

Certain definitional problems are now being addressed by members of the US Action Group: What do we mean by a Social Science Data Archive? How does it differ from a Social Science Data Library? Joseph Bonmariage has suggested that there are different levels of production and dissemination. The issue of what constitutes "social science" has been raised. David Nasitir suggested that "everything is (or can be) grist for the social scientific mill." He has proposed that by social science we mean "used by social scientists" rather than "produced by social scientists." This broadens the definition to include, for example, original or secondary distributors of process-produced data, a major social science resource.

The directory would be developed in machine-readable form in order to facilitate updating and would either be published annually or available on a subscription basis. It will include entries for both archives and libraries and would include an appendix listing known organizations for which no further information is available.

A questionnaire is being prepared for distribution by the first of the year and a preliminary version of the directory should be ready in April, 1977. In the meantime, a "primitive bibliography" of existing data archive "registries" is being compiled which might appear in the directory in the form of an annotated bibliography.

DATA ACQUISITION

- Canada- Pierre Lacasse, Centre d' recherches en aménagement régional, Université de Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke, Québec
- Europe- Marcia Taylor, Social Science Research Council Survey Archive, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, P.O. Box 23, Colchester, Essex, England CO4 3SD
- United States- Donald Harrison, National Archives (NNR), Washington, D.C. 20408

Mandate

This Action Group addresses the problems of data acquisition for archives with particular emphasis on the necessary relationship between the collectors and creators of data and the archives. Recommended procedures for the acquisition of data would be developed with the intent of assisting researchers at critical points during the data collection process to ensure and promote the transfer of high quality data to the public domain for further academic investigation. The group will also survey different acquisition policies already in use, with attention to both legal and procedural problems connected with the acquisition and de-acquisition of data.

[Editor's Note: The original mandate included the statement, "A survey of confidentiality laws, implications, and problems existing in machine-readable data would be conducted. A report summarizing the survey and resolving the problems when possible would be produced." This activity has been transferred to the Action Group on Process-Produced Data. The under-lined section of the mandate of the Data Acquisition Action Group reflects an enlarging of the scope of activities to be undertaken.]

Activities and Plans

A comprehensive questionnaire on archive acquisition policies has been drafted by Marcia Taylor and is now being reviewed by Action Group members in North America and Europe. The questionnaire addresses the criteria for selection including contractual obligations, medium of storage, geographic scope, field of study, quality, selection procedures, and incentives and sanctions for encouraging/discouraging deposits.

Whereas other Action Groups are concerned with various means of making data accessible to the user, this Action Group will focus on the problems relevant to the initial archival acquisition. Related to this issue is the possibility of joining with other organizations in providing incentives for both academic and governmental data producers to make their data files more generally usable and more widely available.

The Action Group intends to address questions of deacquisition as well as acquisition policies to the needs of a local service data library.

DATA DOCUMENTATION

- Canada- Dave L. Salley, Management and Central Services Group, Standards Division, Statistics Canada, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T6
- Europe- Cees Middendorp, Steinmetzarchief, Kleine-Gartmanplantsoen 10, Amsterdam-C., Netherlands
- United States- John Grasso, Office of Research and Development, Center for Appalachian Studies and Development, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia 26506

Mandate

This group will develop standards for the measurement of variables, i.e., the definition of constructs and their operationalisation and measurement. In principle, these standards should be applicable cross-nationally, although this may not always prove to be possible. Standards will be developed for "simple background variables" used in surveys, i.e., educational level, age, head of household, as well as constructs such as job satisfaction, anomia, political interest (i.e., to be measured by a scale or index). Thus, the work of this group will be closely linked to that which is going on regarding the development of social indicators. The codes will be incorporated into source books to provide researchers with a resource tool for coding and organizing their data consistently.