

UK Databytes

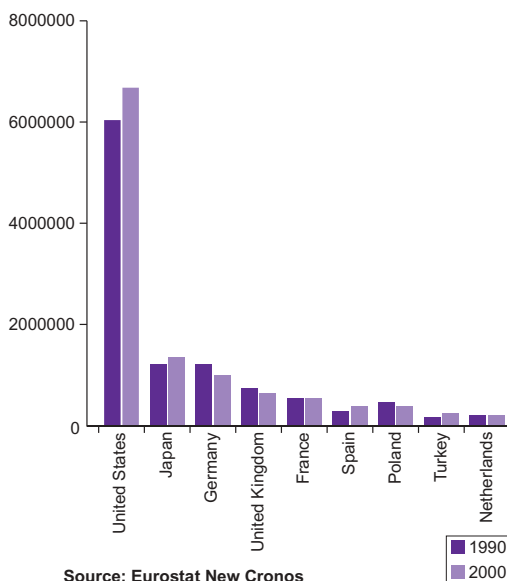
Eurostat New Cronos proves to be a hit!

In the two months following ESDS International's release of the Eurostat New Cronos database at the beginning of September, the dataset was accessed 987 times by 264 users from 48 different institutions. This high quality international dataset contains time series data from 1960 onwards for the 25 European Union member states and in many cases for central European countries, Japan and the USA. The data are monthly, quarterly, bi-annual or annual data, depending on the variable and country selected and are organised into nine statistical themes: General Statistics; Economy and Finance; Population and Social Conditions; Industry, Trade and Services; Agriculture and Fisheries; External Trade; Transport; Environment and Energy; Science and Technology. The data were made available in the ESDS International development environment to give users a chance to preview the new Beyond 20/20 Web Data Server version 7.

All data are freely available to the UK academic community via Athens authentication and ESDS online registration.

For details on the expected release dates of the remaining international datasets:
www.esds.ac.uk/international/access/availability.asp

Emission of greenhouse gases (Global warming potential, CO2 equivalent, 1000 Tonnes)



ESDS Government Research Conference

The 2004 ESDS Government Research Conference was held on 29 October at the Institute of Mechanical Engineers, London. The conference topic was coronary heart disease (CHD) and related risk factors and the aim was to highlight the importance of research based on the government surveys. Attendees included academic researchers, government policy-makers and non-academic researchers. John Fox, Head of Statistics at the Department of Health, chaired the conference.



Madhavi Bajekal (left) from ONS talks with Sonia Saxena, Department of Primary Care and Social Medicine, Imperial College London, who was one of the speakers.

Rick Bond from the Department of Health gave a short introduction, explaining that secondary analysis of government surveys has given us a wealth of information about disease levels in the population. Six stimulating research papers were presented by academics who had used the government surveys to examine a variety of CHD-related issues. The topics of the papers included CHD trends and inequalities; ethnic patterns in CHD; ethnic differences in obesity in children; linking the Scottish Health Survey to routine data; obesity and weight control; and smoking. The papers highlighted the research value of the Health Survey for England, Health and Lifestyle Survey, Omnibus Survey, Scottish Health Survey and ONS Longitudinal Study.

Copies of the slides and summaries of the papers are available from:
www.ccsr.ac.uk/esds/events/past.shtml

NCDS/BCS70 and MCS workshops

In collaboration with the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS), ESDS Longitudinal recently staged two introductory workshops for users of the three major birth cohort studies in the ESDS collection.

On 27 October, at the University of Manchester's MIMAS computing centre, new and potential users of the National Child Development Study (NCDS) and the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70) were introduced to the surveys, their design and coverage. A practical demonstration provided participants with an understanding of how to access the data via ESDS. This was followed by a hands-on computer session in the afternoon.

Based on the same structure, the CLS hosted a one-day introduction for new users of the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) on 10 November. The MCS is the newest of the British birth cohort studies and follows the lives of nearly 19,000 babies born in 2000-2001.

The series of birth cohort workshops, which have been very popular since they were first staged in 2003, will continue to run during 2005.

ESDS Qualidata records transferred

The staff of ESDS Qualidata are transferring key catalogue records from the earlier Qualidata resource discovery hub to the UKDA online catalogue. Many of these resources were acquired, processed and catalogued by Qualidata (from 1995-2000) before being moved to their current place of deposit. Integrating these catalogue records will allow researchers to search amongst a wider range of qualitative collections and across the methodological spectrum. Each record is written to the same high standard associated with conventional UKDA catalogue records. Whilst the majority of these collections are not located at the UK Data Archive, full details on access are provided. So far the project has enabled the release of 31 records and more will follow. Highlights include Folk Devils and Moral Panics : the Creation of the Mods and Rockers, 1964-1967 by Stan Cohen (SN 4880); Gender Divisions and Gentrification, 1960-1992 by Liz Bondi (SN 4927); and Taste of Power : The Greater London Council, 1980-1986 by Hilary Wainwright (SN 4915).

Making sense of statistics: e-learning strategies

Students across the UK are set to benefit from a project aimed at helping them to make more sense of statistics. The Survey Data in Teaching (SDiT) project undertaken by the UKDA aimed to consider how repurposing existing data resources for teaching and learning as flexible online learning materials might increase their usage in the classroom, particularly within the further education sector. The SDiT project was funded under the JISC Exchange for Learning (X4L) Programme which is exploring a range of strategies, methods, tools and metadata standards that will enable the repurposing and widespread adoption of e-learning materials.

The SDiT project has produced a set of free teaching and learning materials to help students understand how social science data can be used to address real-life problems. Outputs include a cut-down restriction-free teaching dataset drawn from the British Crime Survey with web-based and print-ready instructional materials, quizzes and analysis software designed to show how data can be used to conduct research, investigate issues and, ultimately, inform public policy. The resources are accompanied by a tutor guide and a CD containing the data and analysis software. The materials are designed for use in classroom teaching, or for self-paced learning activities from further education to higher education level, are relevant to a wide range of social science subjects and cover many of the Key Skills requirements for 16 to 18 year olds.

Recent publicity has attracted local media attention and interest from social science teachers and more than 800 copies of the learning materials will be distributed in hard copy with a CD to UK HE and FE institutions.

To request a copy or for further information: x4l.data-archive.ac.uk



UKDA funded to map systems and metadata

The UKDA is pleased to announce that in partnership with The National Archives (TNA), it has been awarded JISC funding to map the systems and metadata currently in use by the two organisations against those in the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) reference model and the Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS). The funding will also allow practical testing to measure the extent to which the partners comply with OAIS.

In addition the UKDA and TNA will assess how their operational structures can be informed by OAIS (and *vice versa*). They will explore the potential for interaction between the existing metadata standards, utilised within the two institutions, and METS. Each organisation will then assess the relevance of the reference model and the metadata standard to their work and determine the level of compliancy.

The final report will outline the experiences of each organisation and is expected to be of use to other organisations that might want to undertake mapping to the OAIS and METS. The work will also contribute to the JISC Continuing Access and Digital Preservation Strategy.

www.data-archive/home/oaismets.asp

Work exchange with ICPSR

As part of a work exchange scheme between the UKDA and Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), Ken Miller, Information Systems Development Manager at the UK Data Archive, was invited to visit the ICPSR at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor for a period of three weeks during the month of October, ICPSR being the largest social science data archive in the world.



University of Michigan Union Building

During this period several mutual topics of interest were covered, with the two main areas being the restructuring of the ICPSR download web pages, to be more in line with methods presently employed at the UKDA; and the interoperability links that could be achieved via protocols such as Z39.50 and Open Archive Initiative Metadata Harvesting Protocol (OAI-MHP) and the use of the UKDA multilingual thesaurus.

During the visit Ken also attended a three-day meeting of the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) Structural Reform Group, which was held at ICPSR. This group has been consigned the task of producing a conceptual model of the international DDI standard for technical documentation describing social science data. This model will then be used to construct a new version of the standard that is more modular and extensible and easier to understand and use.

www.icpsr.umich.edu/DDI/org/minutes/2004-10-24.html

Preserving the past

The UKDA Director participated in a two part series entitled *Preserving the Past* broadcast on Radio 4 on October 6 and 13. The series focused on the growing mountain of digital materials that are becoming 'lost' due to rapidly changing technologies and the resulting obsolete formats – computerized storage formats, as well as hardware and software specific storage systems. Information and data originally created on various forms of magnetic tape and even CDs are no longer accessible due to rapid deterioration and obsolescence. The average life of a tape is estimated at fifteen years, a CD twenty, computer systems and software far less. In addition to important data collections, digital music and film recordings are also at risk, including, apparently, relatively recent rock classics such as the Eagles' *Hotel California* and REM's *Automatic for the People*. In both cases the master tapes have fallen victim to 'sticky shed syndrome', in which the tapes are literally sticking together as their chemical constituents come apart.

In Part One of the series, the presenter, Richard Hollingham, investigated specific examples of what is now unplayable or unreadable. This included an interview with the UKDA Director in which it was revealed that the UK individual level population census data from 1951 are lost, as are significant parts of the 1961 and 1971 census. In Part Two, the programme looked at what can, and is, being done to stop more data being lost in the future, including the role of digital archives (such as the UKDA and The National Archives), the preservation of government emails and internet sites, concrete bunkers for nitrate films, and a new newspaper repository.

The series can be listened to via the internet at: www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/progs/listenagain.shtml

Launch of Digital Curation Centre

The opening ceremony of the new Digital Curation Centre (DCC) took place on 5 November at the National e-Science Centre, (NeSC) University of Edinburgh.

The DCC consists of a consortium of partners including the EDINA service, the NeSC, and the School of Informatics, all based at the University of Edinburgh, Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute (HATII) based at the University of Glasgow, UKOLN based at the University of Bath and the Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils (CCLRC).

The DCC has been funded jointly by JISC and Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) for five years to provide a national focus for research into curation issues and to promote expertise and good practice, both national and international, for the management of all research outputs in digital format. Working with other practitioners, the DCC will support UK institutions to store, manage and preserve these data to ensure their enhancement and their continuing long-term use.

The DCC is not itself to be a data or document repository, nor an attempt to impose policies and practices of one branch of scholarship upon another. Rather, based on insight from a vibrant research programme that addresses wider issues of data curation and long-term preservation, it will develop and offer programmes of outreach and practical services to assist those who must curate data. It will thus seek to complement and contribute efforts of related organisations, rather than duplicate services.

Chris Rusbridge has been appointed Director-designate of the DCC, and will start full time as Director on 21 February 2005.

www.dcc.ac.uk

Annual Report and Strategic Plan

The ESDS Annual Report for 2003-2004 and the Strategic Plan for 2004-2009 are now available in print or as pdf files from the ESDS web site.

www.esds.ac.uk/news/publications.asp

“...producing a conceptual model of the international DDI...”

“...sticky shed syndrome...”



Launch of NCESS

The launch of the ESRC-funded National Centre for e-Social Science was held on 10 December at the University of Manchester. The centre has been set up as part of the broader cross-research council programme on e-Science. NCESS aims to stimulate the uptake and use by social scientists of new and emerging Grid-enabled computing and data infrastructure, both in quantitative and qualitative research. The co-ordinating hub of NCESS is based at Manchester Computing and supported by the UKDA.

The centre was officially launched by Professor Ian Diamond, the Chief Executive of ESRC; Ms Sue Duncan, Government Chief Social Researcher and Prof. Alan Gilbert, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Manchester.

www.ncess.ac.uk



AHDS History News

Digitisation workshops

The Arts and Humanities Data Service runs a regular series of workshops to introduce attendees to the key themes to consider when creating a digital resource for use in research, teaching or learning. This includes topics such as project management, data capture, metadata and documentation, copyright and resource dissemination. While dealing with some technical issues, the workshops are very much considered an introduction and delegates need not have prior knowledge.

The workshops are particularly suitable for those

applying for funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) and are required to fill in the AHRB's Technical Appendix. However, the themes of the day are useful for anyone creating, or indeed running, a digital resource project, and applicants to the British Academy or ESRC are also encouraged to attend.

The workshops are timed to coincide with the dates for major grant submissions to the AHRB, and take place yearly in April and November. The next set will be in April 2005.

Regular announcements about the workshops are made on the ahds-all mailing list. To join visit: www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/AHDS-ALL.html

Information Papers from previous AHDS workshops can be located at: ahds.ac.uk/creating/information-papers/

Forthcoming Events

- 6 January 2005:** Family, Community and Social Change: Looking Back and Moving Forward, London South Bank University
- 21 January 2005:** Social Science Data Archives: creating, depositing and using data, Loughborough University
- 21 January 2005:** BHPS User Group Meeting, University of Essex
- 28 January 2005:** Workshop on secondary data sources at the UK Data Archive, Department of Sociology, University of Essex
- 4 February 2005:** General Household Survey User Group Meeting, Royal Statistical Society, London
- 4 February 2005:** Computerised Qualitative Analysis, University of Manchester
- 7-11 March 2005:** ECHP Training Session, University of Tilburg
- 21-23 March 2005:** BSA Annual Conference 2005, University of York
- 23 March 2005:** Social Science Data Archives: creating, depositing and using data, University of Wales Swansea
- 4 April 2005:** Social Science Data Archives: creating, depositing and using data, University of Reading

Further details of events and training courses can be found on the ESDS web site.



Season's Greetings



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