Editor's Notes

The theme of the IASSIST 2002 conference in Storrs, CT was "Accelerating Access Collaboration and Dessimination". The conference consisted of many good ("best ever") and well attended workshops, streams, discussions, panels, and presentations. Many of the PowerPoint presentation are already available for viewing at the IASSIST web-site www.iassistdata.org. On the web-site you can take a look under Multimedia Presentations from the IASSIST 2002 conference. If your presentation is not available you should contact the collector Lisa Neidert (lisan@umich.edu). Papers from the conference are scheduled to appear in this and coming issues of the IASSIST Quarterly. You can contact the editor (kbr@sam.sdu.dk).

This issue Vol. 25-4 of the IASSIST Quarterly contains three papers from the 2002 conference: September 11th has affected nearly everybody, everywhere. Shortly after the acts the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) lauched the "National Tragedy Study". The intention was to replicate the "Kennedy Assassination Study" carried out forty years earlier. For the session on "The New Frontier for Archives" Tom W. Smith and Michael Forstrom from National Opinion Research Center and University of Chicago had prepared a paper with the title "In Praise of Data Archives: Finding and Recovering the 1963 Kennedy Assassination Study". The paper explains that this task cannot be said to have been easy. This is a detailed description of a search for documentation and data for a single study. Luckily the needle in the haystack was retrieved, but again technology raised new difficulties, in this metaphor the problem was now the missing sewing machine. The conclusion is as the title says "praise for data archives", if data and documentation had been properly stored at a data archive the similar task could have been routine and not an experiment in data excavation and the task could have been carried out in confidence of a positive outcome.

From the session on "eXtreme Intelligence: Pushing Expert Systems to Their Limits" Robert Wozniak from the Minnesota Population Center explores in his paper "Emerging from the Quagmire: Building Expert Systems Technologies for the Social Sciences" the latest technology for the discovery and access to social science data. Utilization of the web has moved the extraction expertise from the professional to the user and leaving the user in a quagmire. By taking advantage of the current technology and by utilizing domain knowledge both the novice and the expert will be assisted. The paper uses NHGIS National Historical Geographic Information System and its terabyte of United States summary census data as an example. The system is an expert system and is capable of deducing that a requested variable does not exist at the required geographical level and will expand to the next level to fulfil the request.

In the session called "Make It Faster, Make It Bigger: Developments in Data Delivery Systems" Micah Altman from Harvard University presented the paper "Open Source Software for Libraries: from Greenstone to Virtual Data Center and Beyond". The paper provides an introduction to Open Source Software (OSS) and looks into questions like what are the advantages and disadvantages of OSS and which are most useful in the library environment. Among the advantages are cost and fast respondance to bugs and thus evolution of the software. The risk of using OSS could be the stagnation of software and a lesser degree of usability. For the data library or archive OSS can be of significance as it can be recompiled and ported to new hardware and operating systems which is important if the digital objects are requiring specific software. (Often the archive will try to store the objects in formats that are readable or transformable into other existing and even coming software packages). The paper also directly reviews some OSS packages for library use as well as gives addresses to these and other resources.

Three papers from three sessions at the recent conference. Do have a good read of this issue of the IASSIST Quarterly.

Karsten Boye Rasmussen, August 2002