

Editor's Notes

Welcome to the IASSIST Quarterly (IQ) volume 32 2008. We have collected the 1, 2, 3, and 4 issues into a single issue for 2008 in order to catch up with our schedule.

In the text below - mostly by cutting and pasting - I am giving a short appetizer for the articles in this issue of the IQ. This type of editorial is among the few areas where plagiarism is actually welcomed.

Nikos Askitas is the head of the International Data Service Center of the Institute for the Study of Labor in Germany (IZA). At the 2008 IASSIST conference he presented what is here an article on the "Data Documentation and Remote Computing at the International Data Service Center". The data documentation of the IDSC that started with translation of German metadata into English has developed into a detailed, in depth, searchable and standardized information service, especially helpful for comparative research. The datasets are in the areas: Employment and Wages, Education and Training, and Demographics and Migration. The documentation is available in HTML, PDF, and as DDI-files. This documentation production is explained in the first part of the article. In the second part of the article the IDSC experience with "remote computing" is described. Germany uses the concept of "factual anonymization" and the production of "scientific use files". However, such files are not allowed for export. Instead IDSC supplies interfaces to scientists with both local and remote support for which IDSC has developed special software (JoSuA).

The article "A Documentation Model for Comparative Research Based on Harmonization Strategies" by John Kallas from University of the Aegean at Mytilene on Lesbos, Greece and Apostolos Linardis from the National Centre for Social Research in Athens, is proposing a documentation model for both longitudinal and cross-cultural studies. Different harmonization strategies are examined and three documentation models are proposed. The authors have chosen the term "cross-cultural" rather than "cross-national" as cultural discrepancies may exist within the same nation. The article underlines the importance of the data element, the concept, the universe, and the classification as they are study components where even small changes may affect the overall comparability. This is leading to looking at the stages for the different types of harmonization strategies: ex ante input, ex ante output, and ex post. Most documentation processes at data archives are ex post harmonization. The authors are aware that the proposed study documentation procedure is laborious for the researchers; however, the positive side is the benefits in searching and locating the data.

At the 2009 IASSIST conference in the session "Protecting Privacy While Preserving Access: Restricted Use Data and Disclosure Considerations", Sharon Bolton and Matthew Woollard gave a presentation that is now an article titled "Strengthening Data Security: an Holistic Approach" and they are advocating exactly that. The authors both work at UK Data Archive (UKDA) as Data Services Manager and Head of Digital Preservation and Systems. The holistic approach to data security includes "the education of data creators in the reduction of disclosure risk, the integration of robust and appropriate data processing, handling and management procedures, the value of emerging technological solutions, the training of data users in data security, and the importance of management control, as well as the need to be informed by emerging government security and digital preservation standards". The background is a massive governmental data loss that hit front pages and has resulted in reports and laws with criminal penalties for the disclosure of confidential information. These lessons as well as the laws are relevant for the archival society. The UKDA had an audit of its "in-house data handling" which resulted in existing good practice being identified and additional methods developed. These were collated into a comprehensive set of data security procedures with effect for both UKDA staff and the users.

At the same IASSIST conference in the session "Sharing Data: High Rewards, Formidable Barriers" Carina Carlhed and Iris Alfredsson from respectively Mälardalen University, Sweden and the Swedish National Data Service (SND) presented a report from an investigation carried out earlier in 2009. The report has been turned into an article for the IQ with the title: "Swedish National Data Service's Strategy for Sharing and Mediating Data. Practices of Open Access to and Reuse of Research Data - The State of the Art in Sweden 2009". The report is based upon a joint project between SND and four university libraries that carried out a national survey of existing databases and database research, as well as attitudes towards data sharing among researchers. This was carried out by email questionnaires sent to professors and doctoral students. In general the results show that doctoral students expressed great uncertainty about questions of amounts of reusable digital data, while professors emphasize lack of resources for researchers to document and make their data accessible for others. The groups consider the most effective interventions for enhancing accessibility to digital data to be that research grants should include funds for preparing the data for sharing and archiving, and that archiving data for use by the scientific community is acknowledged to be of scientific merit. A similar study was carried out in Finland and compared to this Swedish study. We hope to present the Finnish study in a later issue of the IQ. The Swedish Research Council founded in 2006 a Database Infrastructure Committee (DISC) to promote

the development of an effective infrastructure for sharing research data. A product of this initiative has been the formation of the Swedish National Data Service (SND) that also is described in the article. The article further describes the procedures of the surveys and there might be followers for doing similar user investigations among other data organizations. The survey contains questions as to the knowledge of plans such as the roadmap “The Swedish Research Council’s Guide to Infrastructure” (2007) and the “OECD Guidelines on Open Access to Research Data from Public Funding” (2007). Answers to these questions exhibited a low level of knowledge, as did questions about making own data available. Read more in the article, and also about reasons given for not reusing digital data, and the seven suggested obstacles to sharing digital data.

Should you be interested in compiling issues for the IQ as guest editor(s) please contact me. If you don’t have anything to offer right now, then please prepare yourselves for the coming IASSIST 2010 if you are acting as chair for a session there. That is an obvious opportunity to bring quality sessions to more people than the session participants and also making the memory more sticky.

Take a look at the website <http://iassistdata.org> and the IASSIST blog - the IASSIST Communiqué – at <http://iassistblog.org>.

Articles for the IASSIST Quarterly are very welcome. Articles can be papers from IASSIST conferences, from other conferences, from local presentations, discussion input, etc. Contact the editor via e-mail: kbr@sam.sdu.dk.

Karsten Boye Rasmussen October 2009