The IASSIST QUARTERLY represents an international cooperative effort on the part of individuals managing, operating, or using machine-readable data archives, data libraries, and data services. The QUARTERLY reports on activities related to the production, acquisition, preservation, processing, distribution, and use of machine-readable data carried out by its members and others in the international social science community. Your contributions and suggestions for topics of interest are welcomed. The views set forth by authors of articles contained in this publication are not necessarily those of IASSIST.

Information for Authors

The QUARTERLY is published four times per year. Authors are encouraged to submit papers as word processing files. Hard copy submissions may be required in some instances. Manuscripts should be sent to Editor: Karsten Boye Rasmussen.

The first page should contain the article title, author's name, affiliation, address to which correspondence may be sent, and telephone number. Footnotes and bibliographic citations should be consistent in style, preferably following a standard authority such as the University of Chicago press Manual of Style or Kate L. Turabian's Manual for Writers, Where appropriate, machine-readable data files should be cited with bibliographic citations consistent in style with Dodd, Sue A. "Bibliographic references for numeric social science data files: suggested guidelines". Journal of the American Society for Information Science 30(2):77-82, March 1979. Announcements of conferences, training sessions, or the like, are welcomed and should include a mailing address and a telephone number for the director of the event or for the organization sponsoring the event.

Editor

Karsten Boye Rasmussen
Marketing & Management
SDU
University of Southern Denmark,
Campusvej 55, DK-5230
Odense M, Denmark
Phone: +45 6550 2115
Email:kbr@sam.sdu.dk

Production

Fadi Dagher
423 West 120th St., #107
New York, NY, 10027
USA
Email:fd2102@columbia.edu.
Walter Piovesan
Maps/Data/GIS Library
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, B.C.
Canada V5A 1S6
Phone: (778) 782-5869
Email:walter@sfu.ca

Contents

Volume 30 Number 3 Fall 2006

Editor's Notes
The Origins and Early Years of IASSIST
M. O’Neill Adams
Recollections of the Formative Years of IASSIST
C. L. Geda
Open virtuality or virtually open? Openness on the web as viewed by the IASSIST membership
K. Boye Rasmussen and R. de Vries
Welcome to the second issue of the IASSIST Quarterly,

We are all interested in the future, because that is where we intend to spend the rest of our lives. At the 1999 IASSIST conference, there was a session called “Bridging the Past with the Future” which featured central and important IASSIST people assembled to celebrate the 25th anniversary of IASSIST. IASSIST began - as you will learn in this issue - in Toronto at “the meeting in the bar”. IASSIST 1999 was appropriately held in Toronto and this special celebration session was chaired by Laine Ruus from the University of Toronto. The session involved looking backwards and forward through the following presentations: “IASSIST: Origins and Evolution as Revealed in Its Archives and Other Materials” by Margaret Adams, “Early IASSIST as Recalled By Its First President” by Carolyn Geda, and “Social Research Infrastructure from A European Perspective” by Ekkehard Mochmann.

Better late than never, we are now able to present the revised manuscripts from the American side. These pages summarize original material and present eyewitness observations, some of which had been in the personal information processor for longer than the 25 year span that was commemorated. In the early years, IASSIST had an archivist and I’d like to point out that the position is currently open. As the Adams’ article demonstrates, there is a lot of material available on the formation and establishing of IASSIST for anyone who wants to continue documenting the organization’s history.

The young readers might not fully grasp that when we use the words “mail” and “mailing”, we are in the area of physics, the area of moving around physical envelopes with physical paper - often by foot for the last bit. Communication was slow; not instant like we are used to now that we can’t imagine a world without e-mail. The technological revolution and the practical ease nowadays might make you feel that “I was so much older then, I’m younger than that now”. However, our kids will - without being asked - tell us differently!

The first article is a contribution from Margaret O’Neill Adams: “The Origins and Early Years of IASSIST”. In it, Adams compiles and researches the information found in the IASSIST archives and presents a view of how “ASSIST, International ASSIST, I-ASSIST, and IASSIST” started. No single person is given the credit for inventing the brilliant acronym. The Adams’ article also explores some of the central issues, conflicts, and relations to other organizations. From the beginning, IASSIST has been an organization with people as members. Carolyn L. Geda, the first president of IASSIST looks further into the issue of the acronym in her article “Recollections of the Formative Years of IASSIST”. She credits no particular person or people, which, in my view, could be taken as an example of the solidarity within IASSIST: that IASSIST is a group consisting of individuals but often acting as a group or organization. In the article, Carolyn Geda writes: “The first task of the Committee was to construct and agree upon an acronym. This acronym evolved at the infamous bar in Toronto. Once the acronym of IASSIST was agreed upon, we had the problem of finding appropriate words for it. Although we were very pleased with the acronym, we frequently had and continue to have problems remembering the actual name of the organization!” Geda’s piece demonstrates the “international” character of IASSIST when mentioning how regions where supposed to be involved in all Action Groups and how this evolved into Regional Secretariats for recruitment, fee handling and also regional meetings.

The third article is also from our very own world. It is not about 25 years ago, although the data are a bit aged. This is a self-look or what could be called an organization’s narcissistic research. In 2001, Repke de Vries and I collected information through a questionnaire about the use and the future use of the IASSIST web-site. Some of this information has been presented earlier, and a lot of good people have worked hard and improved the IASSIST web-site tremendously since then. I gave the presentation a new wrapping when I used the information at the 2007 IASSIST conference in the panel session “Care and Maintenance of a Global Knowledge Community”. More content was added and we ended up with the second article on IASSIST as a virtual community with the title: “Open Virtuality or Virtually Open? Openness on the Web as Viewed by the IASSIST Membership.” Among the issues the article addresses is the balancing of access for and openness towards non-members of the IASSIST.

The IASSIST acronym is indeed very, very good. It’s so good that others are using it too. Ever heard of “The Internet Server Manager For Mac OS X”? Or how about “SJ Asset Management IASSIST”? Or iassass.org, not to be confused with our iassistdata.org? Or “iAssistHR - a Virtual Assistance firm”? The “iassist.co.uk”? Or “iassist.ca”? Etc. Most of these are new, small, or discontinued. Our IASSIST is certainly still here and with a history to tell.

Remember to have a look at the website http://iassistdata.org

Articles for the IASSIST Quarterly are most welcome. Articles can be papers from IASSIST conferences, from other conferences, from local presentations, discussion input, etc. Contact the editor via e-mail: kbr@sam.sdu.dk.

Karsten Boye Rasmussen, August 2007
The Origins and Early Years of IASSIST

A Personal Prologue
This essay is based upon my presentation on a plenary panel commemorating the 25th anniversary of the founding of IASSIST at the IASSIST annual conference in Toronto, Canada, May, 1999. My panel colleagues were Carolyn Geda and Ekkehard Mochmann; Laine Ruus chaired the session. All three had participated in IASSIST’s 1974 founding meeting, also in Toronto, and remained active in IASSIST thereafter. Although I was part of the late 1960s social science data archives community, at the time of the 1974 meeting I was “retired” – at least temporarily, and did not participate in IASSIST’s founding nor formative years.

Carolyn’s and Ekkehard’s 1999 presentations drew upon their personal experiences and memory. Carolyn focussed on her experiences as the chair of the ad hoc committee that created IASSIST and then as its first association president. Ekkehard provided a European view, and brought the discussion of the evolution of the international social science data community closer to the present. Laine, too, drew upon her memory of events to add her own coloring and a Canadian perspective.

We all spoke from rough outlines or notes, which we promised to convert to text. In the time since I have tinkered with my material, planning to finalize it for the IASSIST Quarterly (IQ). The IQ editor, Karsten Boye Rasmussen, patiently inquired about an article from time to time. When he wrote that he was coming from Denmark to Washington, D.C. in the summer, 2005, to pick it up, I expected to be able to oblige. Instead, completion became a 2006 New Year’s resolution.

This essay, submitted in anticipation of the 32nd anniversary of the founding of IASSIST, is neither as detailed nor as extensive a history as I once planned. That qualification aside, the IASSIST history is a tribute to all IASSISTers: to the pioneers no longer engaged in data services or no longer with us, to those who carry on their work and the IASSIST traditions today, and to those who will do so into the indefinite future.

Introduction
Preparing a historical interpretation of the founding and evolution of IASSIST offers a chance to relive its early days vicariously and to celebrate the founding and subsequent contributions of the IASSIST community. It also provides an opportunity to survey the milieu from which IASSIST emerged and to document efforts of international cooperation in the collection, processing, storage, retrieval, exchange, and use of machine-readable social science data.

Looking back more than three decades on experiences of the early international data services community can also, perhaps, contextualize contemporary digital library and archives challenges, issues, and initiatives. Maybe it can contribute to defining the unique professional identity of its multi-disciplinary members.

Hindsight often is 20/20. It seems to be human nature to minimize past challenges met when considering those that loom and are still to be resolved. The accomplishments of the international data community over the last three decades are not necessarily well known. To those unaware of the history of the social science data community, expectations for identifying, preserving, and providing access to the valuable portion of the immense outpouring of digital materials produced by the tools of office automation, or by digitization, are “new” challenges. Yet from the perspective of past as well as present achievements managing social science data, and from subsequent accomplishments exploiting contemporary technologies to describe, disseminate, and preserve them, today’s challenges may be seen as simply the latest variation at the intersection of computing technology and the social sciences. Valuable lessons learned by the pioneers who preserved, described, and provided access to computer-readable structured data can be applied to the archival challenges of continuing and new forms of digital information. The story of how the pioneers came together to collaborate in an international organization may yield contemporarily useful insights.

Historical Sources
Two sets of materials, the IASSIST archives and the full run of Social Science Information (SSI), offered plentiful primary material for considering IASSIST’s past and some of its early accomplishments. From 1962-1987, the International Social Science Council (ISSC), with support from the United Nations Educational, Social, and Cultural
Organization (UNESCO), published SSI. SSI became a vehicle for reporting on the work of the ISSC as well as for publishing articles from interdisciplinary social science research.

The IASSIST archives rest for now in a traditional environment. They are paper documents folded in approximately 30 Hollinger boxes, the acid-free containers that traditional archives use to store paper records. They include an almost complete set of the early years of the IASSIST Newsletter/Quarterly, a significant volume of correspondence between the founders, meeting minutes, and other administrative material. The author’s ready access to the archival material provided her the opportunity to attempt this history. All of this essay’s references to unpublished materials are from the IASSIST archives, unless otherwise cited.

Elina Almasy, the long-time editor of SSI and for many years the Executive Director of the ISSC, supported the quest for additional background materials by kindly offering access to all the volumes of SSI when the author visited her in Paris in the spring, 1999. Numerous SSI articles document post-World War II international and interdisciplinary collaboration in the social sciences, including efforts to coordinate resources and support services. Some of the earliest explicitly discuss the need for data libraries or data archives to support international, interdisciplinary, and comparative social science research.[1] Mme. Almasy, who was Secretary of the ISSC’s Standing Committee on Social Science Data Archives at the time of the founding of IASSIST, also generously shared with the author some of her recollections of the personalities and milieu that contributed to IASSIST.

One of the oft-told stories of IASSIST’s origins revolves around “the meeting in the bar.” Thus one of the first pieces of evidence sought in the archives was any documentation or reference to such a meeting. The author also hoped that the archives would offer evidence of the role that Michael T. Aiken played in facilitating the emergence of IASSIST. Aiken, professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison (UW) in 1974 and eight years earlier, the founding faculty director of UW’s [Social Science] Data and Program Library Service (DPLS), had been active in the work of the ISSC’s Standing Committee on Social Science Data Archives. He appears to have been largely responsible for planning a Conference on Data and Program Library Services that was held in conjunction with the World Sociology Congress meeting in Toronto in late August 1974. IASSIST emerged from that conference.[2]

Earlier in August 1974, Mike had shared a copy of the conference “call” and general program outline with the author and enthusiastically told her of his hopes that this conference could be the catalyst for the formation of an association for the newly emerging profession of social science data archivists and librarians. They were the women and men who were developing data support services in numerous institutions around the world and establishing standards for managing and sharing computer-readable social science data. An internationally recognized association might solidify the professional status of data services personnel, something that was becoming especially important in North America in an era of increasing professionalization that was in part a by-product of new affirmative action and equal opportunity initiatives.

In addition, an international association of social science data services professionals could further collaboration in social science research. That long had been a goal of the ISSC’s Standing Committee on Social Science Data Archives and of the by-then defunct U.S. Council of Social Science Data Archives (CSSDA).[3] With a cutback in U.S. government funding, CSSDA met an early demise in 1969-1970. Its final activity was co-sponsorship with the University of Wisconsin of a national workshop on the management of a data and program library in Madison, Wisconsin in June 1969, and the subsequent publication of the proceedings from the workshop.[4]

The Archives
The IASSIST archives do document the “meeting in the bar” and they verify Michael Aiken’s role in the formation of IASSIST. They also document much more, well beyond what can be drawn upon in a single essay. It therefore focuses solely on the formative years.

Before considering the specifics of IASSIST’s history, some general impressions gleaned from skimming the archival material offer insight about the environment from which IASSIST emerged and suggest the degree to which its accomplishments are so noteworthy. For example, on a mundane level, the archives include few photocopies but many onion skin carbons. The latter offer evidence of the way correspondents circulated multiple copies of letters and document drafts across continents. Somewhat surprisingly by contemporary standards, there is much traditional formality in these materials, despite the collegiality and familiarity of the writers. One frequently finds original typewriting whose quality caused self-consciousness on the part of the authors. On the other hand, imagine the effort that Judith Rowe was reflecting upon when she wrote to Carolyn Geda on September 12, 1974, barely three weeks after the Toronto meeting: “Enclosed are the two drafts typed with my own hands. What greater love has anyone?”

Those drafts contrasted with many of the others, and contained no strike-overs, no typos. One was a three-page general memo concerning the organization of ASSIST [sic], the Association for Social Science Information Services Technology. It presumably was intended for widespread distribution, while the second was a memo to members of ASSIST’s Ad Hoc Organizing Committee. These drafts...
were the first of many that Judith composed in the early months, and that were revised many times by Alice Robbin, Per Nielsen, Carolyn Geda, and sometimes others, as well as by Judith herself. They formed the beginning of a hefty collection of paper documents that Carolyn gathered for a mailing to the Ad Hoc Organizing Committee later in the fall, 1974.

The authors of the early IASSIST documentation comment frequently about delays in circulating correspondence within North America, and between the U.S., Canada, Western Europe, and other parts of the world. There is no suggestion that the authors considered using international telephone lines to speed communication. Questions of currency equivalencies and how they might apply to any effort to set a standard membership fee, the challenges of hedging any organizational bank accounts against possible currency deflations, and the problems of the varied financial costs of seemingly comparable activities from one country or continent to another are among the persistent organizational themes.

The archives offer a window on the vicissitudes of the academic employment scene of the time, and the vagaries of institutional support for both international and national social science data infrastructures. You don’t have to read between the lines to understand that dealing with all of this took a toll on the abilities of individuals to do the organizing work they had promised. The reader also observes a group of dedicated professionals trying to build a worldwide network of achievement and support, apparently having no question about the language by which they would communicate among themselves: English.

Many of the concerns of the early IASSISTers are issues that still preoccupy the international data community. Yet in terms of basic communication, and especially the technologies that support it, the environment was wholly different than that of today. While we all know this and understand on many different levels what this means, there is something about all those carbon paper copies that serves to symbolize just how much has changed, societally and professionally, since 1974.

Any foray into the IASSIST archives leaves the reader exhausted by the volume of correspondence and other written material produced in those early IASSIST years. What is especially remarkable was that most of it was authored by only four individuals: Judith Rowe of Princeton University’s Data Library, Alice Robbin of UW’s Data and Program Library Service, Carolyn Geda of the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research (ICPR) at the University of Michigan, and the late Per Nielsen of the Danish Data Archives. While many others contributed throughout the early period, those four were the primary actors, and by their unique commitment, enthusiasm, and tenacity, assured the emergence of a formal international membership organization to address the common problems facing all who were organizing and staffing social science data archives or libraries.

We’re getting ahead of the story.

**Background for the Toronto Meeting, 1974**

Reading between the lines in the materials reviewed for this essay, and recalling the author’s conversation with Mike Aiken shortly before the Toronto meeting, it seems that organizing a conference on data archives and program library services concurrent with the 1974 World Sociology Congress in Toronto was the way Aiken found to advance his long-term goals. He had connections with at least three professional groups that shared his interests in influencing the future of international social science research and support services for it. His networks included the international profession of sociologists, his colleagues in ISSC’s Standing Committee on Social Science Data Archives, and the staffs of the emerging informal network of social science data services providers. It is fairly clear that Aiken, and likely others, sought to use the Toronto sociologists’ meeting, ISSC connections, and personal involvement in the nascent “data community” to bring issues of common interests to a joint gathering of social science researchers and data services providers.

The International Social Science Council (ISSC), formed in 1952, was an interdisciplinary nongovernmental organization (NGO) supported by UNESCO. By the early 1970s, Stein Rokkan, a Norwegian social scientist (and founder of the Norwegian Social Science Data Services, the NSD), was President of the ISSC. Rokkan had been working since the late 1950s, if not earlier, on international efforts to facilitate access to social science data for comparative cross-national and cross-cultural analysis. He and his colleagues had identified the tools essential for access to data for comparative analysis. They included data inventories, archives of raw survey data, a current file of information on progress in cross-national and cross-cultural research, guides for research workers in need of data for other countries, standardization and manuals of information on existing and proposed data classification standards for the social sciences, and regional working conferences and seminars of senior social scientists as well as some for graduate students.[5]

During the 1960s the ISSC sponsored several conferences on social science data archives, most of which focussed on European issues, with one in the U.S. hosted by Yale University. Rokkan, among others, viewed UNESCO, through the efforts of the ISSC, as the logical agent for internationalizing social science research and for making truly comparative research a reality.[6] As a result of a recommendation of the third European Social Science Data Archives conference in 1965, the ISSC decided at a conference in London in April 1966 to constitute a Standing
Committee on Social Science Data Archives (SCSSDA). Its first meeting was in the U.S., at Ann Arbor, Michigan in June the same year. By fiscal year 1967-68, UNESCO allocated [U.S.] $6000 for the Standing Committee’s work.

The original Standing Committee members included Stein Rokkan, Erwin K. Scheuch of Germany, John Madge of England, and three other Europeans. Ralph L. Bisco and Warren Miller of ICPR, William Glaser of Columbia University, Philip Hastings of the Roper Center, and Ithiel de Sola Pool of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology formed the U.S. contingent. Glaser and Bisco wore two hats on the Standing Committee as they were also, respectively, Chairman and Executive Director of the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF)-financed Council of Social Science Data Archives (CSSDA). Over time, membership on the Standing Committee expanded to include other European and North American social scientists, as well as members from South America, East Asia, South Asia, and the USSR.[7]

The ISSC’s Standing Committee and the U.S. CSSDA emerged at approximately the same time and for the years of their co-existence, jointly focused upon developing data inventories. None was produced before the demise of the CSSDA in 1969. CSSDA did, however, sponsor several national meetings and in 1967 published a directory of social science data archives in the United States, covering the activities of twenty-three U.S. data organizations and one in Canada, and included an entry for the CSSDA itself.[8] Both ISSC’s Standing Committee and the CSSDA focused primarily on the interests of social science researchers. Professionals from the data services community who were not themselves researchers played no role in ISSC’s Standing Committee, though some participated in the work of the CSSDA.[9]

The evolution of the Standing Committee on Social Science Data Archives continued as the CSSDA faded. It became more structured, recasting itself into Task Forces as the vehicles through which its work would be done. By the time of its 1968 meeting, the ISSC’s Standing Committee had seven such groups: Task Forces on “archived records” should be the joint concern of all its Task Forces.[10]

In 1970 Michael Aiken became chairman of the Program Library Services Task Force. This likely reflected not only his interests, but also a new project at the University of Wisconsin: a NSF-sponsored national program library service.

The 1974 Toronto Conference
The formal convenors of the 1974 Conference on Data Archives and Program Library Services, August 21-22, 1974, sponsored by the ISSC’s Standing Committee on Social Science Data Archives were its chair, Erwin Scheuch, director of the Zentralarchiv, Cologne; Michael Aiken; and Hagen Stegemann, also of the Zentralarchiv. These three also were the coordinator and discussants, respectively, of the final summary session of the conference.

An overview of the conference program is reprinted here as Appendix A. It shows the conference considering some of the topics that were a responsibility of one or more of the Standing Committee’s Task Forces. In addition, the program introduced some themes that reflected issues of importance to professionals who were supporting social science research, rather than undertaking it.

UW’s Data and Program Library Service sent more than 300 invitations to the conference. Session coordinators, program speakers, and the approximately 60 registrants came from the social science data services community, from the existing membership of the Standing Committee’s Task Forces, and other interested social scientists. This mix of people differed from participants in previous ISSC activities, wherein social science researchers prevailed. The conference program addressed issues that both complemented and expanded upon challenges the ISSC and the former CSSDA had confronted. Note the similarity to the themes and issues of IASSIST conferences over the years.

Alice Robbin’s account of the final session, included in the reprinted program overview, summarized the action areas agreed to by conference participants. Taken together, they led to recognition that meeting the challenges of facilitating the kind of international and interdisciplinary social science research collaboration that Stein Rokkan and others had long advocated required moving beyond the organizational status quo. The group identified professionalization and training of data archivists, the people on whose work social science research depended, as the first means of accomplishing their goals.

More than 30 years later, clarifying the professional status and complementary relationship between data archivists or librarians and those engaged in social science research
can sometimes seem elusive. Compounding this is the challenge of integrating data services into the mainstream of the traditional archives and libraries as they embrace a digital era.

Robbin recalls that at the summary session of the conference, David Nasatir, then Director of the International Data Library and Reference Service at the University of California, Berkeley, recommended that the group adjourn and continue discussing the idea of a new organization “down in the bar.”[11] The idea of a “meeting in the bar” thus can be credited to Nasatir, embellishing further the reputation he earned for his many contributions to the social science data community.[12]

There are several documentary references for “the meeting in the bar” to corroborate the memories of this happening. The first is a letter of September 10, 1974, less than three weeks after the conference, from Alice Robbin to Carolyn Geda and Judith Rowe. Alice sent news that Stein Rokkan, President of the ISSC, had already written to Mike Aiken to say he was delighted with what he heard about the Toronto meeting, which he had been unable to attend. Rokkan urged that “programme points;” i.e., an outline of mandate, function, goals, etc. for the new organization be formulated quickly, so he could submit them to UNESCO. He evidently emphasized that UNESCO funding might be available, given the right approach. Alice adds a “p.s.” to her letter, in which she refers to the “notes that Carolyn and Judith took at the Long Bar on Thursday night.” She ends by suggesting that the newly-forming group may want to think of a name change.[13]

The second reference to “the bar” comes in a letter from David Nasatir to Carolyn Geda dated a day later, September 11, 1974, in which he writes, “recognizing that Mike Aiken will have to fill in, etc., I thought I would set down what I understand of the results of our meeting in the bar, the meeting the next morning, and the Standing Committee on Social Science Data Archives meeting on Friday night, and possible implications for IASSIST.” Apparently some shift in emphasis or support developed after the conference summary session and the meeting in the bar and before or during the Standing Committee’s meeting a day or so later.

At a planning meeting for IASSIST the morning after the gathering in the bar, there had been tentative proposals that IASSIST might associate in some manner with the ISSC’s Standing Committee. One suggestion was that a chair and vice-chair of IASSIST serve on ISSC’s Standing Committee, alongside its Task Force chairs. However, it seems not everyone on the Standing Committee supported this overture or the idea of a joining of IASSIST and the Standing Committee in this manner. Nasatir’s letter recommends that “everyone...should keep her cool” and remember a few things.

IASSIST is [to be] an independent, autonomous organization that can (and should) do as its members please. They may wish to have working groups, for example. ...[secondly] The [ISSC] Standing Committee on Social Science Data Archives... has an established structure. ...[thirdly] Nothing prevents (in fact everything supports) some or all of the working groups of IASSIST becoming Task Forces of the Standing Committee, without [its members] ceasing to exist as IASSIST members. [He continues:] ...on the morning after the meeting in the bar, a group met to form IASSIST and agreed to form a provisional organizing committee with you [Carolyn] as the chair, Per as the European Secretary, ...and we decided to work towards a goal of an organizational meeting to be held in 1975. We hoped to seek funds for this, but the mechanism for funding remains vague in my mind.

Aiken wrote a few weeks later to Carolyn Geda, confirming the information in Nasatir’s letter (David had sent him a copy), and said he was writing with hopes of clarifying the situation. He, or he and Nasatir, had evidently reported to the Standing Committee about the organizing plans of “International ASSIST,” and had there expressed the desire of the new group to be an independent professional organization, while recognizing that it probably would gain greater “legitimacy in the international social science [research] community immediately [if it had] association with the [ISSC] Standing Committee.” He expands a bit: “International ASSIST is a stand alone organization with autonomous status, unless its membership decides otherwise. It is an association of professionals in the data archives field who will define projects of mutual concern, set up task forces to carry out these objectives, and we hope, be able to obtain sufficient resources to have national and international meetings from time to time.”

He continues: “Regarding its relationship to the [ISSC] Standing Committee on Social Science Data Archives... one way to maintain both its autonomy and to participate in the activities of the Standing Committee is for the task force chairmen of International ASSIST also to occupy the position of task force chairman in the Standing Committee.” He also mentions that when it met in Toronto after the conference, the Standing Committee formed one new task force, on a worldwide data archives register, that was “eminently fundable” by the ISSC. He implied that such an effort would be of interest to International ASSIST. Nonetheless, it is likely that even at this early point, the potential for competition between the SCSSDA and IASSIST for ISSC and/or UNESCO funds added to the tension related to the issue of organizational autonomy.

Post-Toronto
The stage was thus set for the flurry of organizing activity that consumed Carolyn, Judith, Alice, Per and colleagues...
for the next many months and years. Overall it is a story of many small and not so small dramas, well beyond the scope of this essay. The organizing tensions evident in the early correspondence needed to be resolved in a manner that the interested parties could support

Should IASSIST affiliate with the ISSC’s Standing Committee on Social Science Data Archives? Doing so might mean eligibility for UNESCO support. Should it affiliate with other professional organizations? Should IASSIST be a federation of regional associations or some other structure? Perhaps the key decision, from the perspective of establishing the professional identity of data archivists and librarians, was whether membership was to be of individual professionals or institution-based. Ultimately, when the IASSIST constitution was adopted a couple of years later and made clear that its membership was of individuals, the International Federation of Data Organizations (IFDO) emerged to facilitate the types of collaboration that its organizers felt required institutional support.[14]

A few organizing efforts offer a glimpse of the range and variety of work undertaken in IASSIST’s first years. The first was assembling the package of materials that Carolyn Geda sent to the IASSIST Ad Hoc Organizing Committee. Mailed in early December 1974, it included five parts:

- a list of most of the major meetings related to social science data archives that had been held between 1962 and 1969, including reports or agendas from some of them;
- two sample constitutions from other professional associations that might help IASSIST draft its constitution;
- the summary of the meetings on IASSIST in Toronto;
- a questionnaire on the interests of the committee members, including their suggestions for persons for the mailing list that the Ad Hoc Organizing Committee was building; and,
- a list of suggested newsletters and publications which might be asked to print a notice publicizing IASSIST.

While Carolyn was busy those first couple of months with this mailing and the numerous other details that fell to the chair of an organizing committee, the archives provide evidence that Judith Rowe was also busy doing what she seemed to do without ceasing throughout her career. She was working every angle, spreading the word about the new organization and seeking allies in and among numerous other associations. For example, there is a letter dated September 19, 1974 from the Canadian Secretary/Treasurer of WAPOR (World Association for Public Opinion Research). Yvan Corbeil, responding to a letter he had received from Irving Crespi of the Gallup Organization in Princeton about “the idea” proposed by Judith Rowe. He calls “the idea” interesting, though he “isn’t sure of the exact nature of the association she is planning.” However, he raises a concern that the two associations potentially could be competing for the same members, so proposes an alternative. IASSIST could become a research group within WAPOR. Clearly he missed the point because being subsumed in this manner was not what the IASSIST founders had in mind. It is, however, representative of some of the response they encountered as they began to organize.

For her part, Alice Robbin was contributing to the narratives about the Toronto meeting, including authoring the article in SSI excerpted here as Appendix A. She also put the growing mailing list into machine-readable form, corresponded with some of the others who had been at the Toronto meeting, and during 1976 and 1977, edited the first volume of the IASSIST Newsletter.[15]

As European Secretariat, Per Nielsen shouldered responsibility for rounding up commitment from “interested parties,” as he called them, from throughout Europe. To some extent his efforts evolved in parallel with an informal coming together in the spring, 1976, of European data archives in what became CESSDA: Committee of European Social Science Data Archives. His IASSIST organizing challenges also related to the continuing tensions that emerged in Toronto between ISSC’s Standing Committee and IASSIST and are reflected in a letter he received from Erwin Scheuch, dated June 7, 1976, on the subject of the future structure for the ISSC Standing Committee. It echoed, in part, a letter Scheuch had sent Geda in January 1975 following the mailing described above to IASSIST’s Ad Hoc Organizing Committee. After discussing his interpretation of the differences between IASSIST and the Standing Committee, Scheuch proposed some possible areas for collaboration, such as on a world registry of data archives and related data sources, and in the development of procedures for data handling in survey archives.

While negotiating all of the above, Per also responded at length to the various draft documents and other mailings that came from the North Americans, and urged what he called “the aspect of the third world.” In addition, given that most of the sentiment for an individual-membership organization, which he personally seemed to support, was coming from North America, while the sentiment for an association of institutional members tended to be preferred by some of the Europeans, the archives suggest that Per was the point person for ameliorating the differences in these perspectives. Both Carolyn and Per drafted constitutions for IASSIST for discussion with the Ad Hoc Organizing Committee, and subsequently its Steering Committee, and the constitution which was eventually adopted later in 1976 significantly merged their drafts.
The Evolution of IASSIST

Evidence of organizational progress for IASSIST is shown in Appendix B, a reprint from the first issue of the IASSIST Newsletter (November 1976). It lists the original seventeen members of the IASSIST Steering Committee. The latter replaced the Ad Hoc Organizing Committee following meetings in April 1975 in London in conjunction with the meeting of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), and in August 1976, in Edinburgh during the International Political Science Association meeting. The list provides evidence of commitment to IASSIST from a very heterogeneous international social science community. The identification of six regional secretariats suggests the ambitious manner in which the organizers sought to be truly international. Members of the Steering Committee came from thirteen different countries!

IASSIST as an organization, and its members individually, can be credited with numerous contributions in the fields of archives and library services and also in interdisciplinary social science research. They occurred as IASSISTers participated in the programs of numerous allied professional associations, collaborated in data-related standards-setting efforts at both national and international levels, and through the work of the IASSIST Action Groups.

The closing glimpse in this essay of the work undertaken by IASSIST in the early years is thus of its initial Action Groups. The fourth issue of the IASSIST Newsletter, dated Fall, 1977, included a list of all the initial groups and their respective Canadian, European, and U.S. chairpersons. There were seven Action Groups, giving further evidence of the scope and ambition of the young IASSIST. They were: Classification [of data], Data Acquisition, Data Archive Development, Data Archive Registry, Data Documentation, Data Organization and Management, and Process-Produced Data.

Perhaps the best known and most influential product to emerge from the early IASSIST years was the Working Manual for Cataloging Machine-Readable Data Files, prepared by Sue A. Dodd, the U.S. chair of the Classification Action Group. Members of the Action Group and other IASSISTers tested the manual’s guidelines, using them to prepare descriptions of their holdings. This was the necessary first step toward the long-sought goal of a union catalog for data files. In 1982 the American Library Association (ALA) published Dodd’s manual, Cataloging Machine-Readable Data Files: An Interpretive Manual and subsequently chose it as their prize book of the year. The Classification Action Group, the last operational Action Group from the formative IASSIST years, disbanded shortly thereafter.

Conclusion

In its first decade IASSIST succeeded in becoming an autonomous, vibrant, and productive association for professionals of the international community of social science data services. From the outset, IASSIST has been a forum for “early-adopting” collaboration between social science researchers and data services and information technology professionals. IASSIST’s continuing embrace, over time, of ever-new technologies for its own communications and organizational efforts, together with its workshops, annual meetings, and publications, have facilitated widespread adoption of innovations and standards for the management of collections of social science data.[16]

The first decade’s activities represent the rich legacy from which present-day IASSIST has evolved. IASSIST’s more than 30 years of accomplishments, rooted in international professional collaboration, are a firm foundation for confidently addressing contemporary challenges at the intersection of technology and the social sciences.

Footnotes


2. Michael T. Aiken was Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana in 1999, when the author contacted him with respect to the material she was preparing for IASSIST’s 25th anniversary panel. When we talked, Mike was modest in his recollections of his role in the founding of IASSIST. Those who know how he worked and his commitment to the development of data services for social science teaching and research likely know of his contributions to the data services community. In addition, the author has her own personal debt to Michael Aiken, for he hired her in 1966 to be DPLS’s founding data archivist/librarian.


6. Stein Rokkan, “International Efforts to Develop Networks of Data Archives,” Social Science Information 4:3 (1965), pp. 9-13. One cannot help but imagine how excited Rokkan would be by the Nesstar project, one of
whose sponsors is the NSD, and which embodies, in an evolutionary way, his early innovative ideas. For further information, see: http://www.nesstar.org/.


9. One person who was an exception to this was Ralph L. Bisco, whose participation in the ISSC’s Standing Committee devolved from his role as Executive Director of the U.S. CSSDA. Bisco died in 1970.


11. Alice Robbin, in telephone conversation with the author, April 1999.


13. There are several variations to the organizational name in materials from the early days of IASSIST: ASSIST, International ASSIST, I-ASSIST, and IASSIST. The author has attempted to be faithful to the usage in the context under discussion, but has also reverted to the dominant usage following adoption of its constitution, i.e., IASSIST.

14. Ekkehard Mochmann’s International Social Science Data Service: Scope and Accessibility (Report for the International Social Science Council (ISSC)), Cologne, 2002 includes a brief description of the distinction between IFDO and IASSIST on p. 9.

15. The IASSIST Newsletter became the IASSIST Quarterly in 1982.

16. A wealth of information related to IASSIST’s accomplishments can be reviewed from its website www.iassistdata.org.

---

**Appendix A**

**The Conference on Data Archives and Program Library Services**

**Toronto, Canada**

**August 21-22, 1974**

In conjunction with the 8th World Congress of Sociology

Convened by the Chairman of the International Social Science Council’s Standing Committee on Social Science Data, Erwin K. Scheuch, Institut für Vergleichende Sozialforschung, Cologne; and two of its Task Force Chairmen, Michael T. Aiken, Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin; and Hagen Stegemann, Zentralarchiv, Cologne. Invitations (over 300) were sent by the Data and Program Library Service, University of Wisconsin, Madison. Sixty people, from Australia, Latin and North America, India, the Middle East, and Europe registered for the Conference.

Panel Discussions with audience participation. Each topical session was prepared by one or two coordinators, and their invited discussants.

**Session 1: QUALITY OF THE DATA BASE: THE ISSUE OF DATA GENERATION**

Coordinators: Carolyn Geda, Inter-University Consortium for Political Research [ICPR], Ann Arbor, MI; and Frank Aarebrot, The Christian Michelsen Institute, Bergen Discussants: Per Nielsen, Danish Data Archives, DDA, Copenhagen; Erwin Rose and Mark Karhausen, Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung, Cologne

**Session 2: PROBLEMS OF INVENTORYING DATA: CLASSIFICATION SCHEMES**

Coordinator: Ekkehard Mochmann, Zentralarchiv, Cologne Discussants: Sue Dodd, Institute for Research in Social Science, University of North Carolina; Paul R. Voss, Roper Public Opinion Research Center, Williamstown, MA; Per Nielsen, Danish Data Archives, DDA, Copenhagen; Carolyn Geda, ICPR, Ann Arbor, MI; and Paul Peters, Social Sciences Information Utilization Laboratory, Pittsburgh, PA

**Session 3: INCREASING THE UTILIZATION OF DATA ARCHIVES**

Coordinator: Lorraine Borman, Vogelbeck Computing Center, Northwestern Univ., Evanston, IL Discussants: Tom Atkinson, Institute for Behavioral Research, York University, Ontario; Richard A. Hay, Jr., Northwestern Univ., Evanston, IL; Mark Karhausen and Erwin Rose, Zentralarchiv, Cologne

**Session 4: SPECIFIC PROBLEMS FACING THE DATA ARCHIVE**

Coordinator: Ramkrishna Mukherjee, Indian Statistical
Sub-Session 4a: **THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTER AND THE EMERGING SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA NETWORK** -- Paul Peters, Social Sciences Information Utilization Laboratory, Pittsburgh, PA
Sub-Session 4b: **INTRODUCING THE ACCESS AND USE OF MACHINE-READABLE DATA TO THE TRADITIONAL LIBRARY** -- Judith Rowe, Social Science User Services, Princeton Univ., Princeton, NJ
Sub-Session 4c: **DATA AVAILABILITY AND DIFFUSION IN THE THIRD WORLD: LATIN AMERICA, A CASE IN POINT** -- Manuel Carvajal, Latin American Data Bank, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

**Session 5: THE PROBLEM OF OWNERSHIP AND DIFFUSION OF DATA**
Coordinator: Joseph Bonmariage, Belgian Archives for the Social Sciences, Louvain
Discussants: Evert Ladd, Social Science Data Center, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT; Warren Miller, ICPR, Ann Arbor, MI; Hagen Stegemann, Zentralarchiv, Cologne

**Session 6: EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION**
Coordinator: Erwin K. Scheuch, Institut fur Vergleichende Sozialforschung, Cologne
Discussants: Hagen Stegemann, Zentralarchiv, Cologne; Michael Aiken, Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

The final session summarized the problem areas identified during the earlier sessions, suggesting topics for further work:
1. Need for professionalization and training of data archivists -- both upgrading of current data archive professionals and training of professionals for emerging data archives, generally and especially in Third World nations;
2. Confidentiality and the role of the archive: development of a position on confidential data;
3. Establishment of standards for ownership and diffusion of data;
4. Establishment of standards for classification of data files and data descriptors;
5. Establishment of standards for text documentation of data files;
6. Cooperation and exchange between traditional libraries and data archives;
7. A mechanism or organization to permit consideration of these problems in greater depth.

__________

All of the above comes directly from: Alice Robbin, “The Conference on Data Archives and Program Library Services,” SOCIAL SCIENCE INFORMATION XIV:2, 1975, pp. 197-201.

The same volume also includes an article by James C. Taylor, “Session on Program Library Services,” (pp. 202-205). It discusses the session concerning computer program abstracting and information clearinghouse services that was also part of the above-described conference.
Appendix B

ACTION GROUP COORDINATORS

CLASSIFICATION

Canada- Mohan Sharma, Humanities & Social Science Library, University of Alberta, Rutherford North, Edmonton, Alberta

Europe- Ekkehard Mochmann, Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung, Bachemier Strasse 40, 5 K6ln 41, Federal Republic of Germany

United States- Sue Dodd, Data Library, Institute for Research in Social Science, Manning Hall, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

DATA ACQUISITION

Canada- Pierre Lacasse, Centre de recherches en aménagement régional, Université de Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke, Québec

Europe- Marcia Taylor, Social Science Research Council Survey Archive, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, P. O. Box 23, Colchester, Essex, England CO4 350

United States- not activated

DATA ARCHIVE DEVELOPMENT

Canada- Laine Ruus, Data Library, Computing Centre, University of British Columbia, 2075 Wesbrook Place, Vancouver, British Columbia V6T 1W5

Europe- not activated

United States- Alice Robbin, Data and Program Library Service, 4452 Social Science Building, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin 53706

DATA ARCHIVE REGISTRY

Canada- Lisa Lasko, Canadian Consortium for Social Research, Institute for Behavioral Research, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Downsview, Ontario M3J 1P3

Europe- Joseph Bonmarriage, Belgian Archives for the Social Sciences, University of Louvain, SH-2, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

United States- John Kolp, Regional Social Science Data Archive, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242

DATA DOCUMENTATION

Canada- Dave L. Salley, Management and Central Services Group, Standards Division, Statistics Canada, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T6

Europe- Cees Middendorp, Steinmetzarchief, Kleine-Gartmanplantsoen 10, Amsterdam-C., Netherlands

United States- Sheldon Laube, C.M. Leimwond & Associates, 5010 Stewart Court, College A/C, Maryland 20740

DATA ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

Canada- Greg Morrison, Social Science Data Archive, Department of Sociology, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5E6

Europe- Eric Tannenbaum, Social Science Research Council Survey Archive, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, P. O. Box 23, Colchester, Essex, England CO4 350

United States- William Gammell, Social Science Data Center, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut 06268

PROCESS-PRODUCED DATA

Canada- John DeVries, Social Science Data Archives, Department of Sociology, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5E6

Europe- Paul Müller, Institute for Applied Social Research, University of Cologne, Greinstrasse 2, 5000-K6ln 41, Federal Republic of Germany

United States- Donald Harrison, National Archives (NRR), Washington, D.C. 20408
Recollections of the Formative Years of IASSIST

Abstract
Before beginning, it is necessary to state that these are my recollections and in no way are meant to reflect recollections of other individuals involved with the formation of IASSIST. It is clear to me that we all have different interpretations of the past and come from different perspectives. I also apologize for the use of the first person at times, but that is necessary to assure that no one else receives blame for my interpretations and/or recollections. The flow of this presentation is not smooth, in part because so much was going on concurrently and the amount of effort that went into the establishment of IASSIST was too great to present coherently. It overwhelmed me then and it still overwhelms me. Reliving the past is a very emotional experience for me, as is this 25th anniversary. It was certainly most unclear to me at the time that we would be able to establish IASSIST.

As many of us know, Toronto, Canada is the origin of IASSIST. During August, 1974, the VIIIth World Congress of the International Sociological Association met in Toronto. At this Congress, the International Social Science Council (ISSC) Standing Committee on Social Science Data (SCSSD) sponsored a conference on the Problems of Data Archives and Program Library Services. The conference was made possible through the very strong support of Stein Rokkan, President of the ISSC, and Elina Almasy, Secretary of the SCSSD, and the endorsement of conveners Erwin Scheuch, Chairman of SCSSD, Michael Aiken, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Hagen Stegemann, the Zentralarchiv in Cologne, Germany.

Participants of the conference reviewed common problems that confronted individuals affiliated with or utilizing data repositories. In general, these problems were related to the production, acquisition, preservation, processing, distribution and use of electronic data files of interest to the social science community. The problems were also relevant to the development and maintenance of data archives and data libraries.

During this conference, many participants concluded that a communications network that provided a formal means for continued dissemination and sharing of information was needed. There were opportunities to meet each other through the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), known at that time as the Inter-university Consortium for Political Research (ICPR), annual meetings and later biennial meetings. But a broader format was needed that would permit individuals to discuss the problems they were experiencing, permit collective efforts toward resolving these problems and establish workshops that would provide basic training in data management as well as training with new technologies. Toward this end, Alice Robbin, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Judith Rowe, Princeton University; and I, ICPR at University of Michigan; proposed to ICPR that a data management workshop be included in the Summer Program. When this workshop was offered, members of our peer group attended, thus demonstrating that there was indeed a need for an organization like IASSIST. Obviously, there were additional needs for advanced workshops and seminars. A little later, the European Archives addressed this need by offering expert workshops. In addition, ICPR Official Representatives were predominately academics, while individuals staffing the archives and the user services were increasingly becoming data librarians. In order to facilitate dissemination and sharing of information, I suggested to ICPR that a technical person as well as an academic be formally recognized for each ICPR member institution.

Returning to the results of the Toronto meeting, an Ad Hoc Organizing Committee (later to become the Steering Committee) for IASSIST was designated to draft a proposal for the establishment of an appropriate organization. Since the organization was to be international, additional individuals were added to the Committee to achieve regional representation from other parts of the world where interest in such an organization was felt to exist. Ultimately, in order to satisfy the mandate of ISSC and assure proper representation for an international organization, the Committee grew to 18 members. This was a large number of people with which to work, especially when all correspondence was to be sent to
everyone on the Committee via air mail. We did not have e-mail, certainly as we know it today, to assist us. Many organizations were still using carbon copies as a means of distribution for documents and correspondence. Although we made every effort to achieve an international organization, the expectations set forth by ISSC were completely unrealistic. Organizations existed on paper for several of the regional areas, but we were not able to develop active regional secretariats in each of the areas designated. Our attempts to comply even included reproducing additional copies of the newsletter to send to these secretariats for distribution to their interested individuals. The cost of these additional activities was borne by our home institutions as part of the commitment to IASSIST. Eventually, we were forced to say that we could not expect an organization of individuals to continue to support such costs and the regional secretariats were scaled back to the areas that actually had members.

As you might also expect, we were a very vocal group of people, each of whom obviously thought they were right about everything. Nonetheless, I found myself chairing this Organizing Committee. It is unclear why I accepted this charge; all I recall is that I thought ICPR had a mailing list that would form the base of individuals that might be interested in joining such an organization. In assuming this role, I tried very hard to prevent the feeling of American dominance, American Imperialism and particularly American Data Imperialism. Additionally, I continually struggled with a concern that ICPR might be perceived as dictating to the Committee or that IASSIST might become the puppet of ICPR.

The first task of the Committee was to construct and agree upon an acronym. This acronym evolved at the infamous bar in Toronto. Once the acronym of IASSIST was agreed upon, we had the problem of finding appropriate words for it. Although we were very pleased with the acronym, we frequently had and continue to have problems remembering the actual name of the organization!

It should be noted that not all individuals felt IASSIST was a good idea. A well respected colleague and friend of mine thought it was a bad idea and vehemently spoke against it. Several days later I received the following letter:

Carolyn,

About the conversation in the bar—I’m really sorry that I spoke as I did. It was an unthinking reaction which did not become clear to me until later when I realized that, as opposed to most people I know these days, you really cared about the ideas and plans for IASSIST. Real interest and concern is such a fugitive quality these days—one which I terribly admire—and thus am even more sorry to have listened and responded so negatively and so unfeelingly. In a way, though, I’m almost glad it happened since it made me realize that things still can get accomplished, if only because some people are ready to really work to achieve such accomplishments.

In retrospect I should have considered this a serious warning. My friend, Lorraine Borman from Northwestern University, recognized far better than I what was going to be involved. And, in fact, when I returned to ICPR to discuss the creation of IASSIST, I discovered that some ICPR staff thought we were forming a union!

While in Toronto in 1974, the Committee met several times in an attempt to begin laying the foundation for IASSIST. Some of the questions or problems raised during these discussions were:

- Scope and type of membership
- Objectives
- Activities
- Affiliation with other organizations
- Newsletter
- Governance
- Participation of developing countries
- Membership fees

One of the most difficult issues was whether to establish an independent association with its own newsletter or to affiliate with an existing association whose objectives were consistent with those of IASSIST. Included in this issue was the relationship IASSIST might have to the ISSC Standing Committee on Social Science Data. The affiliation with another association was considered in anticipation of a relatively small membership. Less time would have been required to activate IASSIST if the Committee had decided to affiliate with an existing association. Eligible associations were identified and considered, but the resultant lack of autonomy and independence for IASSIST was seen as too great a disadvantage. The Committee felt the same way about a newsletter.

As mentioned earlier, Alice Robbin, Judith Rowe and Carolyn Geda were among the United States prime movers in the founding of IASSIST. Ultimately, we were branded as “American Female Functionaries” in part because we did not have PhDs. We were non-PhD females breaking from the established ISSC composed of men who were professors at universities and directors of the archives.

In April 1975, at the European Consortium for Political Research meetings, the Committee met again with a draft constitution and proposed a set of Action Groups. The constitution was not approved, but significant progress
was made on the mandates of the Action Groups. Each Action Group was to address a problem area or set of related problems not being systematically addressed by another organization, and would look toward a final, hopefully publishable, product. Any proposed Action Group that could not meet those criteria was deleted. Two Action Groups were deleted: One dealing entirely with matters of archival policies and the other dealing with computer software. On the other hand, since data archive development was defined differently in Europe and North America, a decision was made to create an additional Action Group to deal with data organization and management. Emphasis was also placed on the desirability of developing Action Group products that were consistent with the ongoing professional activities of the membership. In this way the efforts devoted to IASSIST tasks by members would provide direct benefit to their home institutions.

At that point in time each Action Group was perceived as having members from all regions in IASSIST. The Action Group structure was replaced by a regional structure because it soon became obvious that problems of international travel and communication precluded effective activity at this level. In addition, as the Regional Secretariats began to establish Action Groups, it was apparent that a regional or national focus and redefinition was required to meet the different needs, interests and levels of development. Parallel Action Groups were recommended, in some instances with slightly different mandates. The chairpersons of the Action Groups were to be responsible for communicating with the chairpersons of the same or similar Action Group in other regions. Action Groups would be activated or dissolved according to the recommendations of the membership and/or Action Group chairpersons. Action Groups in existence were:

- Data Archive Registry
- Data Acquisition
- Data Documentation
- Classification
- Data Archive Development
- Process-Produced Data
- Data Organization and Management

Regional Secretariats were established to be responsible for the recruitment of members, receipt of membership fees, development of Action Groups, scheduling of regional meetings and handling of other associational activities. The regional focus of the association allowed members’ interests to be served more directly and helped to spread the burden of membership recruitment. Membership meetings of regions could be more readily scheduled and better attended than could international meetings. Regional Secretariats were designated for the following areas: South and Central America, Canada, Asia-West Africa, West Europe, East Europe and the United States. Australia was interested in joining pending sufficient membership. Mass mailings were sent by the Secretariats to approximately 1000 people– 123 in Asia/Africa, 71 in Canada, 282 in Europe, 96 in Central and South America and 493 in the United States.

At approximately the same time the European archives felt a need for greater recognition of their roles as national archives, particularly within ICPSR. Prior to this point, individual archives and universities within Europe were members of ICPSR. The formation of National membership in ICPSR centrally organized around the national data archives permitted a stronger role by each of the archives. Yet the Europeans also felt a need for an organization of organizations within which they could continue to operate and develop policies. An organization of individuals was not the format in which they operated. It was imperative that IASSIST be an international organization, not just a North American organization, that would permit the Europeans to affiliate with IASSIST.

The issue of an organization of individuals versus an organization of organizations had to be resolved. The Committee met again in Edinburgh, Scotland, in August 1976, where the International Political Science Association (IPSA) was meeting. Another constitution for IASSIST had been drafted and was presented. During this meeting, I endured a lengthy lecture on how to craft a constitution. We seemingly made no progress on reaching an agreement on anything. Discouraged and drained, I left the meeting around midnight. (This had always been a very hard working group that frequently met into the night.) I arrived back at the dormitory where I was staying and called my director, Jerome Clubb. I said I had done my best to reach agreement but had failed. IASSIST was not going to be accepted. Jerry gave me permission to return to the United States the next day in spite of the fact that he and I had additional meetings to attend after the IPSA meetings. He recognized that I had disintegrated and simply had no more stamina. His support was most encouraging. The next day the Committee met again. Somehow it had been concluded, in large part due to the extraordinary abilities of Stein Rokkan to work through very difficult international situations, that there could be an IASSIST and an organization of organizations, which became the International Federation of Data Organizations (IFDO). The constitution was approved with the understanding that IASSIST was a fledgling organization and as the organization developed, the constitution would have to be amended. It was also acknowledged that the Committee of 18 people might be too large to function effectively.

We were all growing up professionally at this time and the growing pains placed strains in all directions. Nevertheless,
it was a golden era and a very special time to learn a great deal from each other and form lasting professional and personal relationships.

Throughout the formative years of IASSIST, which seemed to go on forever, many people worked untold hours. There are simply too many people to name individually, but I remain eternally grateful for their commitment and very hard efforts. One person in particular stands out, my good friend and colleague Per Neilsen who kept European IASSIST together and acted as their Secretariat. Others who acted as pillars of strength and are no longer with us are Stein Rokkan, Warren Miller, Murray Aborn, Harold Naugler and Ed Hanis, who was our first treasurer.

In conclusion, I hope I have managed in some small way to convey the rich legacy of IASSIST. Although it remains a small organization, it is one filled with deeply committed individuals who are always eager to assist others struggling in our field in any way possible. We continue to work towards the resolution of what sometimes seems to be the same set of problems we had 25 years ago, just packaged differently. IASSIST gives us an ongoing international format for listening to each other, of which we must continue to take advantage, and a format in which we can identify the similarities and differences of our approaches and work collectively on resolutions.

* Carolyn L. Geda was the first president of IASSIST 1976-1979 and has served on many IASSIST committees since then. Contact information: cg3@ix.netcom.com
Open virtuality or virtually open? Openness on the web as viewed by the IASSIST membership

Abstract
The purpose of this article is to investigate an interest in the concept of virtual communities and to consider whether IASSIST could be characterized as a virtual community. Previously, the authors carried out an investigative description of the utilization of the IASSIST mailing list, answering questions like: What are the characteristics of the top users of the mailing list? Are there patterns of responses to initial submissions or to the subsequent requests mailed to the list? The work was carried out using the e-mails published on the IASSIST listserv over a period of time, and a descriptive report was most recently presented in IASSIST Quarterly vol. 29-3 (Rasmussen & de Vries, 2006). The IASSIST web site is an equal part of the virtuality of IASSIST and was targeted for the next project. The foremost interest concerning the web site regarded how the web site could support the users’ needs in the future, with a focus on openness and the protection of privacy. This was carried out with a questionnaire from which the results are presented in this article.

Focus for the investigation of the web site
A virtual community is a community that is to a large extent brought together and kept together by the use of electronic computerized media. Quoting from an earlier article (Rasmussen & de Vries, 2006):

“Virtual organizations have been identified as real (Davidow & Malone, 1993) or real organizations sometimes viewed as imagined (Hedberg et al., 1997). The concept of the virtual community has now existed for a good 10 years (Rheingold, 1993). The virtuality emerges due to intense use of information technology corresponding to organizational arrangements that potentially and practically break the boundaries of time and space. In our time of virtuality, people no longer have to share the same space or be in the same time, as direct electronic communication can span the space, and relayed (asynchronous) electronic communication can span the time. A voluntary association – such as the IASSIST – is considered as both an organization and a community, and by applying electronic communications, such associations have the potential of growing into a virtual community.”

The virtual community has an invested interest on the use of applications on the Internet. The reason behind the investigation into the mailing list was to deliver an objective account of this aspect of the virtuality of the IASSIST organization. An equally objective attempt to describe the use of the IASSIST web site could have been accomplished by obtaining a web log for the site. These raw log data could then have been processed into more intelligible patterns of page views and their accumulation into user sessions with the intention of isolating characteristics of web behavior (Kimball & Merz, 2000). However, the objective analysis of the user’s actual behavior on the web site is postponed to a later time. While the actual web behavior would have sufficiently been explained by the log analysis, the investigation into the attitudes, expectations and wishes for the future implied that the request for information was to be directed towards users.

The focus of the investigation was on what kind of openness and/or protection of privacy IASSIST should aim for. Openness is a positive word and is considered to be a good characteristic, but even a good thing has its limits. The intention was to find where the audience placed these limits - where the audience had gotten too much of a good thing.

The questionnaire
As explained, the soft issues of intention, values, attitudes, and future lead to the decision of using the questionnaire technique, and in order not to disturb the audience unnecessarily, a small, closed and heavily structured questionnaire – thus supposedly easy to fill in - was posted on the web.

The primary objective of the questionnaire was to obtain empirical information concerning the perception of IASSIST services, including the mailing list that is mentioned above. But several intentions lay behind the core of choice and design of the questionnaire. The attitudes of the membership towards existing as well as future services were to form a background for how the IASSIST web site should be developed. Furthermore, the questionnaire explicitly addresses the ethical dimension by obtaining information concerning the disclosure of different types of
individual background information as well as the utilization of a questionnaire securing the “informed consent” of the participants, which often is disregarded in aggregate and more anonymous analysis; e.g. the e-mail analysis mentioned.

The questionnaire was mainly addressed towards the members of the IASSIST organization but non-members were not excluded from answering the questionnaire. The rationale was that if the information about the IASSIST questionnaire actually did reach non-members and they reacted on that, then these people were probably in the periphery of IASSIST and therefore potential IASSIST members. Both groups were invited to fill in the web questionnaire by an e-mail that included a link to the questionnaire. This invitation was sent to the IASSIST listserv as well as to some other relevant lists.

Methodology
The degree of representativeness of the questionnaire can only partly be determined. The total membership of IASSIST (265 persons) was invited to fill in the questionnaire, but as the questionnaire should provide anonymity it is not possible to determine if a respondent that is stating to be a member of IASSIST is an actual member of IASSIST. One hundred and eight of the 138 respondents stated in the questionnaire to be members. Acceptance of the validity of this statement resulted in an answer rate of 41 percent among the IASSIST membership. The answer rate is not considered exceptionally poor; however it is certainly not a random choice for the receiver of the invitation to fill out the questionnaire form. We will expect a very strong bias towards the group of IASSIST members that are most interested in IASSIST in general, and in the IASSIST web site in particular. The methodology presents a study with self-selection, which always is a peril for the validity of a questionnaire investigation (Dillman, 2007). This construction can lead to overrepresentation as people outside the target group are answering the questionnaire and often these will fill in their e-mail address as “Goofy” and “Bart Simpson”. Many respondents (110) gave their actual e-mail address, which implies a high degree of seriousness. We have no indication that some were masquerading behind other real persons’ e-mail identities. Luckily, the invitation went to communities that were not inclined to waste their time on spoiling questionnaires. However, this construction meant that we cannot calculate the overall significance of the shown figures; although the number of respondents is known, the magnitude of the population—including potential IASSIST members—is unknown. This methodological mishap was accepted in order to gain more insight into the preferences of the total audience.

The data were collected from 13 March 2001 to 30 April 2001. Announcements and reminders were sent to the IASSIST listserv, as well as to other lists for professionals where the IASSIST web questionnaire had been announced.

Results from the questionnaire.
The results presented here concentrate on background information in the form of country of origin; otherwise the tabulations relate to the experience of the web site, the need or ranking of the availability of further information, and the attitudes towards openness and privacy on the IASSIST web site.

Country information
In an anonymous global questionnaire, it would be unethical to reveal information about the country of a respondent, but this information can be obtained fairly accurately from logs, especially the IP address. However, as 110 respondents provided their e-mail addresses, the country information was available by a procedure similar to that carried out for the mailing list study (see the IASSIST 29-3 issue). It can be seen from table 1 that a large contingency of the respondents are from North America, as shown by the mapping of common and general URL endings into this geographical area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>ZA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australasia</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ES</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COM</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GOV</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NET</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ORG</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no e-mail given</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Distribution of questionnaire respondents by country
IASSIST Conferences
As we mentioned in the earlier article, which reported on the IASSIST mailing list, one of the questions we wanted to shed light on was, “Is there IASSIST life between conferences?” It was confirmed that there is a virtual life. But the question was put in a negative manner, as if we expected there to be little life. We could also have stressed the high degree of IASSIST life found at the conferences and for the arrangers and presenters also in the time span up to the conference. The conference is also a recruiting platform, and one of the questions asked concerned when the respondent first participated in an IASSIST conference. The size of the bubbles indicates the number of first-time participants.

Figure 1 shows that many members attended their first IASSIST conference several and even many years ago. It is stipulated that members, to a large degree, have continuous uninterrupted membership. However, there are also new members joining in the more recent years. A more accurate description can only be made with the use of the full member registry.

In an investigation of virtuality, it seems to be strange to bother with the physical closeness that members experience at conferences, where attendees are in the same space at the same time. However, virtuality is not absolute. The interrelatedness of reality and virtuality seems to be a synergic fortification of both. Thus, we postulate that it is the virtual activities between conferences that bring people to the conferences, and likewise the participation in conferences gives attendees the incentive to participate on the mailing list, to browse the web site, etc.

Openness to all
IASSIST has members and non-members. If non-members receive the same information products as the members, what is the incentive to become a member? On one hand, this calls for reserving services to members. On the other hand; allowing non-members to utilize some services from IASSIST will act as an advertisement in addition to spreading the impact and supporting the mission of IASSIST. The problem for the organization is that it must decide on a reasonable differentiation of the products available for members and non-members or, phrased otherwise, to differentiate between the paying customers and the non-paying users. The product of the information age is information. In the digital age the information product is often reproduced, distributed and spread without any substantial extra cost to the organization. So one could argue for giving it away to potential customers (Keen, 2001: 168). There are plenty of free offers: e-mail accounts, Wikipedia encyclopedia articles, web pages, freeware, home videos, etc. However, since “there is no such thing as a free lunch,” the gratis offer is done for a reason. Differentiating between the cost product and the free product often implies that there is an extra cost to the organization. The question is whether the extra cost is outweighed by the extra money raised through membership. There are examples where the premium product is the only product, and a new product with an inferior functionality is obtained only by some versioning effort from the organization (Shapiro & Varian, 1999: 62).

What functionalities on the IASSIST web site should be available for members and non-members? These questions were asked of the respondents and the answers give an indication of the membership’s willingness to pay for features that can be used by all. In table 2, the different services that were investigated in the questionnaire have been ranked by the membership, as only the opinions from IASSIST members are included. The ranked order reflects whether the service should be available to members only or freely accessible for everyone.

The members highly agree that non-members should be granted free access and searching capability of IASSIST.
Quarterly (IQ) as well as free access to search the pages of the web site (items 1 and 2). The interpretation of these findings is that the newsletter is considered an important vehicle for the spread of IASSIST influence and that the IASSIST pages should also be available as a promotional vehicle. The second item includes not only the search, and thus identification of relevant articles, but also the general availability of the IQ (in full text PDF) that was readily available before this questionnaire was launched.

There is a remarkable distinction between the different functionalities of free access. The evaluation is reversed from a liberal 20-80 distribution in favor of openness for items 1 and 2 to a restrictive 80-20 distribution for the items 3 to 5. One factor in explaining this dramatic shift may be the intention behind the content. While the web pages and the articles in the IQ are written with the intention of being published for a wider audience, the other items – mails to the discussion list and the related archive - are communication between members taking place in a more secluded fashion within virtual space and thus these contributions were not intended for non-members.

Openness about personal information
This section concerns the disclosure of information about personal members. Less than 25 percent are in favor of opening information on IASSIST members to non-members. The next question is: Should the information about IASSIST members be available at all, i.e. available for the membership itself? A large majority of the membership found that this type of information should be made available (77 persons or 71.3 percent).

Openness is a broad concept, but how open? One way to look into this was to investigate the different attributes of the individual that were being disclosed in a membership database. The people who found that membership information should be available were then asked which attributes describing individual members should be made available:

The percentage of respondents who agreed with the inclusion of specific personal information was expected to be very high. This is because only respondents who were positive towards a general description are included here. If a general description is acceptable at least some of the specific descriptive items themselves must be acceptable as well. A member’s name is the most obvious identification and the entry point for viewing other information concerning the person. In the list above (Table 3), even Name has not received 100 percent. This reveals some information about the precision of the measures obtained.

| Table 2. Opinions from the membership towards access for non-members, percentages (only members (N=108), missing data excluded, N between 101 and 106) |
|---|---|---|
| **IASSIST web** | **Free Access for all** | **For members Only** |
| 1. Search of IASSIST pages | 83.7 | 16.3 |
| 2. Search of articles in the IQ | 82.5 | 17.5 |
| 3. Discussion list archive | 36.2 | 63.8 |
| 4. Information on IASSIST members | 23.8 | 76.2 |
| 5. E-mail discussion list | 18.9 | 81.1 |

| Table 3. Ordered list of attributes to include in the member description (N=77) |
|---|---|
| Name | 98 |
| E-mail address | 96 |
| Work address | 93 |
| Interest areas | 91 |
| Job description | 74 |
| Link to personal web page | 66 |
| Portrait | 21 |
from quick answers. The person’s e-mail address being the prime address for contact is also high and above other attributes like work address and interest areas. Lower down on the list is the description of the job and links to a personal web page. The reason behind this could be the instability of information due to changes in employment. Lastly, the inclusion of a portrait ranges very low among these descriptive items. Online communication has been analyzed for its effects on identity deception (Donath, 1998) but in the mailing list, the identity of the person is well established by name and e-mail. Even though identity is carried by physical appearance, and includes an online portrait, this portrait (according to members) is apparently crossing the line of privacy and adding too much “body” to the virtual community. In addiction, adding an online portrait may counteract with the traditional perception of a virtual community as being virtual only.

**And then came the future**

Now six years later we can present what information is actual available on the IASSIST web pages that describes the membership. First of all, it should be stressed that the membership directory is only available to IASSIST members. Secondly, the actual attributes comprise all of those mentioned above – with the exception of the picture. Thirdly, the members provide their own attributes. A member not interested in revealing much information may be reluctant to fill in information. Furthermore, some information can be hidden by a member because they can choose “No” in the “Show Contact Information” field. The feature of hiding information applies equally to the “Profile” which is a text field for description of what could be both “Job description” and “Interest areas”.

**Use and usefulness of the IASSIST mailing list**

The analysis of the IASSIST mailing list (Rasmussen & de Vries, 2006) is supplemented by the impression or opinion of the mailing list by its members. Accordingly, the questionnaire included some questions as to the use of the mailing list. The perceived values of mailing lists are investigated in some earlier literature (Hardie & Neon, 1994; Sproull & Kiesler, 1992: 34). These values are often directly related to performance improvement via computer-mediated communication (Rice, 1994).

Performance improvement was the focus for the question concerning the usefulness of the mailing list as related to the job of the respondent. Among the 112 persons that responded as members of the IASSIST mailing list, 103 persons (92 percent) answered “agree” or “agree strongly” to the question concerning usefulness of the mailing list. Even for the small group that did not find the mailing list as having any obvious, or recently experienced, direct job value (8 percent) there might be valuable aspects of the mailing list to the person, e.g., information concerning a future job area, affiliation with the area by pure interest, etc. The proof of the continued interest in the mailing list lies in the fact that these people have not unsubscribed to the mailing list even though these respondents did not identify any positive connection between the information and discussion on the mailing list and their job.

The high account of usefulness of the mailing list among the membership can be taken as evidence for the mailing list being the “diamond” in the collection of functionalities available to the IASSIST members. To a high degree the mailing list can be considered to be the strongest incentive to becoming a member of IASSIST.

A mailing list has also been treated as the vehicle for the analysis of virtual communities. A recent article (Blanchard & Markus, 2004: 67) cites and stresses the “sense of community” concept placed in a framework of four dimensions: “feelings of membership, feelings of influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection”. The figures above on the usefulness of the IASSIST list are an example of “fulfillment of needs”. The well distributed (democratic) activity on the mailing list shown in our earlier article can be interpreted as support for “feeling of influence”. To a certain extent the high percentage (64 percent) of respondents who answer positively to a question of “Have you ever responded or reacted to information on the IASSIST mailing list by sending a reply directly to the sender or discussants so your comment did not show up on the IASSIST mailing list?” can also be taken as an emotional connection with the listserv users – and even specific users.

In the discussion of community, and especially of the virtual community, it should be noted that most membership applications take place in connection to the non-virtual conferences. The conferences are thus a strong aspect of non-virtuality supporting the sense of community in the membership.

**Openness for others and towards self**

The title phrase of “open virtuality” is directed towards the aspect of opening the virtual community for people outside the membership. We were searching for the limits of openness and found them to be related to the mailing list and the membership directory. These areas were considered to be for members only. The concept of “virtuality” is also a synonym for “sort of” and including “but not quite”. “Virtuality open” means that the IASSIST offerings look as if they are open, but they are not quite all available. The “not quite” openness also extends to the opinion of the membership towards what attributes should not be included. It is “sort of” paradoxical that photos are not included, while on the other hand photos from the IASSIST conferences are considered to be popular and are often placed on a parallel site for amusement of the IASSIST conference attendees.

**Conclusion**
The earlier investigation of the IASSIST e-mail list and this reporting of the questionnaire data have mostly been descriptive. The mailing list itself is considered a service that should be restricted to the membership. But other contributions that are directed towards a bigger audience (articles in the IASSIST Quarterly or web pages) are considered suitable. The reason behind this consideration is the general attitude towards openness to information and research. But there might also be an aspect of promotion of the IASSIST organization. The bigger audience not belonging to the IASSIST community should be allowed to benefit from many of these services.

The IASSIST organization and its members are evidence of a process where the boundary of the organization exemplified by the boundaries of the organizational services and of membership (and thus the boundary of the community of members) has become more blurred. The blurred boundaries concerning time and space transform the community into a virtual community. And the availability of at least parts of the offerings to non-members is also contributing to the blurredness. The joke of Groucho Marx that he would not join a club if it would have people like him as a member has become a fact. In the virtual community you don’t have to join the club in order to benefit from some of the services.

* At the IASSIST conference in Amsterdam in May 2001 “Preliminary findings from the IASSIST web questionnaire 2001” were presented by Karsten Boye Rasmussen. This was part of the collective presentation by Karsten Boye Rasmussen and Repke de Vries: “Professional associations in transition to virtual communities for collaboration: the case of IASSIST”. The finding have been discussed at some IASSIST administrative meetings, was latest used as PowerPoint slides at the 2007 conference in Montreal in the panel session “Care and Maintenance of a Global Knowledge Community”, and are also to some degree reflected in the actual layout of the IASSIST website www.iassistdata.org that has expanded significantly in content and functionality. Repke de Vries, Department of Public Services at The Royal Library of the Netherlands. Karsten Boye Rasmussen, Department of Marketing and Management at University of Southern Denmark. Contact about the articles should be directed to: kbr@sam.sdu.dk.

References


The International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology (IASSIST) is an international association of individuals who are engaged in the acquisition, processing, maintenance, and distribution of machine readable text and/or numeric social science data. The membership includes information system specialists, data base librarians or administrators, archivists, researchers, programmers, and managers. Their range of interests encompasses hard copy as well as machine readable data.

Paid-up members enjoy voting rights and receive the IASSIST QUARTERLY. They also benefit from reduced fees for attendance at regional and international conferences sponsored by IASSIST.

**Membership fees are:**
- Regular Membership: $50.00 per calendar year.
- Student Membership: $25.00 per calendar year.
- Institutional Subcription: $75.00 per calendar year (includes one volume of the Quarterly)

I would like to become a member of IASSIST. Please see my choice below:
Options for payment in Canadian Dollars and by Major Credit Card are available. See the following web site for details:

http://www.iassistdata.org/membership/membership.html

- [$50 (US) Regular Member
- [$25 Student Member
- [$75 Subscription (payment must be made in US$)
- [List me in the membership directory
- [Add me to the IASSIST listserv

Please make checks payable, in US funds, to IASSIST and Mail to:

IASSIST,
Assistant Treasurer US
Shelagh Mackay
University of California
Davis, CA, USA
95616-8617

Name:

Job Title:

Organization:

Address:

City:    State/Province:

Postal Code:    Country:

Phone:    FAX:

E-mail:    URL: