October 6th and 7th, I attended the meeting in Paris, France. My trip was funded by the National Science Foundation as part of its program to help international organizations sponsor and plan professional society meetings. The interests of IASSIST correspond rather well with the objectives of the Foundation's travel grants and, in particular, with the French-American program of the International Program Division. In attendance was the Executive Planning Committee, composed of French members, F. BON and B. BOUET of the University of Grenoble, J.-P. GREMY of the University Descartes (and also a member of IASSIST), and myself. G. MARTINOTTI, President of IFDO, was unable to attend. The meeting was a delight, and we worked steadily with few interruptions for hours on end, all of us committed to completing a long agenda of items and each recognizing that we had very little time to exchange information. I am most grateful for the careful pre-meeting planning and enthusiasm that the French members of the Executive Committee demonstrated and the good humor that reigned throughout the long days.

Here are the particulars:

TITLE:

The Impact of Computerization on Social Science Research: Data Services and Technological Developments/ L'impact de l'informatique sur les recherches en science sociales: les banques de donnees et les developpements technologiques

DATE:

September 14–18, 1981

PLACE:

University of Grenoble, Grenoble, France.

CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS:

IASSIST, IFDO, Laboratoire d'informatique pour les Sciences de l'Homme (LISH)/ Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), and the University of Grenoble

WORKING LANGUAGES:

English and French (Sessions will have both French and English speaking professionals who will act as informal intermediaries.)

REGISTRATION FEE:

$35 U.S. or 150 FF.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE:

- End of October: 'Call for Papers' (By this time all IASSIST members should have received a copy.)
- Middle of February 1981: Intention to submit a paper should be submitted to the French Planning Commitee.
- Beginning of April 1981: Abstract of paper submitted to the French Planning Committee (no more than 500 words).
- Beginning of May 1981: Notification of acceptance of paper
- End of June—Beginning of July 1981: Preliminary Agenda for the Conference.

This schedule should allow ample time for IASSIST members to decide whether they want to attend the Grenoble meetings and to apply for institutional and/or extramural funding support. (And also to review our French)

CONFERENCE AGENDA:

Plenary Session: Title: Computers and Information: Their Societal Impact

Themes:

- **New Types of Research** will include the processing of large ecological files and survey, textual, historical, and biographical data; complex data (historical, biographical, time series, genealogical, topological, and textual): their creation, structure, administration, and preservation, and problems arising from their exchange; secondary analysis; computer mapping; and problems of aggregation and disaggregation.

- **New Institutions** will include development of data banks and their perspectives; politics of creating and disseminating data; longterm storage; sociological approaches to the data world (producers, users, services); information systems about data and machine readable files.

- **New Tools** will include networks, shared and distributed data bases, on-line data bases; micro- and minicomputers; data base management systems for complex data bases and perspectives on the application of artificial intelligence and knowledge representation; compatibility (through translation, Pivots languages); and scientific information retrieval.

- **Relations between data producers and researchers** will include data description and documentation, user needs for information and data, economics of data services; information on organizational sources for public and commercial data; political, organizational, and technical problems associated with process-produced data (public/administrative records); public opinion polls; their quality, effects on political decision-making, access conditions; anonymization of data (and deductive disclosure).

As you can see this is a broad methodological, technical, research and policy agenda for the Conference. It permits wide participation by members of IASSIST, who can define their own contributions within the proposed topics. The breadth of subjects is indicative of the wide range of interests by members of IASSIST, IFDO, and the French social scientific community.

WORKSHOP AGENDA:

A one-day series of workshops devoted to three topics of substantial interest to IASSIST members and the French social research community and government agencies has been proposed. The workshops will be the responsibility of IASSIST and its members. IASSIST members should immediately signal their interest in participating in a workshop, submit an abstract of the objectives of their contribution, and as extensive as possible an outline of the proposed discussion (including the estimated length of time required for the presentation). Copies of the abstract and outline should be sent to IASSIST 1981 workshop chair, Laine Ruus, and members of the Program Committee (Robbin, McManus, Rowe, Von Brunken, Gavrel, and Schrik; addresses found below). IASSIST will attempt to secure travel and lodging support for those individuals selected to participate in these workshops (at the same time, individuals should attempt to locate matching funds). The Program Committee will develop an extensive outline of the contents of each of the workshops, to be forwarded to various funding agencies. This outline should be completed by the middle of December; therefore, IASSIST members wishing to participate in these workshops should contact IASSIST Program Committee members and the President as soon as possible.

Topic 1: The Assay/Evaluation of Survey, Ecological, Cartographic, and Satellite Data. This is viewed as a working session (read "technical"), lasting an entire day, during which time four individuals will present the conceptual and methodological activities required to evaluate the quality of data (one person on survey data, the second on ecological, the third on cartographic, and the forth on satellite data).

Topic 2: The Organization and Management of Data Services. This is viewed as a working session, lasting either a half or a whole day (in conjunction with Topic 3), during which time at least one individual will discuss the political, economic, and administrative problems associated with the organization and management of data services; budgeting; personnel recruitment and training (but not to be confused with the next topic); building a collection; user services; relationships of personnel to users, software and computer; maintenance and preservation; user needs, linkages to other information services; etc.

Topic 3: The Formation of a Professional Data Archivist and Librarian. This is viewed as a working session, lasting either a half or a whole day (in conjunction with Topic 2), during which time at least one individual will discuss problems in recruitment and training of data services' personnel, based on previous experience; and knowledge necessary to provide data services. Hands-on experience in the various aspects of understanding data and providing data services will be provided.

EXPOSITION/DEMONSTRATION DURING THE CONFERENCE:

Three areas of interest have been identified, and others are sought.

- Build the exposition around minicomputing and social research; display of materials created and used by IASSIST and IFDO members, with demonstrations during the conference.
- Invite data base vendors (e.g., VIEWDATA) to demonstrate their wares to the social science community.
- Invite the network people of EURONET and regional and international network organizations (e.g., CHRONOS Data Bank of the EEC) to demonstrate on-line access and retrieval.

FUNDING

The cost of attending this conference should not be minimized. In an effort to assist social and information scientists' participation in the Grenoble conference, a variety of funding strategies are suggested. First, as President of IASSIST, I have made application to the U.S. National Science Foundation for a group travel grant on behalf of U.S. social and information scientists. If awarded, the grant would provide 13 U.S. scientists with air travel between their home institution and the conference (an average grant of $884.). The award will be competed for and is open to all U.S. scientists. Selection criteria include a good distribution between young scientists whose professional development will profit by attendance and experienced scientists who are knowledgeable about social science information

infrastructure development and can contribute to cooperative social science research activity; good geographic and institutional distribution; and a mix of contributed papers, invited papers, and workshop organizers. The Selection Committee is composed of social and information scientists who have long been involved in efforts to develop social science data services and in organizing access to machine-readable data. The Committee is chaired by Dr. Joseph W. Duncan, Director of the U.S. Office of Federal Statistical Policy and Standards. Should the grant be awarded, IASSIST members and other social scientists will be immediately informed through their professional journals. Instructions will be supplied on to whom and in what form your proposed paper should be described. The grant proposal will be submitted by January 1, 1981. I hope that a decision will be forthcoming by April 1st and that the Selection Committee will make its final decision by the end of May. You are very much encouraged to respond immediately to the 'Call for Papers' (directly to Frederic Bon). I will be kept informed by the French organizers about the IASSIST members' and other social and information scientists' interest in participating in the Grenoble conference. Should you have any questions, please feel free to call me.

Second, IASSIST members should make every effort to secure institutional or extramural funding support if they wish to attend this Conference. National research funding agencies (e.g., Social Science Research Councils and the like) have limited amounts of funding for individual travel grants. For example, the U.S. National Science Foundation has a limited budget for individual awards to individuals who have been invited to organize a special session or lecture at a plenary session of an international scientific meeting. Other national funding bodies have funds for individuals who will give papers/communications in sessions at international scientific meetings. Since there is ample time to make special requests for institutional support, this strategy should be employed.

Third, an effort will be made to interest data processing and minicomputer manufacturers to assist in the conference. All ideas on this front are solicited from the members of IASSIST. Please contact me if you have any thoughts on this matter.

IASSIST is an *international* organization. It was organized to reflect the needs of professionals involved in providing data services. Also included in its mandate is the objective of providing the expertise from among its members to assist in developing data services in countries where this need has been articulated. The French scholarly community has requested our assistance in the planning and in the success of this Conference. It behooves each of us to diffuse the knowledge and experience we have gained in providing data services. This international Conference will allow us to do just that. I look eagerly for your enthusiasm and commitment to making this Conference a success.

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IASSIST 1981 Workshop Chair

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Program Committee Members (IASSIST)

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