Editor's Notes

This is the fourth issue of the IASSIST Quarterly vol. 27. With this issue we end the 2003 volume of the IQ. The coming issues in vol. 28 (2004) will hopefully be out somewhat earlier next year. As we go to press at end of 2004, this is a good time to wish you all a good 2005.

Celia Russell, Keith Cole, M.A.S. Jones, S.M. Pickles, M. Riding, K. Roy, and M. Sensier are presenting an article on the SAMD-project ("The Seamless Access to Multiple Datasets") based in Manchester at MIMAS ("Manchester Information and Associated Services") in collaboration with the supercomputing center at the same UK-university. The article describes the project to demonstrate the use of grid technologies for data retrieval, manipulation, and analysis in an economic application. The author indicates that grid technologies have superceded the world wide web for the handling of large and complex datasets in the physical sciences, and companies like Microsoft, Sun, IBM are developing grid technologies for use in business to business communications. The paper is about the first project to successfully use grid technologies in a social science context and looks at the implications of this for future social science quantitative research (e-Science). This paper was presented by Celia Russell at the IASSIST 2004 conference in the session on "New Avenues for Data Dissemination".

From the session on "Changes in the way Data Archives Process Data" at the same IASSIST 2004 conference a paper by Anne Sofie Fink Kjeldgaard, Søren Priisholm, and Birgitte Grønlund Jensen (at the Danish Data Archives) shows "Data Processing in Danish Data Archives". At the Danish Data Archives (DDA) great effort is taken to preserve the data sets in a way that meets the needs of the secondary researcher. For this reason data processing is a core operation in the DDA and great importance is attached to producing reliable and useful documentation of the preserved data files.

Also from Manchester comes an article from Angela Dale, CCSR, at the University of Manchester on "Research access to microdata: an attempt to provide a context". The article mentions that among the "Aims and Objectives of National Statistics" is "to provide researchers, analysts and other customers with a statistical service that assists their work and studies". However, statistical offices have to tread a careful balance between providing the data needed by all sections of society and maintaining the confidence of the general public. Experiences of some countries have shown that the public can lose confidence in the national statistical office and that the process of data collection then will be undermined and may not recover. Microdata are now being provided and used, it is thus very important that these data do not reveal any information for too precise identification. Furthermore, a future breach of confidentiality should also be prevented – including using other, new, and unknown access and analysis methods. Consequently a balance is required. This has to be carried out in such a way that a reasonable amount of detail is released in order not to hinder research and at the same time securing the confidential information i.e. hindering the specific identification. The more detail a dataset contains the more restricted the access to the file has to be.

We invite you to visit the IASSIST website at www.IASSISTdata.org. There you will find information on previous and coming conferences. Among other features of the website is the possibility to access the IASSIST Quarterly as a PDF-file. Papers for the IASSIST Quarterly are most welcome. Papers can be from IASSIST conferences, from other conferences, from local presentation, etc. For further information contact the editor via e-mail: kbr@sam.sdu.dk.

This issue also presents the "IASSIST Call for Papers". The IASSIST (and IFDO) conference will be in Edinburgh 25th to 27th May 2005.

Karsten Boye Rasmussen, November 2004.