

Editor's notes

Meaning and Translations, Thesauri and the Potential of Data Archives

Welcome to the second issue of volume 38 of the IASSIST Quarterly (IQ (38):2, 2014). This issue brings you a potpourri of papers from the very theoretical or philosophical through the technical issues faced in well-established data archives to the supportive reasoning on the creation of new national data archives.

This issue has two papers with the title 'From Data to the Creation of Meaning'. At the 2014 IASSIST conference in Toronto, Kristin Partlo and Justin Joque presented their work in two parts in the session 'Developing Meaningful Data Support Roles and Services'. A slide from the presentation reads: 'Our slides are rather sparse, but we are planning on publishing the papers in IASSIST Quarterly'. I am happy to say that their planning worked very well!

Justin Joque works as the visualization librarian at the University of Michigan; his paper 'From Data to the Creation of Meaning Part 1: Unit of Analysis as Epistemological Problem' addresses how all data creation processes are based upon assumptions about the world and what existing unit can be analyzed. The assumptions present a hurdle when attempting to make data meaningful across disciplines. An example of the ideological framework that can generate incommensurabilities of datasets is the zip coding used in the United States. (Probably similar examples can be found everywhere). Zip codes are linked to addresses and not to areas, but they are often aggregated to use for areas. Furthermore zip codes are dynamic and sometimes changed for greater efficiency of the postal system. This can present major problems, for example when research defines the unit of analysis. Another example is the 'family' as a unit where political issues are involved. Justin Joque points to work of Linnaeus and Aristotle. When discussing categorization, I also recommend the book 'Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things' (Lakoff, 1987).

Kristin Partlo presents part 2 of this work. She works as Reference & Instruction Librarian for Social Sciences and Data at Carleton College in Minnesota. The paper 'From Data to the Creation of Meaning Part 2: Data Librarian as Translator' - highlights how data professionals use their role as translator for new students and researchers in a field, as well as in communication with people from other subject areas - thus bridging and translating for meaning. Kristin Partlo also mentions how a shift away from her primary expertise combined with a similar shift to outside the expertise of the faculty made it possible to find common ground. Kristin brings our awareness to the fact that: 'Infrastructure is something most people don't see or think about until it breaks down'. Data librarians show the challenges of aligning infrastructure, both technical and cultural.

The 2014 IASSIST conference had a session on 'Harmonization, Thesauri and Indexing'. A paper by Lorna Bell and Lucy Bell describes a project that more literally concerns the issue of translation. The authors both work at the UK Data Archive at the University of Essex. The Data Archive maintains a multilingual thesaurus to facilitate cross-national data retrieval. The work on this European Language Social Science Thesaurus (ELSST) is based upon forty years of development of the monolingual thesaurus (HASSET). The paper describes some of the developments and solutions. One of the important tasks of maintenance of a thesaurus is keeping the terms up-to-date, especially for the support of automatic indexing. The ELSST project also focuses on moving from a term-based to a concept-based thesaurus. Elaborated thesauri are developed within the frame of standards; for example three types of mapping between thesauri - equivalence, hierarchical, and associative - defined in ISO 25964. The controlled vocabularies in the thesauri support machine-to-machine communication and the development of a hub for social science data, and open up the world of Linked Data and the Semantic Web.

At the 2013 IASSIST conference in Cologne the session '(SERSCIDA) Making New Connections: Developing Data Services in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia' included the presentation 'Research Landscapes in Social Science Data Archiving in Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia' by Aleksandra Bradic-Martinovic. In this issue Aleksandra has teamed up with Aleksandar Zdravkovic in producing the paper 'Researchers' interest in data service in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia'. New data archives are being brought into existence but even now there are no digital archives in social science in the western Balkan region. This paper shows the potential for establishment of social sciences digital data archives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia. The potentials are presented through statistical results from a cross-country survey of social science researchers in these countries supported by an EU-project and CESSDA. The investigation found a positive attitude towards data sharing and the benefits of data archives. The paper describes the methodology, the characteristics of the researchers and the data they have produced. The researchers are very supportive of the idea of having better access to secondary data and there is a growing trend of producing datasets; however, the datasets are seldom provided with sufficient metadata.

Articles for the IASSIST Quarterly are always very welcome. They can be papers from IASSIST conferences or other conferences and workshops, from local presentations or papers especially written for the IQ. When you are preparing published in the IQ. Chairing a conference session with the purpose of aggregating and integrating papers for a special issue IQ is also much appreciated as the information reaches many more people than the session

participants, and will be readily available on the IASSIST website at <http://www.iassistdata.org>.

Authors are very welcome to take a look at the instructions and layout:

<http://iassistdata.org/iq/instructions-authors>

Authors can also contact me via e-mail: kbr@sam.sdu.dk.

Should you be interested in compiling a special issue for the IQ as guest editor(s) I will also be delighted to hear from you.

Karsten Boye Rasmussen
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Editor