

## Editor's notes

### Sharing data and building information

With this issue (volume 35-3, 2011) of the IASSIST Quarterly (IQ) we return to the regular format of a collection of articles not within the same specialist subject area as we have seen in recent special issues of IQ. Naturally the three articles presented here are related to the IQ subject area in general, as in: assisting research with data, acquiring data from research, and making good use of the user community. This last topic could also be spelled "involvement". The hope is that these articles will carry involvement to the IASSIST community, so that the gained knowledge can be shared and practised widely.

"Mind the gap" is a caveat to passengers on the London Underground. The authors of this article are Susan Noble, Celia Russell and Richard Wiseman, all affiliated with ESDS-International hosted by Mimas at the University of Manchester in the UK. The ESDS, standing for "Economic and Social Data Service", are extending their reach beyond the UK. In the article "Mind the Gap: Global Data Sharing" they are looking into how today's research on the important topics of climate change, economic crises, migration and health requires cross-national data sharing. Clearly these topics are international (e.g. the weather or air pollution does not stop at national borders), but the article discusses how existing barriers prevent global data sharing. The paper is based on a presentation in a session on "Sharing data: High Rewards, Formidable Barriers" at the IASSIST 2009 conference. It is demonstrated how even international data produced by intergovernmental organizations like the International Monetary Fund, the International Energy Agency, OECD, the United Nations and the World Bank are often only available with an expensive subscription, presented in complex incomprehensible tables, through special interfaces; such barriers are making the international use of the data difficult. Because of missing metadata standards it is difficult to evaluate the quality of the dataset and to search for and locate the data resources required. The paper highlights the development of e-learning materials that can raise awareness and ease access to international data. In this case the example is e-learning for the "United Nations Millennium Development Goals".

The second paper is also related to the sharing of data with an introduction to the international level. "The Research-Data-Centre in Research-Data-Centre Approach: A First Step Towards Decentralised International Data Sharing" is written by Stefan Bender and Jörg Heining from the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) in Nuremberg, Germany. In order to preserve the confidentiality of single entities, access to complete datasets is often restricted to monitored on-site analysis. Although off-site access is facilitated in other countries, Germany has relied on on-site security. However, an opportunity has been presented where Research Data Centre sites are placed at Statistical Offices around Germany, and also at a Michigan centre for demography. The article contains historical information on approaches and developments in other countries and has a special focus on the German solution. The project will gain experience in the complex balance

between confidentiality and analysis, and the differences between national laws.

The paper by Stuart Macdonald from EDINA in Scotland originated as a poster session at the IASSIST 2010 conference. The name of the paper is "AddressingHistory: a Web2.0 community engagement tool and API". The community consists of members within and outside academia, as local history groups and genealogists are using the software to enhance and combine data from historical Scottish Post Office Directories with large-scale historical maps. The background and technical issues are presented in the paper, which also looks into issues and perspectives of user generated content. The "crowdsourcing" tool did successfully generate engagement and there are plans for further development, such as upload and attachment of photos of people, buildings, and landmarks to enrich the collection.

Articles for the IQ are always very welcome. They can be papers from IASSIST conferences or other conferences and workshops, from local presentations or papers especially written for the IQ. If you don't have anything to offer right now, then please prepare yourself for the next IASSIST conference and start planning for participation in a session there. Chairing a conference session with the purpose of aggregating and integrating papers for a special issue IQ is much appreciated as the information in the form of an IQ issue reaches many more people than the session participants and will be readily available on the IASSIST website at <http://www.iassistdata.org>.

Authors are very welcome to take a look at the instructions and layout:  
<http://iassistdata.org/iq/instructions-authors>

Authors can also contact me via e-mail: [kbr@sam.sdu.dk](mailto:kbr@sam.sdu.dk). Should you be interested in compiling a special issue for the IQ as guest editor(s) I will also be delighted to hear from you.

Karsten Boye Rasmussen  
December 2011  
Editor