

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.

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Cees Middendorp suggests that the work of this Action Group could perhaps be linked to the older inventories by Robinson, et al. of the University of Michigan Survey Research Center. He notes the difficulties in solving the problems and implementing the recommendations, that standards can only be developed on the basis of research-evidence, and suggests that revisions will be necessary on the basis of either new theoretical insights or new empirical evidence.

At the Steering Committee meeting in Edinburgh, Erwin K. Scheuch of the Institute for Applied Social Research and the Zentralarchiv presented a description of face sheet problems. He described his analysis of 19 studies in which he looked for comparability of demographic characteristics across studies. His findings indicated that the broad collapsing of categories masked various life cycle and income changes which have occurred over time. On the basis of his preliminary results, he suggested that IASSIST focus on the need for standardizing demographic variables. He also suggested that further study could be carried out by IASSIST members and the results be communicated to survey agencies. IASSIST recommendations could be used by these agencies to perfect their survey techniques and would provide IASSIST with an excellent opportunity for impact in the area of standardization of demographic variables.

This Action Group has begun reviewing already available material in the field, which includes the work carried out by Scheuch and Van Dusen and Zill at the Center for Coordination of Research on Social Indicators in Washington, D.C. This work will form the basis for a project which will test the value of these independent variables in actual research and provide a basic list of such items with recommended coding schemes. In time, this should lead to the development of general recommendations for the design of codes.

CLASSIFICATION

Canada- not yet activated

Europe- Ekkehard Mochmann, Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung, Bachemer Strasse 40, 5 Köln 41, Federal Republic of Germany

United States- Sue Dodd, Data Library, Institute for Research in Social Sciences, Manning Hall, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

Mandate

Existing classification schemes for both studies as a whole and variables within studies would be examined. The results of such a review and recommendations would be published. Additionally, information required for the cataloguing of machine-readable data in libraries would be researched and concrete guidelines for such catalogues would be formulated. Required classification schemes for the production of indicator source books and variable level retrieval systems will be investigated. The necessary components of an adequate Study Description will be identified.