
The International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology (IASSIST)

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Data resources for the 1990s was the theme of the IASSIST conference.

The International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology (IASSIST) is an organization that brings together data archivists, librarians, computing specialists, researchers, planners, and government agency administrators interested in social data in machine-readable formats. Since 1974, IASSIST has served as a forum for the exchange of ideas for providing information services and for developing technical applications in data information centers in a number of settings. Among them are national archives, university libraries, computing centers, research institutes, government agencies, and private corporations. IASSIST members are engaged in the acquisition, processing, administration, preservation, and distribution of data.

This year's annual conference was held May 30-June 2, 1990, in Poughkeepsie, New York. The theme of the conference was "Numbers, Pictures, Words and Sounds: Priorities for the 1990s." It reflects the ever-increasing universe of data resources. The program featured several plenary sessions, concurrent sessions, round table discussions, and workshops. Together they highlighted this expanded notion of data as well as concomitant hardware and software development.

Opening remarks were given by IASSIST president Thomas E. Brown, National Archives and Records Administration, and Nancy S. Dye, dean of Vassar College. Laura Guy, University of Wisconsin-Madison, presided over the first plenary session, which included a representative from the U.S. Bureau of the Census speaking on the 1990 census and its challenges. A guest from the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences spoke about recent Soviet efforts to produce their first electronic commercial product and a database of political biographical information.

The second plenary, "Perspectives on Data Services Over the Last 25 Years: Where Are We Going?" was both entertaining and provocative in providing a "romp" over the last sixty years of social, organizational, and technological developments that have affected the provision of data services. Chaired by Murray Aborn, an honored National Science Foundation retiree, the session further covered issues such as the lack of a union list of machine-readable data, the benefits of data archives for faculty and students, the growing commitment of librarians to data, and the need to focus on the educational process in college teaching in relationship to primary data collecting and secon-

dary analysis. Long-time leaders in data library development, Judith Rowe, Princeton University, and Margaret O. Adams, currently at the National Archives and Records Administration, were two of the speakers.

The third plenary session, "Research Library Developments: Future Directions," was also of interest to academic and research librarians. Marianne Gaunt, Rutgers University, chaired the session. Beecher Wiggins, Library of Congress, presented Henriette D. Avram's paper on networking and the immense implications of the proposed National Research and Education Network for libraries. Leslie Hume, Research Libraries Group, Inc., shared a consortial view of new information needs and challenges for research libraries. Richard Leacy, Georgia Institute of Technology, touched on technical issues libraries will face along with the economics of information and issues of access involving U.S. government agencies. James Neal, Indiana University, spoke about "the people challenge" in libraries as they strive to meet the needs to deliver computer-based resources and services to the scholarly community.

Concurrent sessions were varied and included the following topics: cross-national and comparative survey data, data collection and access issues, digital cartographic data, machine-readable documentation, encouraging instructional uses of data, new methods of distributing federal data, lexicons and text data for the humanities, networking, non-North American archives update, bringing data to the user, images as data, developing standards and bibliographic projects related to computer files, public policy issues, cooperation in providing access to computer files on university campuses, research uses of text materials, alternative data sources, and archival responses to technical developments.

In the session "Cooperation and Connectivity: Problems and Solutions," Linda Langschieb and Gertrude Lewis shared their experiences at Rutgers University in providing access to machine-readable information in a setting with a long history of cooperation between the library and computer center. Services ranging from access to data files on magnetic tape to searching commercial databases were highlighted. Patricia Vanderberg, University of California at Berkeley, discussed cataloging of computer files of all types, the need to coordinate with various library and non-library units on campus, and work on standards. Vanderberg is chair of the Computer Files Discussion Group, Association of Library Collections and Technical Services, American Library Association.

Text files were the topic for several speakers. Among them was Marianne Gaunt, Rutgers University, the project director for a one-year planning grant from the National Endowment for the

Humanities. The project, which began in July 1989, was aimed at establishing a national center for machine-readable texts in the humanities. Gaunt's efforts to create an inventory of machine-readable texts has been underway since the early 1980s. RILIN's MDF (machine-readable data format) file continues to bear the fruit of these efforts.

Round table lunches provided the opportunity for informal discussions among conference participants. Topics included: bibliographic control of computer files, database servers, issues of public policy, providing levels of reference, and electronic records and the Freedom of Information Act.

At one of the round table lunches, Sue A. Dodd, University of North Carolina, an IASSIST member and leader in developing cataloging rules for computer files, shared her paper on "Bibliographic References for Computer Files in the Social Sciences: A Discussion Paper." Although researchers are beginning to cite computer files in their bibliographies, those who do are in the minority. Dodd further outlined suggestions to promote accurate and consistent citation practices.

Two half-day workshops, "Geographic Information Systems" and "Introduction to Data Libraries," were also offered, as well as two full-day sessions: "Data Library Management: Planning for the Future" and "International Socio-Economic Time-Series Data."

Presented by Chuck Humphrey, University of Alberta, and Bliss Siman, Baruch College, City University of New York, the focus of the workshop on "Data Library Management: Planning for the Future" was to identify relevant issues for planning. Among the issues highlighted were: bibliographic control, effect of online public catalogs on access to data, trends in research and instruction, collecting data resources, services to be provided, level of staffing required, impact of technological change on data access, and preservation of machine-readable information.

The conference concluded with an IASSIST General Assembly meeting where a five-year plan for the Association was adopted, "Future Directions for IASSIST." The plan stresses the crucial role IASSIST has played in bridging the interests and concerns of social researchers and scientists, information specialists, and computing specialists over the last 15 years. The "Outline of Goals" includes professional development of staff in data centers, advancement and development of social data information centers, assessment and planning for the impact of new technology, promotion of the archiving of social data and the advancement of data standards, development of linkages between social data centers and users and producers of data, and evaluation of the role and contribution of IASSIST and recruitment of new members.

As more academic and research libraries expand

their role as information providers for data files, they will be grappling with many of the same issues highlighted in the program. The conference provided a forum for IASSIST members and other

presentors to share their expertise and visions for dealing with acquisition and access issues, technical and administrative issues, as well as with providing reference services for data files. ■■

The practical librarian: Managing collections and services in the college library

By Sandra Upchurch

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A report on a conference on small college libraries.

The Practical Librarian: Managing Collections and Services in the College Library" was the theme of a conference held at Maryville College, Maryville, Tennessee, May 31–June 2, 1990. Co-sponsored by the Lamar Memorial Library at Maryville College, and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville's Graduate School of Library and Information Science, the conference was designed for college librarians serving student enrollments under 2,000. Sessions focused on the environment of higher education in the 1990s, the role of the college library, collection and service issues, and support for the library on campus. The tranquil Maryville College campus, in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, provided a relaxed environment that encouraged interaction and idea-sharing among the 48 participants.

To facilitate discussion, William C. Robinson (UTK Graduate School) developed a composite

profile of 22 libraries based on a questionnaire. The average conference participant had been at his or her library for 11.4 years; the average library represented held 129,545 volumes and had a book budget of \$82,676. The library was open 82.7 hours per week with four professional librarians and four FTE support staff. Automation activities in the average library included acquisitions, online searching, and cataloging functions. Most libraries used LC classification. Fifty-nine (59) percent of the libraries have a separate reference service point, staffed an average of 50.5 hours per week, and staffed by professionals 41.7 hours per week. The average library provided bibliographic instruction as part of freshman English and subject-oriented instruction at the junior level.

Ingram Book Services hosted a splendid reception at Willard House, formerly a presidential home on campus, and at the opening banquet Tom