

## A mammoth conference!

The Second International Conference on e-Social Science was held in Manchester in June. Over the course of three days more than 160 people attended workshops, plenary, keynote and paper sessions. Delegates came from ten countries, from academic, public and private sectors. Presentations were provided by members of the social science and Grid research communities with experience of, or interests in, exploring, developing and applying e-social science research methods, practices and tools, and in studying the wider

development of e-research and the Grid. Louise Corti and Ken Miller of the UKDA

gave papers on data sharing, international data and metadata exchange standards, ontologies and natural language processing as it relates to qualitative data.

A significant focus of the conference was on developing infrastructures and tools for sharing, handling and annotating dispersed qualitative data - text and audio-visual materials. Usability issues in the design of research tools and middleware for data collection, sharing and integration were also central themes.



Keith Cole (l) and Ken Miller

Photo by Ed Swinden (07817 363 585)

[www.esds.ac.uk/news/eventdetail.asp?ID=1491](http://www.esds.ac.uk/news/eventdetail.asp?ID=1491) ●

## ESRC Research Methods Festival

Almost 1,000 social scientists attended the second Methods Festival, held at St Catherine's College Oxford from 17-20 July. It was organised under the Research Methods Programme, directed by Angela Dale. The National Centre for Research Methods and associated nodes played a central role in the Festival and there were also important contributions from the National Centre for e-Social Science and the Researcher Development Initiative. A wide range of disciplines was represented, from anthropology to statistics. A 'Research Resource' theme ran throughout the Festival and highlighted the many data sources or support functions that are funded by ESRC to enhance the quality of social science.

Participants at the Festival were able to: find out about new methods; identify the relevance of particular methods for particular questions; meet researchers from other disciplines; and extend their research networks. Half-day sessions included cutting-edge methods from leading experts as well as thematic sessions related to key research areas: the family and relationships; place; and ethnicity. Other sessions provided insights into the role of new technology for capturing, organising and analysing visual data and examples of what e-social science could offer researchers. A session on ethical issues encountered in research provided valuable practical advice and generated much discussion. Generally there was plenty

**“new technology for capturing, organising and analysing visual data”**

of time for questions and debate and discussion spilled over into coffee and lunch times. PhD students and early career researchers were able to attend a number of workshops aimed at providing careers support, for example on getting published and applying for grants.

The Festival coincided with the hottest July day since records began and the evening drinks reception and live jazz, held in the shadiest part of the College provided a welcome relief to the heat of the day.

The third Research Methods Festival will be organised by the National Centre for Research Methods and held at St Catherine's College from 30 June - 3 July 2008.

[www.ccsr.ac.uk/methods/festival/](http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/methods/festival/) ●



## ESRC's annual summer reception

ESRC held its summer reception on 7 July at the Atrium in London. The evening event was aimed at parliamentarians, members of the Government, policymakers and representatives from the media, public, private and voluntary sectors, and members of ESRC Connect. ESDS contributed to this high profile event with a promotional stall and spoke with a variety of participants. The Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Alan Johnson MP, gave a keynote speech and presented this year's Michael Young Prize award to Dr Diana Burman. The prize was conceived to encourage new social scientists to communicate their research in a lucid way to non-academic audiences. It rewards work of relevance to a wider audience, based on research of evident social and economic value and which achieves insight into contemporary society and the patterns and dynamics of social change. ■



## Launch of Intute

A new hub for social science information, known as Intute -previously SOSIG and Altis - was launched on 13 July 2006. Intute is the new face of the Resource Discovery Network (RDN), and is a free national service enabling lecturers, researchers and students to discover and access quality internet resources. Intute exists to advance education and research by promoting the most intelligent use of the internet. The new service provides information and tools to help users access the best of the web in the social sciences, including law, business, hospitality, sport and tourism.

[www.intute.ac.uk](http://www.intute.ac.uk) ■

# New web site

ESDS launched its redesigned web site in July 2006. Enhanced features include an improved navigational structure, featuring a 'quick links' menu bar at the top of each page with: login; a single search facility for both the web site and for data; A-Z listing; and site map. A dropdown list on every page provides links to all ESDS services and designated web pages for specific audiences such as new users, teachers or non-UK users.

Searching, registering, ordering and download facilities are all now available within the ESDS web site, in addition to the UKDA web site. Enhanced search functionality is available from ESDS and its specialist services enabling: searching on specific fields; refining search results to major studies only; and a history of recent searches list. The Data Catalogue is now more visible and has its own branding and logo. Additionally, it is now possible to search the data holdings with the aid of the Humanities and Social Science Electronic Thesaurus (HASSET). A new Major Studies page provides quick access to the most popular datasets including those supported by the specialist ESDS services.

The ESDS web site follows agreed best standards and good practice in web design,

accessibility and usability, complying with W3C guidelines for XHTML.



The new web site has been tested by external users, prior to the launch, and feedback has been extremely positive. Helen Chester, a postgraduate student at Manchester commented on the new site, "contains a wealth of information presented clearly and it is possible to obtain the information you require quickly and efficiently".

Plans for the future include further online tutorials, and enhancements to the search facilities. The Web Development Team would be grateful for any feedback on the new site. Email [feedback@esds.ac.uk](mailto:feedback@esds.ac.uk) with comments or suggestions. ■

## Pointing the way forward

The report of the East of England digital preservation pilot project has been published jointly by the East of England Regional Archive Council (EERAC) and Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) East of England. The report describes a pilot project designed to investigate the issues which would need to be resolved if a regional digital repository were set up, and the costs which would arise from this. The report presents the results of two years' work and is probably the first realistic attempt to point the way forward.

Taking as its starting point the anticipated needs of local authorities, the report looks in detail at the processes and costs involved in preserving and managing digital records of the types routinely dealt with by local authority records managers and archivists, including privately deposited material. The two local authorities involved in the project were Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire County Councils, and the expertise in digital preservation was provided by the UKDA, as



one of the longest established digital repositories in the country and the only one approved by The National Archives (TNA) for the deposit of electronic public records.

Copies of the report are available by post from: [info@mleaastofengland.org.uk](mailto:info@mleaastofengland.org.uk)  
Report: [www.data-archive.ac.uk/news/publications.asp](http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/news/publications.asp) ■

# Inside the data factory

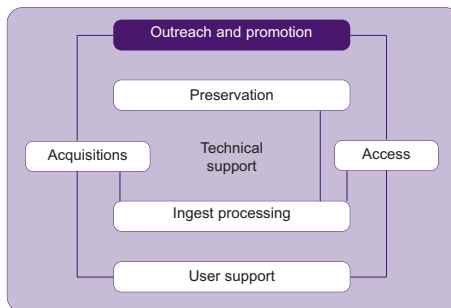
## Outreach and promotion

ESDS maintains a publicity, outreach, and promotion strategy and is supported by the specialist services of the ESDS, which also undertake promotion of their own datasets.

ESDS organises and contributes to over 150 events per year in order to promote and raise user awareness of the service. Events organised by ESDS take the form of general awareness raising about ESDS, workshops focusing on specific themes or datasets, and training on methodology relating to the use of ESDS-held data. ESDS produces supporting leaflets and publicity material for these events. ESDS also collaborates with other social science resource and information providers through a series of outreach events including joint workshops and poster sessions.

Helping users to get started is one of the key aims for the section. A series of user-friendly searchable online guides are available that both introduce and give step-by-step advice on how to use various ESDS services. In addition to showing how to navigate the ESDS web site, and online systems for finding and exploring social science data and documentation held by ESDS, some of the guides include exercises that are used in ESDS hands-on workshops. These work-through exercises are self-explanatory and ESDS encourages

teachers and workshop facilitators, who wish to promote ESDS, to use them in their own training activities and events. Other guides provide a more in-depth exploration of issues pertaining to using data by research themes, software packages or data analysis techniques. A number of guides on good practice such as data preservation and sharing are also produced.



In addition to the ESDS suite of brochures and other printed publicity materials, a further important vehicle for communicating with users and stakeholders is this newsletter, UK Databytes. It currently has a postal circulation list of approximately 2,750, with many more readers accessing it online. Where possible ESDS staff publish short articles in newsletters and journals. Users can also keep updated on the latest data, news and events from ESDS via dedicated web pages, RSS newsfeeds and JISC mailing lists. ●

## AHDS History News

### Histpop

Following the successful completion of usability testing of an alpha version of Histpop - the online Historical Population Reports web site - a beta version was launched in July 2006.

By February 2007, this online resource will be fully populated and will offer a comprehensive view of the changing demographic structure of Britain and Ireland from 1801 to 1937. It will provide access to almost 200,000 pages of pre-World War Two census and registration material for the British Isles. For the first time, researchers will be able to search and browse a collection that includes: all population reports for England, Wales and Scotland published by the Registrars-General and

their predecessors for the period 1801 to 1920; and all the census reports for England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland for 1801 to 1937. In addition, ancillary documents from The National Archives and critical essays will provide an aid to understanding the contexts, contents and creation of the collection.

Funding for this project comes from the JISC Digitisation Programme. Including Histpop, there are six projects within this programme, the others being Eighteenth-century Parliamentary Papers, Archival Sound Recordings, British Newspapers 1800-1900, Medical Journals Backfiles and Newsfilm Online.

[www.histpop.org](http://www.histpop.org) ●



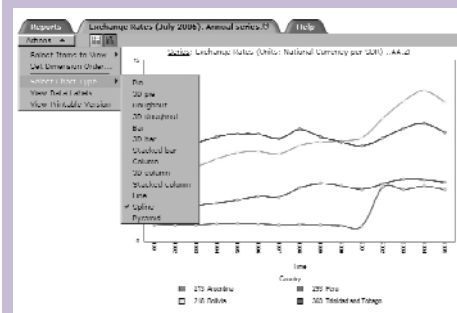
## ESDS International upgrades Beyond 20/20

The Beyond 20/20 Web Data Server (WDS) has recently been upgraded making it easier for users to find, visualise and download the international data they require. Version 7.3 offers some new features:

- a new chart package with Dundas Charting providing enhanced colours and chart types with a modern 3D look and new Doughnut, Spline, and Pyramid charts
- improved searching with whole word searching on the Advanced Search page allowing users to find only one form of a word, such as 'Can' but not 'Canada'
- usable on Macintosh computers - tested on Macintosh running Netscape browser, version 7.2

Beyond 20/20 WDS runs on a standard web browser, is accessibility compliant and is used by many governmental and intergovernmental organisations for the dissemination of aggregated time series data.

[www.esds.ac.uk/International/support/software.asp](http://www.esds.ac.uk/International/support/software.asp) ●



Charting data using Beyond 20/20 version 7.3

## Ethnicity guide

ESDS Government have produced an introductory guide to using the large-scale government surveys for ethnicity research.

In this introductory guide, the main datasets on ethnicity are reviewed and examples are given of the type of evidence that can be found. Also considered are some of the problematic issues of sample size, categorisation and change over time.

[www.esds.ac.uk/government/resources/the/meguides.asp](http://www.esds.ac.uk/government/resources/the/meguides.asp) ●

## QUADS Showcase Day

On 28 September 2006 the ESRC Qualitative Archiving and Data Sharing Scheme (QUADS) will be hosting its end-of-scheme showcase event at the Museum of London. QUADS is dedicated to the mission of learning more about sharing, representation and re-use of qualitative data, in all of its disparate shapes and forms. The scheme's five exploratory projects have been addressing methodological, information and technical matters including some innovations in qualitative methods such as new forms of data description, archiving and dissemination, data mining and the potential for increased participation and access.

This one day conference will showcase the demonstrators from the five projects.



Participants will have an opportunity to hear about the projects and the teams' experiences, and see the web sites and tools created by the projects. The projects afford unique case studies that can be used in the future to help inform those wishing to publish online and share qualitative data. The day is free but places are limited.

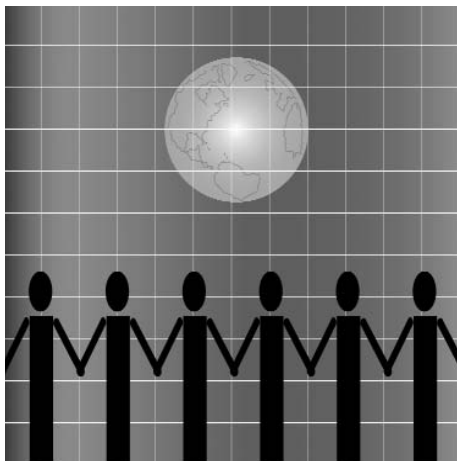
[www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata/news/eventdetail.asp?ID=1588](http://www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata/news/eventdetail.asp?ID=1588) ●

## News Byte

*Over 1900 people have received training at ESDS workshops since January 2003 and presentations from these workshops are available on the ESDS web site.*

## Measuring the World Around Us: ESDS International goes to London

The second ESDS International annual conference is fast approaching. The conference, on 27 November 2006 at the Institute of Materials London, offers an exciting opportunity for international data users and providers to meet and share their ideas. Participants are invited to bring queries relating to international data research, collection, dissemination,



international comparability and other methodological issues. The conference will appeal to members of the academic community from across the social sciences who are using international databanks in their research and teaching, data librarians, and producers of international resources.

Are you a young researcher? Do IFS series codes mystify you? This year representatives of the IMF, the World Bank and the ILO, as well as distinguished academics and practitioners, will be speaking at the conference. Participants interested in attending as an individual, a representative of an academic unit, or a member of government, should contact ESDS International for further information on registration. Attendance is free but registration is limited.

[www.esds.ac.uk/international/news/news.asp#26jun06](http://www.esds.ac.uk/international/news/news.asp#26jun06) ●

## Forthcoming Events

**11-14 September 2006:** National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) Summer School, Southampton

**12-14 September 2006:** International Conference on Child Cohort Studies, St. Catherine's College, Oxford

**14-16 September 2006:** British Sociological Association Medical Sociology Group Annual Conference 2006, Edinburgh

**18 September 2006:** Teaching students quantitative methods using resources from the British Birth Cohorts, City University, London

**20 September 2006:** Internet for Social Research, Birmingham

**28 September 2006:** Qualitative Archiving and Data Sharing Scheme (QUADS) Showcase Day, Museum of London, London

**29 September 2006:** ASC Conference, Words instead of Numbers. The status of software in the Qualitative Research World, Imperial College, London

**19 October 2006:** Real Life Methods Workshop: Localities, University of Manchester,

**30 October 2006:** Introductory workshop on analysis over time, CCSR, University of Manchester

**16 November 2006:** SUF Annual Conference: New statistics from administrative and customer files, The Royal Society, London

**27 November 2006:** ESDS International Conference 2006 - Measuring the World Around Us, Institute of Materials, London

**30 November 2006:** Real Life Methods Workshop: Social Networks, University of Manchester

**5 December 2006:** British Crime Survey User Meeting, Royal Statistical Society, London

**1 March 2007:** Real Life Methods Workshop: Comparative Cases, University of Manchester

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