

ESDS funding renewed!

ESDS has been awarded funding for a further five years. ESRC Council decided at its February meeting to endorse the earlier recommendation of the ESRC Research and Resources Board (RRB) to extend support for a further five years to October 2012. The new funding will allow ESDS to continue in its present form and structure, as a distributed service, based on a collaboration between four key centres of expertise: UK Data Archive (UKDA),

Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), both based at the University of Essex; Manchester Information and Associated Services (MIMAS) and Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research (CCSR), both located at the University of Manchester.

The decision to renew funding for ESDS comes after a lengthy process of review

and evaluation which started with the writing and submission by ESDS staff of a 150 page report in May 2005. This review document, which assessed and summarised the work of ESDS to date, was produced to inform the review panel set up by the ESRC/JISC and chaired by Dr Jeremy Harbison. The review panel deliberated over the summer of 2005 and conducted site visits of ESDS in September, delivering its recommendations to RRB in November 2005. During 2006 the lengthy process of budget preparation took place, with RRB eventually agreeing the budget and sending it to Council for final agreement in November 2006.

All those at ESDS are delighted with this news. The renewed funding will enable the continued delivery of a world-class data discovery, delivery and support service to the social science community for the foreseeable future. Well done to all those who have collectively contributed to making ESDS a success story! ■



Next steps for ESDS Longitudinal

ESDS Longitudinal has added a sixth major study to its portfolio - the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE).

The LSYPE, also known as Next Steps, is commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and is a major innovative panel study of young people which brings together data from a number of different sources, including both annual interviews with young people and their parents and administrative sources.

The main role of the study is to identify, and enable analysis and understanding of, the key factors affecting young people's transition from the later years of compulsory education, through any subsequent education or training, to entry into the labour market or other outcomes.

Early demand for the LSYPE data from academics, central government staff, policy think tanks and staff from government agencies represented in the study's growing user base has been significant. Demand for the LSYPE is expected to intensify when data from Waves 2 and 3 of the study are made available later in 2007.

A workshop to introduce this study, alongside other recent data collections, is being held at the Royal Statistical Society in London on 8 May 2007. The workshop will cover the methodology (background, coverage, sampling, aims etc.) of the LSYPE, the Citizenship Survey, the Families and Children Study and the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey. The day will also introduce users and potential users to initial findings and work in progress based on these studies.

Wave 1 (2004) data for the LSYPE are now available under SN 5545 in the Data Catalogue and a suite of web pages dedicated to the study have been added to the ESDS Longitudinal site. www.esds.ac.uk/longitudinal/access/lisype/ ■



Methodological Innovations Online

In February, a special issue of the journal *Methodological Innovations Online* was edited by Louise Corti of UKDA. This collection of papers entitled 'Making qualitative data more re-usable: issues of context and representation' focuses on defining and capturing context of raw qualitative data – in relation to sharing and re-use rather than original interpretation. The papers arise out of a lively and productive workshop organised as part of the Qualitative Archiving and Data Sharing Scheme (QUADS) held in spring 2006 by ESDS Qualidata. The day fostered an opportunity for QUADS projects, and three other groups working with large collections of previously collected qualitative data, to share experiences from work in progress with a remit of addressing context. The depth of insight arising from these papers has produced some concrete and pragmatic advice on how best to capture context – and points to recommendations that qualitative researchers should consider when undertaking new data collection.

Methodological Innovations Online is an open access international peer reviewed social research journal. It publishes high quality papers in research methods and methodology from all social science disciplines.

www.methodologicalinnovations.org ●



METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS Online

Micro data scoping studies

In April 2005 the Research Resources Board of the ESRC commissioned a review of international data resources and needs. The review forms part of a strategy to foster international collaboration in the social sciences. Among its many recommendations, the report arising from this review drew attention to the paucity of accessible social and economic micro data resources covering certain key countries – notably China, India, Brazil and South Africa. To inform future actions to address this issue, the Board commissioned four scoping studies designed to establish the availability within these countries of social and economic micro data resources for research purposes. Staff from ESDS have been involved in the commissioning process. The final reports on the four countries mentioned above will be available from ESRC in June. ●

Qualitative 'virtual' data collections

In the period before Qualidata was an integral part of the UKDA and the ESDS it developed its own catalogue of qualitative data resources known as Qualicat. This listed collections processed by Qualidata, as well as other important qualitative resources formally archived elsewhere in the UK. An important milestone for ESDS Qualidata has been to update and revise these records so that they can be integrated into the ESDS Data Catalogue. This process was completed recently with the addition of the final 'virtual' collection records to the catalogue. This special

category was created for resources which are not directly available from the UKDA but which are of potential interest to our users.

Almost 140 records have been created and added to the catalogue and include titles such as SN 4929 1968: a Student Generation in Revolt, 1945 -1985, SN 5533 Family and Social Life in Barrow, Lancaster, Preston, 1940-1970, SN 4945 National Sound Archive: Oral History Collection, 1890 – present, and SN 5516 Development of Television Literacy, 1989. ●

Forty years of the UK Data Archive

This year sees the 40th anniversary of the UKDA. As part of its celebrations the UKDA will be publishing a history of the Archive and would welcome your memories, anecdotes or photographs of the last four decades.

Timescapes

The Timescapes qualitative longitudinal study, Changing Relationships and Identities through the Life Course, is a research initiative funded for five years by the ESRC. The study is organised into seven research projects which together cover the life course and which will feed into three central strands of work. In strand one (archiving), data from the projects will be gathered together to establish the Timescapes archive, a qualitative longitudinal resource based at the University of Leeds and developed as a specialist satellite of ESDS Qualidata. Strand one also includes an archiving project which is designed to develop methods of archiving and sharing qualitative longitudinal data. In strand two

(secondary analysis) the team will showcase the re-use of the Timescapes data, acquire new data from affiliated projects and build up a community of users for the resource. In strand three (knowledge exchange) the consortium will organise a series of knowledge exchange activities including workshops and conferences.

The Timescapes study will be carried out by a consortium of researchers from five universities (Leeds, London South Bank, Open University, Cardiff and Edinburgh). The study will be housed within the Families, Life Course and Generations (FLaG) Research Centre, University of Leeds, and directed by Bren Neale. The UKDA are acting as consultants to the study team on professional archiving and data sharing standards and procedures. ●



OECD Education Statistics released at ESDS International

ESDS International began 2007 by enhancing their extensive dataset portfolio with the release of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Education Statistics. This database contains an array of comparative education statistics and indicators from OECD and non-OECD countries. It provides information on: the human and financial resources invested in education; access to,

progression and completion of education; how education and learning systems operate; and the returns to educational investments.

ESDS International data is freely available to students, researchers and staff at UK further and higher education institutions.

www.esds.ac.uk/international/support/user_guides/oced/ ●



ESDS International reports on second annual conference

ESDS International held their second annual conference, 'Measuring the World Around Us' on the 27 November 2006 at the Institute of Materials in London. The event was well received by delegates who came from a wide range of educational, research and inter-governmental organisations to meet and share their ideas on issues relating to international data research.

Mark Barrett of University College London opened the conference with a fascinating talk on the use of international databanks in energy and environment modelling and policy making. A number of young researchers then presented their work on economic convergence and foreign direct investment. A session by the data providers followed with Cathy Wright of the International Monetary Fund speaking about the Fund's move towards making statistics available online and the possible release of several new databanks. Lawrence Jeffrey Johnson of the International Labour

Organisation discussed the major trends and issues in the global and regional labour markets. The final speaker of the day, Valentina Kalk of the World Bank presented the role of the World Bank Development Data Group and highlighted the ways intergovernmental organisations work together to establish data exchange processes and methods, help countries improve their statistical capabilities and build consensus on defining international agreed standards.

The conference concluded with a lively and informative data providers' panel discussion chaired by Denise Lievesley, the former director of statistics at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). A comprehensive report of the day with links to conference abstracts, slides, audio files, as well as a podcast is available at: www.esds.ac.uk/international/news/2006conf.report.asp. ●

UKDA awards update

Scoping study on social science resources

The UKDA has received an award from the ESRC to carry out a scoping study assessing the potential for development of social scientific research materials based on public records and allied archival materials held at The National Archives (TNA). The main output of the project will be a report outlining key social science resources held at the TNA which could be enhanced and made available to a wider audience.

The project will assess the current and potential needs and demands within the social science community for research resources and advise on those resources for which there is likely to be demand. The report will be published in late summer 2007 and will be based on wide consultation with the user community. A web-based questionnaire will be on the UKDA web site from early 2007, and feedback is welcomed from all social science researchers regardless of whether or not they use resources in the TNA. ●

RELU-DSS

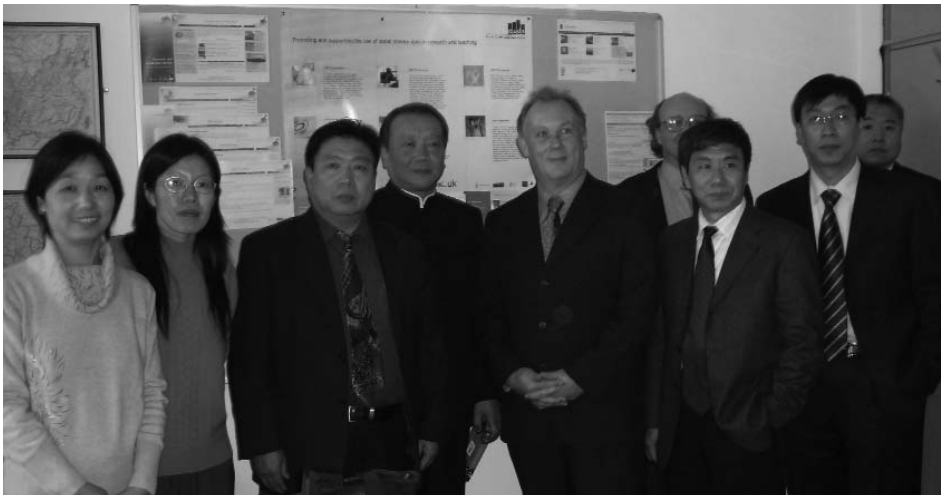
The UKDA has been awarded a further grant for the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme Data Support Service (RELU-DSS) which supports Programme award holders in the development and implementation of their project's Data Management Plan and subsequent sharing of data created. The Data Management Plan addresses the following important considerations: access to existing data sources; description of primary data to be collected; quality assurance of data; and long term archiving of collected data. Data being created span the social and natural sciences from survey data and in-depth interviews to land-use maps and soil analyses. The award runs until 2008 in the first instance. relu.esds.ac.uk ●

ESDS hosts visits from South Africa and China

The reputation of ESDS as a leader in its field is reflected in the large and increasing number of visits it receives from international delegations wishing to explore first hand what ESDS does, and how it does it, in order to build on this experience in a local context. January 2007 witnessed two such visits. The first was a party of four from the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Pretoria, South Africa. This group visited the UKDA for four-days spending time with staff across many sections of the archive in order to get 'hands-on' experience of the task of data curation. They were particularly interested in understanding the processes from data acquisition to data dissemination, and the problems encountered since HSRC are currently planning to implement an 'open access' policy regarding data generated as a result of research council funding.

The second visit was by a delegation of

senior scientists and administrators from the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS). This trip was organised by the ESRC (co-ordinated by the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick) in collaboration with funding bodies in both the Netherlands and Germany, as part of a fact-finding tour across all three countries. In addition to visiting ESDS in both Essex and Manchester, the CASS delegation also visited ISER's Longitudinal Studies Centre (Essex), the ESRC National Centre for e-Social Science (Manchester), the Office for National Statistics in Newport where attention focused on the Virtual Micro-data Laboratory, and the Centre for Longitudinal Studies at the Institute of Education, University of London. CASS will be hosting the foundation conference of the International Data Forum in Beijing in June 2007 and this visit to Europe was part of the CASS preparation for that event. ■



Improving access to government data

At the recent Statistics User Forum meeting, Improving Access to Government Data, held in London, users from the academic, local government and commercial sectors and some key suppliers of government data presented to a large and varied audience. Discussion centred on the requirements to:

- balance disclosure control with improving access;
- consider preservation issues (e.g. persistent formats) and archiving data, documentation and web sites;
- improve finding aids and make web

- sites more usable and accessible;
- use existing standards (e.g. DDI) and improve metadata alongside tables;
- produce UK-level statistics, separate production from presentation and package in better, new and different ways;
- improve collaboration between producers, users, presenters and resellers;
- balance timeliness and accuracy;
- produce comparable data consistent over time and provide data from smaller geographical areas;
- encourage wider and better use of data.

www.esds.ac.uk/news/eventdetail.asp?id=1655 ■

Forthcoming Events

19 March 2007: Data Linkage: Exploring the Potential, Royal Statistical Society, London

28-29 March 2007: Online Research Methods, Royal Society, London

29 March 2007: General Household Survey User Meeting, Royal Statistical Society, London

29 March 2007: Integrated Household Survey meeting, Royal Statistical Society, London

18-20 April 2007: CAQDAS 07 Conference: Advances in Qualitative Computing, Royal Holloway, University of London

19 April 2007: Introduction to ESDS International, University of Manchester

19-20 April 2007: Methods@Plymouth, Plymouth

23 April 2007: Family Resources Survey User Meeting, Royal Statistical Society, London

8 May 2007: Youth, community and justice: new survey datasets for social research, Royal Statistical Society, London

15-18 May 2007: IASSIST 2007: Building Global Knowledge Communities with Open Data, Montreal Quebec, Canada

17 May 2007: Real Life Methods Workshop: Kinship and Relatedness, University of Manchester

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

Annual Report 2005-2006

The ESDS Annual report for 2005-2006 is now available online in PDF format, or can be requested in printed form. ■

