

Launch of the Survey Resources Network

The Survey Resources Network (SRN) - set up to co-ordinate and develop Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) activities related to survey research methods - was launched at a well-attended evening reception at the London School of Economics (LSE) on Thursday 23 April 2009.

The reception formed part of the wider 'Informing Public Policy' conference, organised by the LSE and the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen).

Professor Denise Lievesley, Head of the School of Social Science and Public Policy at King's College London, gave the keynote address, praising the ESRC for continuing to

put funds into survey research methods and anticipating a successful collaboration among the separate Network partners. The University of Essex's Professor Peter Lynn - the Network's Principal Investigator - then introduced colleagues responsible for each of the services and projects that make up the Network.

The aim of the Network is to provide a coherent and integrated approach to the development of skills and knowledge, the dissemination of research findings and research resources, and the promotion of best survey practice.

From the perspective of ESDS, a key component of the Network is the Survey Question Bank (SQB). The SQB aims to expand and extend the services previously available via the ESRC Question Bank based at the University of Surrey. Managed



by the UK Data Archive, the new SQB will seek to interoperate with ESDS and its survey data collection, enabling users to move - at the click of a button - from the survey question, to its context in the questionnaire, to the variable frequency. Integrating the SQB with ESDS will also allow users to make the opposite journey - to locate variable frequencies in the ESDS Nesstar catalogue and then to move seamlessly to the question behind it.

www.surveynet.ac.uk

Launch of World Bank's Africa Development Indicators

In May 2009, ESDS International launched access to a new World Bank database: the Africa Development Indicators (ADI). It is the most detailed collection of data on Africa in a single database and is compiled from various sources including local World Bank staff and economic and sectoral specialists.

The ADI contains data for 53 African countries and 5 regional country groups and covers a vast range of topics including national accounts, balance of payments, trade, government finance, demography, health, education, communications, transport, energy and the environment.

This database provides annual time series data for over 1,400 indicators from 1960 to the latest available year, and thus gives a long and consistent series which allows excellent opportunities for comparable research.

While the ADI database has been used internally by the World Bank for many years, it only became available online in 2008. Now the ADI dataset can be accessed through Beyond 20/20 Web Data Server software and is freely available to staff, researchers and students at UK Further and Higher education institutions. ESDS International also provide two user guides for the ADI:

- dataset user guide containing further detail on the topics and countries covered
- software user guide containing a worked example of how to extract data from the ADI using Beyond 20/20

www.esds.ac.uk/International/access/dataset_overview.asp#desc_WBADI



Photo by: sara y izunky, Creative Commons, Flickr

New edition of the Edwardians

With the recent release of the 1911 Census giving millions an insight into the lives of their ancestors, a more rounded picture of British life at this time emerges in the latest version of Professor Paul Thompson's classic study, *The Edwardians*.

Released by ESDS Qualidata, this seventh version of Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973 (SN 2000) sees two significant additions to the collection. For the first time, all 453 interviews are now accessible as Rich Text Format (RTF) documents and a set of RTF cover sheets containing a two-page summary of each interview is newly available. All these files were created from the original interview transcripts.

Additionally, the quantitative component of the collection has been enhanced. Originally created in the 1970s by Trevor Lummis and known as Systematic Analysis of Life Histories, its intention was to prepare the interviews for archiving and qualitative analysis by coding variables. For this new edition a selection of the original variables were cross-referenced for verification. The dataset was then expanded to include a set of additional standardised variables on occupation and location as well as short textual summaries of the interviews.

Family Life and Work Experience contains interview transcripts with people born between 1872 and 1906. Conducted in the early 1970s, Professor Thompson's research team spoke to domestics, labourers, skilled and semi-skilled workers, professionals and socialites from all parts of Britain asking them to describe their work,



leisure, political attitudes and environments during this time of critical social change. ■

ESRC Festival of Social Science 2009

ESDS hosted two very successful events during this year's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Festival of Social Science, which ran from 6 -15 March 2009.

On 9 March 2009 a one-day seminar on health and lifestyles was held at the British Library (BL) – 'Studying Lifestyles: Resources Past, Present and Future'. The event, co-hosted by ESDS and the BL, aimed to raise awareness of existing UK-based research resources and encourage their use by both academics and students for postgraduate dissertations and research projects. Four core UK resource providers - ESDS, the BL, The National Archives (TNA), and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) - showcased key resources relevant to analysing aspects of lifestyle. Each of these presentations was followed by a 'how I did it' style presentation by a prominent academic researcher. These presentations covered both quantitative and

qualitative research. The day concluded with an interactive panel discussion which was extended and developed in small breakout groups in a research surgery session. A clear indicator of the positive response and success of the day is the fact that the attendees explicitly requested more theme-based seminars of this type. ESDS and the BL plan to host a joint annual event of this kind with TNA and ONS, centring on a different theme each year.

This was followed on 13 March 2009 by a one-day conference hosted by ESDS entitled 'Sharing research data: pioneers, policies and protocols'. It was held at the Park Crescent Conference Centre in London and its purpose was to bring together key speakers from the natural and social science research communities to highlight existing data sharing policies and initiatives. The keynote speaker was Mark Walport, Director of the Wellcome Trust, who spoke on the findings of the recent Data Sharing

Review commissioned by the Government in 2008. Representatives from the UK Research Councils, and other major funders highlighted aspects of their own data sharing policies. The day provided the opportunity to showcase some existing innovative and practical solutions to data management and sharing in the UK, and to discuss requirements and infrastructures for preparing and accessing research-generated materials. The event also saw the launch of the UK Data Archive's updated version of its Guidance on Data Management and Sharing handbook, which is aimed at researchers and repository managers who curate research data, bringing in important clarification on consent, confidentiality, intellectual property rights and data security.

Studying lifestyles: www.esds.ac.uk/news/eventdetail.asp?id=2146

Sharing research data: www.esds.ac.uk/news/eventdetail.asp?id=2140 ■



Second survey round from Young Lives released

In March 2009, ESDS added a second round of data to the innovative Young Lives study of childhood poverty in developing countries.

Young Lives is unique in its size and scope, collecting data across four developing countries to highlight the multidimensional nature and changing dynamics of childhood poverty. The purpose of the project is to improve understanding of the causes and consequences of childhood poverty and examine how policies affect children's well-being, in order to inform the development of future policy and practice.

The study is tracking the lives of 12,000 children in 4 countries over a 15-year period to 2015. This is the time frame set by the United Nations to assess progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Round 1 of the study in 2002 interviewed 2,000 children aged between 6 and 18 months and their households, from both urban and rural communities in each of the 4 countries (8,000 children in total). Data were also collected from 1,000 children aged 8 years in each country, in order to provide a basis for comparison with the younger children. Round 2 of the study returned to the same children in 2006-2007 when the younger children were aged between 5 and 6 years and the older children were aged between 12 and 13 years. It is envisaged that subsequent survey waves will take place once every three years, interspersed with in-depth qualitative research with a smaller sub-sample of the children. Thus, the younger children are being tracked from infancy to their mid-teens and the older children through into adulthood, when some will become parents themselves.

The dataset covers material and socio-economic aspects of children's lives as well as cognition and school performance, health and social factors, and emotional and psychological well-being. Further information about the survey, including publications, can be downloaded from the Young Lives website.

www.esds.ac.uk/findingdata/snDescription.asp?sn=5307
www.younglives.org.uk ■



European qualitative longitudinal research workshop

This one-day international workshop brought together researchers and archivists with an interest in the re-use of qualitative data, and in the development of qualitative longitudinal research and data resources across Europe.

The workshop was organised as a collaborative venture between the UK Data Archive, the Timescapes Qualitative Longitudinal Study and Archive, and the Bremen Life Course Archive, with support

from the Council of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA) under its European Commission FP7 Preparatory Phase Project. Fourteen countries were represented at the event, including several CESSDA members.

The participants agreed to form a network and to take forward key initiatives around qualitative data sharing. Immediate tasks are to publish (tentatively in IASSIST Quarterly) the reports prepared on the state of qualitative archiving in each country. The reports also included two types of inventories that will be published as web

resources. First, a list of international qualitative data infrastructures will be updated shortly on the ESDS Qualidata site. Second, for qualitative longitudinal resources and collections, a page will be created on the Timescapes web site. Finally, there is also agreement to collaborate in seeking funding for subsequent meetings, exchange programmes, workshops on setting up an archive, and other activities.

www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/about/bremen-workshop.php
www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata/access/internationaldata.asp ■



Changes at the ESRC

ESDS has been served to great effect over the past four years by its ESRC Case Officer, Siân Bourne. On behalf of all at ESDS we send her (now Siân Millard) best wishes and congratulations on the occasion of her recent wedding.

The newly-married couple will shortly be leaving for Hawaii, where Mark will be working as Finance Officer for the Science and Technology Research Council's

telescope site there – tough work but someone has to do it! While this will mark a tremendous start to their new life together, sadly it means that ESDS will lose Siân. We wish to record our thanks and huge gratitude to her for her support and contribution to ESDS over the past four years, and wish her well in her new life amongst the surf and volcanoes of the Pacific.

We are also glad to announce that our new ESDS Case Officer will be Kristine Doronenkova, Senior Policy Manager within the ESRC's Policy and Resources Directorate. A warm welcome to Kristine! ●

Ensemble project presentation



In March 2009 the Ensemble project (co-funded by the ESRC with partners from the University of Cambridge, City University, London, and UKDA) gave the first public outing of its Fedora Repository and associated Mulgara Semantic Triplestore at a lunchtime seminar for staff at the UKDA.

Patrick Carmichael, project director and lead researcher, University of Cambridge, presented an overview of the project and Agustina Martinez Garcia, University of Cambridge, demonstrated how an appropriately constructed digital repository could serve both data and metadata to web applications.

Agustina showed how large datasets could be accessed, 'rules' applied and the results could then be presented using the visualisation tools developed by the

Semantic Interoperability of Metadata and Information in unLike Environments (SIMILE) project at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

They showed how data from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) can be viewed using the SIMILE 'Exhibit' Tool and its Google Map element. Users can select observations of plants and use these as the starting points of further investigations, queries and hypothesis formulation. Patrick Carmichael explained: "these developments mark an important move forward for the project: they enable us to deal with much larger datasets than previously, which will allow teachers and learners to engage with real data rather than small exemplary collections. Supporting this kind of authentic learning is an important component of the case based approaches we are finding in the research settings in which we are working."

www.data-archive.ac.uk/randd/ensemble.asp ●

Forthcoming Events

24-26 June 2009: Fifth International Conference on e-Social Science, Maternushaus, Cologne, Germany

26 June 2009: Census data workshop: using migration data and the ONS Longitudinal Study, University of Essex, Southend

30 June 2009: Managing research data well, London, City University, London

1 July 2009: Managing research data well, Manchester, University of Manchester

9 July 2009: Health surveys user meeting, Royal Statistical Society, London

13 July 2009: NCRM Ideas workshop for research methods teachers, University of Southampton

16-17 July 2009: eLearning in health: working together to enhance learning, University of Warwick

16-22 August 2009: The 57th Session of the International Statistical Institute, Durban, South Africa

17-21 August 2009: The XXIII European Society for Rural Sociology (ESRS) congress, Finland

7-9 September 2009: Digital Resources for the Humanities and Arts - Dynamic Networks of Knowledge and Practice: Contexts, Crises, Futures, Queens University, Belfast

10-12 September 2009: Workshop for Users of the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) and the Cross-National Equivalent Files (CNEF), Cornell University

12-16 September 2009: Scottish Health Informatics Programme - Training Workshop, University of St Andrews, Scotland

17-19 September 2009: Scottish Health Informatics Programme - Exploiting Existing Data for Health Research - International Conference, University of St Andrews, Scotland

12-13 October 2009: 7th ESSTrain - Socio-Demographic Background Variables for Cross-National Comparative Survey Research in Europe, Ljubljana, Slovenia ●