

UK DAtabytes

The Newsletter of the UK Data Archive

No. 4

Promoting the use of survey data from a national perspective

There are a number of large-scale national surveys covering Scotland, including the Scottish Household Survey, the Scottish Health Survey, the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey and the Scottish Crime Survey. The data from these four surveys are deposited with the UKDA and whilst being freely available to the majority of researchers, are not used to their full capacity. In November 2001, the Director of the UKDA attended a meeting entitled 'Making the most of Scottish surveys' organised by Elizabeth Fraser of the Health Education Board for Scotland. The meeting presented a useful opportunity to share information about the surveys and to discuss ways to promote and enhance the use of data.

Following on from this meeting the UKDA held a workshop in Edinburgh on 7 December 2001, based on the Scottish Household Survey (SHS). The workshop brought together staff from the Scottish Executive, working on the design, implementation and analysis of the SHS, with existing and potential users.

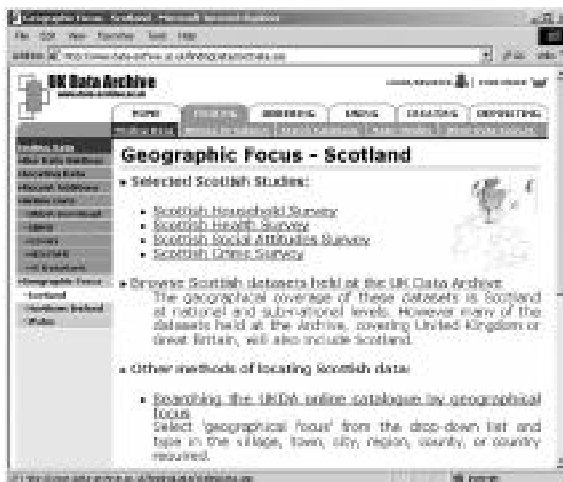
The SHS is a continuous survey based on a sample of the general population in private

residences in Scotland, financed by the Scottish Executive and undertaken by a partnership of System Three Social Research and MORI Scotland. The aim of the survey is to provide representative information about the composition, characteristics and behaviours of Scottish households, both nationally and at a more local level. The survey covers a wide range of topics to allow links to be made between different policy areas. There is a particular focus on information to inform policy on transport, local government and social inclusion. The 1999 dataset is currently available from the UK Data Archive with the 2000 data becoming available shortly.

Details from the SHS workshop are at: www.data-archive.ac.uk/findingData/shsNews.asp

The Scottish Executive are keen to get feedback on any aspects of the SHS and can be contacted at: shs@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

In order to assist in the location of nationally-based data resources, the UKDA has recently launched a series of web pages with a geographical focus. The series presently covers Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales with pages focusing on other European and North American data to follow. These pages are aimed at providing researchers with quick and easy access to datasets, online resources, and links to other key web sites relating to the nations.



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Census projects at the UK Data Archive

The UKDA is currently working on two major census projects: to develop a census portal; and a census registration service.

The census portal is being developed as part of the Collection of Historical and Contemporary Census Data (CHCC) project, which has an overall remit to facilitate resource discovery of contemporary and historical census data for teaching and learning. The portal will contain a cross-searchable metadata database of materials within the CHCC.

The census registration service will provide a user-friendly, 'one-stop shop' registration system for access to all the varied resources from the 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001 decennial censuses. The service is expected to be ready in the summer and will be integrated with the census portal.

The UKDA is collaborating on these projects with MIMAS, the School of Geography at the University of Leeds, the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research, the History Data Service, the LTSN Centre for History, Classics and Archaeology and EDINA.

Whitehall Summer Placements

The Government has set up a new scheme to fund academic summer placements in Whitehall in 2002, in accordance with the Performance and Innovation Unit Report 'Adding it Up'. The scheme is open to all government departments and plans to reach out to different research specialisms.

The aims of the scheme are to strengthen the links between the academic research agenda and government policy development needs, and to open new channels of communication between the research community and Government. The focus is on contributing to the formulation of evidence-based policy.

Details of the scheme can be found at: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/placement2002

University collections to join Archives Hub

The UKDA recently won a bid from the JISC to support the creation of collection-level content based on the archival holdings at the University of Essex for delivery to the resource discovery portal, the Archives Hub. Collections from the UKDA, the History Data Service and the University Library's Special Collections will be marked up to the General International Standard Archiving Description (ISAD(G)) archival cataloguing standard accompanied by a full set of index terms. The award will help to promote the expansive range of archival resources based at Essex whilst at the same time bringing them closer into line with traditional archiving standards in the UK.

Details of the Archives Hub based at MIMAS can be found at: www.archiveshub.ac.uk

QUALIDATA News

New web site launched

The Qualitative Data Service now has a new suite of web pages at: www.qualidata.essex.ac.uk. The pages have been re-designed to improve navigation and include additional content and functionality. The new structure follows the logic of the UKDA web site with simple-to-use top tabs divided into About, Resources, Re-use, Create, Deposit and News with side tab menus within each of these main headings.

New features include:

- online user guides, available via the Qualicat catalogue, containing useful and often unique research and methodological information about the study;

- a data listing for each data set providing classifying information to help identify particular types of interviews or transcripts;

- 'Create' pages offering revised information on issues relating to research design and the collection of data with respect to archiving and re-use;

- a FAQ section for ESRC research award holders including up to date information on consent, confidentiality, legal issues and costing for preparation of data;

- 'Deposit' pages with a simplified overview of how to deposit and prepare data with accompanying downloadable deposit forms;

- pages on re-using data including a bibliography of articles on re-using qualitative data and advice on the use of data in teaching and learning, training opportunities in the area of qualitative research methods;

- a news section detailing current events and related news, with highlights of recent deposits.

The web site also carries a report from the recent Qualidata symposium called 'Celebrating Classic Sociology: Pioneers of Contemporary British Qualitative Research' held in July 2001 at Essex. Abstracts, along with further information about this successful event, can be found at: www.qualidata.essex.ac.uk/news/symposium.asp

Feedback on the new layout and content, as well as any suggestions for additional features, will be gratefully received. Please email Qualidata using the address listed on the back page of this edition of UK DATabytes.

The UKDA at the Online Information exhibition

The UKDA was represented at Online Information 2001, which took place from 4 - 6 December 2001. Over the course of the three days, staff from the Archive and Nesstar demonstrated their services and resources. The busy flow of visitors were shown online resource discovery systems, the UKDA's new Download Service, ELSST (the European Language Social Science Thesaurus) and Nesstar.

"... contemporary and historical census data for teaching and learning"

"... promote the expansive range of archival resources based at Essex"

New EEDA Observatory Data Module announced

The recently formed Nesstar Ltd and the UKDA have been closely involved in the development of an interactive data module for the East of England Development Agency (EEDA). The service will greatly assist the monitoring of the socio-economic and environmental indicators for the region and was formally launched on 24 January 2002.

The EEDA observatory is unique in that not only does it provide a shop window of key headline policy indicators, but also comprises a three-tier data system, headed by the headline indicators. These are supported by underlying tables, which may be static Excel files or derived directly from the third tier, the underlying microdata. The Nesstar software being employed in the observatory provides a powerful data and metadata browsing system.

Further details of this project can be found at: www.eastofenglandobservatory.org.uk

Death of social scientist Michael Young

The UK Data Archive was saddened by the death of Michael Young, Lord Young of Dartington, aged 86, in January this year.

A pioneering sociologist, reformer and political activist whose influence on the data collections archived by the UK Data Archive and Qualidata has been considerable; not least as the founding chairman of the Social Science Research Council.

One of his first studies, comprising a series of surveys undertaken in Bethnal Green and published as *Family And Kinship In East London* (1957), which he undertook with Peter Willmott, forced planners to reassess the fashion for sweeping urban redevelopment. Data from these surveys are available from the UKDA.

He worked closely with Brian Jackson, whose papers are archived at the National Social Policy and Social Change Archive, on the establishment of the Open University. In addition, through his East London based Institute of Community Studies he became both the inspiration and employer of many future, now eminent, sociologists. Among these was Peter Townsend, whose pioneering work on the social conditions of the elderly, *The Family Life of Old People* was begun in Bethnal Green and formed the basis for a lifetime's radical sociological enquiry. Peter Townsend's data collected for that study, together with his work on social housing and subsequent major studies into the elderly and poverty, are also housed at the National Social Policy and Social Change Archive at Essex and the UK Data Archive.

Michael Young's final official connection with Qualidata took the form of an interview recorded with him for the Qualidata-organised summer 2001 conference 'Celebrating Classic Sociology: Pioneers of British Qualitative Research'.

For further details of the life and career of Michael Young see the Guardian obituary at: www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4336191,00.html

AHRB award success



Dr Alasdair Crockett (pictured above), Depositor Services Manager at the UKDA and Dr David Voas, University of Sheffield, have been awarded a prestigious Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) Innovation Award for a project that will model religious change using multilevel simulation. Some findings on related work will be published in the April 2002 edition of the *American Sociological Review*.

Multi-media Edwardians project under development

The 'Edwardians Online' project is being undertaken by Qualidata in conjunction with the History Data Service at the UKDA. The project aims to build a freely-accessible web resource based on a collection of some 500 life history interviews drawn from a cross-national sample of people in Britain born before 1918 and interviewed in 1972-73. This dataset, known as 'Family Life and Work Experience before 1918' has been archived and is currently disseminated by Qualidata. The transcripts are held at the National Social Policy and Social Change Archive at the University of Essex, and the original audio recordings are available from the British Library National Sound Archive. The set of interviews attracts high usage, yet are relatively inaccessible as the transcripts are only held in paper format and recordings in reel-to-reel format.

The paper transcripts are being scanned, converted to Portable Document Format (PDF), bookmarked and made available online via a web front-end searchable database. There are also plans to mark up some of the text to reproduce the original thematic coding scheme using eXtensible Markup Language (XML) following the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) Document Type Definition (DTD) for oral history. This work will provide a unique opportunity to evaluate the interoperability of different mark-up and metadata schema for this kind of partially-structured textual material, particularly with reference to the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI).

Finally, and depending on funding, the project aims to link in audio materials, photographs, census data and maps relating to the individuals and whole sample, and to build in exemplars for use in teaching.

"... assist the monitoring of the socio-economic and environmental indicators for the region "

"... a freely-accessible web resource based on a collection of some 500 life history interviews"

Hope for a Canadian national data archive

The UKDA Director, Kevin Schürer, attended a meeting hosted by the National Archives of Canada in Ottawa in early February. The meeting was part of an on-going consultation exercise, sponsored by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a national data archive for Canada. Phase One of the consultation exercise concluded that a central data archiving function was needed and required in Canada.

The consultation process is now into Phase Two, in which issues such as the form and structure a data archiving and dissemination function should take are being addressed.

Professor Schürer was invited to the meetings of the Canadian Working Group (together with Bjørn Henrichsen, Director of the Norwegian Social Science Data Services and President of the Council for European Social Science Data Archives) as an 'expert witness' to provide information and advice on the setting-up and operation of a national data archive.

Revised BSA Statement of Ethical Practice

The British Sociological Association (BSA) decided in October 2000 to establish a small working group to revise its Statement of Ethical Practice. Led by Professor Joe Bailey, the group has revised and updated the existing guidelines in the light of recent legislative changes, and other issues of concern to researchers. These include confidentiality and consent in research, safety of researchers, child protection, and the use of the internet in research.

Qualidata is represented on the working party and aims to ensure that archival issues are considered in relation to the advice on research strategy and practice offered by the statement.

The BSA revised Statement of Ethical Practice will include 'signposts' to sources offering further advice and support in specialist areas, including references to codes of practice and ethical guidelines from other organisations. The revised statement is being proposed for adoption at the BSA AGM in March. Their web site is available at: www.britsoc.org.uk/about/ethicreview.htm

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Printed by Alphaprint (Colchester) Ltd

History Data Service News

Geo-data projects funded

Following on from the recently completed feasibility studies, we are pleased to announce the JISC is funding two demonstrator projects to be conducted by the History Data Service (HDS) and EDINA. The 'Geo-Crosswalk' and 'Geo-Data Portal' Demonstrator Projects will develop, respectively, a scalable demonstrator for a gazetteer service, and a geo-spatial portal. Both projects aim to be suitable for full integration into the DNER Information Environment.

Digitisation workshops

Digitisation is a powerful medium for exploring a range of previously inaccessible primary sources, and historical research currently being undertaken

increasingly includes a digitisation component. Creating digital resources is, however, not always a straightforward process; there are a number of important technical and non-technical questions that must be addressed if the final product is to become an enduring and subsequently re-usable resource.

The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) and HDS are running a series of workshops to help with the undertaking of digitisation projects. Details of these workshops can be found at: ahds.ac.uk/workshops.htm

The HDS workshop presentation can be downloaded and consulted at: hds.essex.ac.uk/diary/workshop14-02-02.ppt

Forthcoming Events and Announcements

Forthcoming workshops

- 14 March 2002 Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) Digitisation Workshop, Glasgow.
- 15 March 2002 British Society for Population Studies (BSPS) meeting, Royal Statistical Society (RSS), London.
- 25-27 March 2002 British Sociological Association (BSA) Annual Conference, University of Leicester.
- 10 April 2002 Joint RSS Official Statistics Section and Health Statistics User Group (HSUG) meeting, RSS, London.
- 10 April 2002 Geo-Data Forum, Manchester University, Manchester.
- 11 April 2002 AHDS Digitisation Workshop, Bristol.
- 17 April 2002 Association for Survey Computing (ASC) Conference, Imperial College, London.
- 2 May 2002 AHDS Digitisation Workshop, York.
- 11-15 June 2002 IASSIST 2002 Accelerating Access: Enhancing Collaboration and Dissemination, University of Connecticut.
- 27-29 August 2002 Official Statistics and the New Economy, ONS, London.
- 2-6 September 2002 International Conference of the RSS, Plymouth.

Further details of the courses, and links to the relevant web sites, may be found at:
www.data-archive.ac.uk/usingData/training.asp

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