

## **AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA ARCHIVE**

### **Expression of Interest to be a Satellite Entity**

The Australian Social Science Data Archive is a distributed network with nodes currently operating at ANU, UQ and UNSW - with UWA coming online in 2007. The team of professional data archivists, directed by a panel of Australia's leading social scientists, provides both stewardship and outreach services to the Australian Social Science community. ASSDA adopts and develops standards in line with international best practice and applies these standards across the distributed network. ASSDA currently provides a 'one-stop shop' for data acquisition and distribution via web-based services. In ASSDA's strategic plan (see Attachment A), it is expected that by 2012, each state will house at least one node of ASSDA provide further stewardship and outreach services to their local communities. Funding from NCRIS could increase the momentum of this process and support the branching out into stewardship and outreach services for the Humanities.

#### **Stewardship**

ASSDA has acquired, preserved and encouraged online access to social data including surveys, opinion polls, census, and is experimenting with curation methods for qualitative data (Australian Qualitative Archive – AQuA, based at the University of Queensland) and historical statistical publications (Historical Census and Colonial Data Archive - HCCDA). ASSDA regularly provides training to its archivists on metadata creation, standardisation of files, and the legal implications of the Privacy Act and the Copyright Act. An important new role for ASSDA lies in employing and training the data archivists needed to curate and manage the collections of these complex and varied data types. A professional cohort of data archivists is a major obstacle to furthering data curation and distribution services in Australia (especially compared with UK and US) and NCRIS potentially provides an opportunity to establish this profession beyond the social sciences.

ASSDA's distributed model has allowed the development of curation practices and metadata standards to address specific problematic data types and to experiment with curation, outreach and governance structures to support data existing in closed systems such as Indigenous data. With small amounts of establishment funding, new nodes can be developed to solve these problems, drawing on the strength of ASSDA's previous experience and have an instant network of project partners to support funding applications. With further resources, the ASSDA stewardship role could also spread to the humanities. Using standards developed through ASSDA's Qualitative Archive service to manage research recordings for text, video, pictures and sound, and ASSDA's H to increase the accessibility of historical documents as research tools, ASSDA could offer consultancy, advisory and curation services to the Humanities.

#### **Outreach**

ASSDA regularly performs tactical outreach services including providing advice on research proposals, ethics applications, data preparation, licensing and legal obligations, and establishing institution based data archives. One-on-one time is essential for this process to explain standards and train staff for data preservation across the project lifecycle. The service could be made more available and systematic, by having dedicated outreach staff to make contact with researchers in receipt of funding, provide lectures to research students, librarians and conduct nation-wide site visits to assist in local archive development.

Using the existing ASSDA skill base, other tools could be developed to assist researchers manage research data across the lifecycle. These tools might include a web interface using the DDI 3 metadata standard to collect and export metadata from the research proposal through to the archiving process to support the easy creation of documentation and repurposing of data files. Training manuals would be prepared, discussing data preservation obligations and strategies across the lifecycle and distributed to those in receipt of funding to collect data. Finally, the establishment of a professional association for data archivists in Australia – with links to relevant international bodies such as IFDO (the International Federation of Data Organisations – would be another possible enduring legacy of NCRIS funding.