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DLI Update



IASSIST, I'm sure all of you have heard that acronym at one point or another but what does it say to you?? What should it say? Well to start off, it stands for International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology. It's an international group of people working with information technology and data services to support research and

teaching in the social sciences. As an organization, IASSIST has the following goals:

- to foster and promote a network of excellence for data service delivery;
- to advance infrastructure in the social sciences;
- to provide opportunities for collegial exchange of sound professional practices;

Sound somewhat familiar? Well it should, DLI fits beautifully into this association. There are many fascinating things happening inside and outside of Canada and the IASSIST conference is the place to hear about them. Plus it is wonderful to meet other people with the same interests and who speak the same language!

Why am I touting IASSIST's horn? Because DLI will be holding its national training in conjunction with the IASSIST conference in Montreal this May giving every single one of us the perfect reason to attend to both.

Happy Reading!
Sage

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A Tribute to Moira Russell
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- Wendy Watkins

Moira and I first met at the Learned's when they were at Brock in 1996, the year DLI began. Moira was thrust into the limelight as "instant local arrangement person" the first day CAPDU met. Her ability to rise to any occasion, including "instant DLI contact" and carry off the task in a professional manner, led us to ask her to become one of the two new Ontario trainers. Unfortunately, her illness intervened and prevented her from taking up that particular challenge. She was, however, as active in DLI as possible given her circumstances and was able to attend the last Ontario training session where we celebrated DLI's 10th anniversary as well as a decade of friendship.

Moira and I had planned to spend a few days at my cottage this summer. We've done that in the past and really enjoyed each other's company. Moira had cottaging down to a fine art--she knew when to pitch in and when just to kick back and relax. And despite her illness and her many surgeries, she retained her sense of humour. After the last surgery, she found enunciation difficult and joked that with her speech and my hearing, we'd have to pass notes or send text messages at the cottage. We were both disappointed when her health prevented that last trip to the lake. Moira died unexpectedly in August 2006. She will be missed by all who knew her.

**DLI recognizes Census
Operations Division for
exemplary access**

By Monia Bergeron from the December @statcan

The Data Liberation Initiative (DLI) has been a successful program at Statistics Canada thanks in no small part to all our participating divisions who contribute on a yearly basis. Twenty-five of Statistics Canada's subject matter divisions have contributed their excellence to the DLI program since its inception [10 years ago](#). To acknowledge divisional participation, on October 20, 2006, the DLI awarded the first Exemplary Access Award to recognize Statistics Canada Divisions that have done an outstanding job of providing data and pertinent documentation to its user community. This year's recipient is Census Operations Division (COD).

**Recognizing Census Operations
Division**

Census Operations Division was awarded the DLI's first Exemplary Access Award in recognition of the transformation to electronic publishing of 2001 census products. The complete online [package](#) of tables, maps and reference materials represents a significant contribution to research at all Canadian post-secondary institutions.

Master of Ceremonies, **Chuck Humphrey** of the University of Alberta's Data Library and Co-chair of the DLI External Advisory Committee, singled out COD for their excellent use of consultation with their users and for implementing suggestions provided by the users. Furthermore, he recognized the improvements made with COD's discovery tools and the high quality of their product line.



Anil Arora, Director General of Social and Demographic Statistics Branch and 2006 Census Manager, accepts the first Exemplary Access Award.
Photo: Mike Sivyer.

Anil Arora, Director General of Social and Demographic Statistics Branch and the 2006 Census Manager, accepted the award on behalf of the division. He related that they were pleased to have been selected for this award and that COD was very proud to be a participating partner in the DLI. He expects this spirit of co-operation to continue for many years.

The selection criteria

In order for a division to win this prestigious award they are judged on DLI users' community values. A special committee of DLI

members developed the following criteria when assessing exemplary access:

1. Providing Public Use Microdata Files (PUMFs) to the DLI.
2. Providing aggregate statistics to DLI.
3. Providing full documentation along with PUMFS and statistics.
4. Providing free, unrestricted access to aggregate statistics through the Statistics Canada website.
5. Responding in a timely and thorough fashion to DLI-member enquiries.
6. Contributing to the DLI training seminars with sessions on new surveys and products.

The DLI Exemplary Access Award Committee will consider new recipients annually.

WARNING:

Using portable files (.por) can be hazardous to data preservation!

When you create a “.por” file the variable names are truncated if they exceed 8 characters. Previously this was not an issue as there was a maximum number of 8 characters allowed in SPSS and SAS however this is no longer the case. Therefore please exercise caution when using a “.por” file or if possible create a “.sav” file which does not change the number of characters in a variable name.

A quick reference showing some of the difference between a “.por” and “.sav” file:

.por	.sav
Ascii	Binary
Truncates variable name	Does not truncate
Works across systems	Platform dependant

The IASSIST Experience...

by Sandra Keys
University of Waterloo

In 2003, when I was a recent arrival at the University of Waterloo and a neophyte to the data world who didn't know a dummy file from a PUMF, I had the opportunity to go to IASSIST in Ottawa. It was an incredible experience! Although I was initially overwhelmed by much of the discussion and many of the speakers, when I returned to work, I felt somewhat more comfortable and certainly more excited about this part of my job. This opportunity also allowed me to start becoming familiar with the broader context of data in the academic community, as well as to meet and talk to others across the country and worldwide, whose names I recognized only from the listservs. And unlike many other conferences I have attended over the years, this one had camaraderie – despite the differences in experience and expertise, the common interest in data brought people together and I immediately felt welcome. This openness and the spirit of sharing were apparent throughout and have remained an important part of my data life as I continue to learn.

The experience in Ottawa so whetted my appetite for more that when I heard that IASSIST would be just across the Ontario border in Ann Arbor in 2006, there was no doubt in my mind – I was going again!

This time, although still far from being an expert, the sessions and the language were much more familiar and I found myself able to enter into at least some of the conversations. What I very much value about IASSIST is that, although many of the attendees are long-time data professionals, the sessions do not necessarily cater to the experts. Rather, there are workshops and topics covering both basic and advanced issues and a broad variety of subject areas to suit different needs. As a librarian (and one for whom data is only a part of the job), I tended to go to the sessions oriented toward assisting users, of which there were several, including Leading Users to Knowledge: Data Librarians to the Rescue; We All Count: Quantitative Literacy Efforts and Approaches; and New Standards in Statistics and Data Citations.

Archiving and institutional data repositories were also popular topics.

In keeping with my interests and relative inexperience, I also attended two pre-conference workshops: Introduction to Data Librarianship (I am NOT alone!) and Statistical Literacy and Learning Objects. The latter, presented by Milo Shields was especially illuminating as it delved into the importance of proper communication and interpretation of statistics and data. Defining “statistical literacy” as the study of statistics used in everyday arguments, Shields demonstrated his Web-based drill program that decodes and gives feedback on the students’ responses. He implemented the program because of surprising results he received when administering statistical literacy tests – even to those who should know! We had great fun taking a statistical literacy test and using the program and yes, realizing just how easy it is to misinterpret!

Once again, I was impressed by the collegiality of the attendees and their willingness to share with the less experienced among us. In addition to those who presented sessions (and I am happy to say that many of these presenters were Canadians!), there were also those who took the opportunity to share their efforts through poster sessions. It is truly a great opportunity to discover the important issues and trends in data and to share both successes and failures. And there *is* something for everyone...whether you are new to the data world or have been immersed in it and have been coming to IASSIST for years...you will find something to catch your attention and help you in your work, whether it be a piece of information or a new data friend.

Oh, and there are some great social activities too! So, this year – *cette année* – Montréal! Allons-y!!



GSS15/CTUMS/IASSIST/DLI/...

Surviving in the Sand Box

By Brian McNally

Mount Allison University

In 1996 I agreed to be a DLI contact for my university. It is now 2007; so what have I learned in the last tens years? Was it fun? Was it all worthwhile? For sure on all counts!!!! Would I do it again? Absolutely!

I have learned that when it comes to data and data management Canada is a world leader. When it comes to GIS, mapping, and geospatial data we are there. For data conservation.... well maybe we need to get busy there. I learned that out there somewhere there is a data file that will meet the needs of most researchers and we are getting better at being able locate that file, retrieve it and share it. I have learned that some researchers have unrealistic expectations while other researchers need to crank up their expectations. Also I learned that you don't need to know it all to be a know it all. In fact, knowing it all is not a requirement to being a DLI contact. Thank goodness.

So, why get involved with data? Why get involved with DLI? For big sites like Dalhousie University, University of New Brunswick, Alberta, Toronto, Ottawa, Carleton DLI is just another weapon in their vast array of information resources that their data experts use to provide service to their researchers, faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students. With less than 2500 undergraduate students, a tiny number of researchers/faculty using data, scarce fiscal resources, and several hats already on my head already did I/do I really need one more? Why become involved in one more project?

I am sure many of you reading this article have been to DLI workshops where everyone seemed to speaking in another language. Or maybe you were even fortunate enough to attend an IASSIST Conference where they use an even more obscure dialect of data speak. It usually goes something like this:

Why Should You Attend IASSIST?

by Walter Piovesan

Top Ten reasons YOU should Attend IASSIST conference:

10: You will meet people who "get" Data.

9: IASSIST membership has its privileges: You will be in a select club of Data Professionals who will provide international knowledge of data collections and services.

8: A chance to meet data professionals spanning the life of the Data Library movement.

7: Attend interesting conferences with a variety of sessions spanning the technological, theoretical, and service component of Data Services

6: Gain insights on how data services are organized and delivered from an international perspective.

5: IASSIST conferences are offered not only in North America (Canada and USA) but also in various countries in Europe.

4: Learn first hand about the emerging Metadata Standards and how these standards will make data management easier.

3: Be among the select few who can boast of attending and surviving a "Turkey Action" session.

2: See Poster Sessions that will open your horizons to new Data Frontiers.

... and the number on reason to attend IASSIST conference is...

1: For the first time you will be among people to whom you don't have to explain what it is you do as a Data Professional!

“At the last IASSIST meeting it was announced that IPUMS files would be available at UNESCO’s Inst. of Stats. in Montreal and that in cooperation with STC it is offering through E-STAT and CHASS at U of T in SPSS or SAS formats access to IPUMS and PUMF files to all CAPDU/RDC members provided they are also members of DLI or DDI and have forwarded a request to that effect to BOM or directly to EAC.”

Five minutes later you have worked through the acronyms as far as IPUM and realize you are stuck and more critically everyone else has gone for coffee and muffins.

When I was studying for my MLS degree at McGill I lived in downtown Montreal near the boundary with Westmount. During the summer I used to take my daughter to play in a park in Westmount – a small green space surrounded to elegant Tudor style town houses. In the middle of the park was a sand box. All the children played in that sand box. Some came with a vast array of Tonka equipment – trucks large and small, backhoes, graders, bulldozers, etc. Others came with discarded margarine containers. Some used their toy equipment to build roads. Others used their margarine containers to build castles. Together they built cities.

DLI is like that sand box. Some sites have all kinds of resources: data librarians, GIS expertise, computer technical staff, computers, plotters, etc. Some sites have margarine containers. We are all playing in the data sand box. So what have I been able to do with my margarine containers? I have provided the best service I can assisted along the way by Chuck, Wendy, Laine, Elizabeth, Ernie, Mike, Sage, Monia, Jackie, etc.

The scary part of all this is that it pretty much all makes sense to us margarine container people provided we have attended the DLI regional workshops and the national training associated with the IASSIST [International Association for Social Science Information and Technology] Conference; an important acronym to take note of. At DLI Workshops we can now sort of keep up during one of Chuck’s SPSS exercises or if not we are able to keep up at least to fake it. Through DLI Workshops we know who may use DLI data and for what purposes most of the time. We know there are lots

of data toys out there and we know the people who play with them everyday and we have met many of them at DLI Workshops or the IASSIST Conference whenever it comes to Canada. We know that Beyond 20/20 is more than just exceptional eye sight and we know that in Beyond 20/20 rows can be changed into columns and vice versa. We know that E-STAT really does answer really complicated census questions. We know that you keep the DLI listserv as the ace up your sleeve. And when all else fails, ask Chuck.

So where does IASSIST fit in all this. IASSIST is another sandbox altogether. As the title of this essay indicates it is a small but central part of a movement by information specialists from all over the world to come to grips with digital data: numeric data files, geospatial data files, conversion of data files, preservation and conservation of data files, storage/access/distribution of data files. The IASSIST conference brings these specialists together where they converse in data speak. So why might DLI contacts endure two or three days of data speak?

I attended IASSIST in 2003 when it was in Ottawa. I learned to think outside of the box to think about bigger issues, bigger problems. For instance, nominal census data from Ireland is a problem since the Irish archives were shelled by the British army in 1924. The Netherlands no longer conducts a census – such activity is prohibited by the Constitution while in Canada it is a constitutional requirement. Place name changes in the UK are being compiled into one file interlinking parish records, county records, church records, and gazetteers. Numerical data literacy like regular literacy has a direct effect on the economy – it is economically important. Data files and resources can be re-purposed as teaching and learning tools. The Canadian census can be used to explore social and cultural behaviours. There are people out there acting as data archivists trying to keep the digital data alive – converting IBM sequential data tapes from the 50’s into new formats to make them usable again.

Will I attend IASSIST in Montreal this spring??? You bet; maybe even if STC/DLI were not picking up the tab.... NOT.

Team Changes

As all of you know Mike Sivyer rode off into the sunset a few months ago. His wife has smartly kept him off the streets by tasking him with a complete home renovation! In the meantime back here Michel Séguin took over the reigns. I believe most of you already know Michel from his previous incarnation from Health Division as he has made the tour of the four regional workshops more than once.

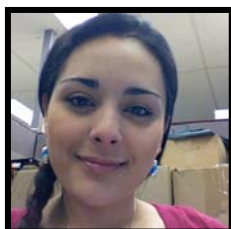
However unbeknownst to many of you there have been several other comings and goings to the team. Jocelyn Geha from Carleton University joined the team back in August. She has been diligently scanning all of our paper documentation. Over the next month or so all of this will be available in .pdf on our ftp. She's been such a pleasure to work with that we've extended her to now organize all of the census products we have.

Another addition to the team is Linda Harding-Devries. She came to us from the Library, as she was intrigued by all the laughter from our section. Her role with DLI is DDI guru, she will be taking over control of creating DDI for all of our files and as the interest spreads she will also be the official DDI trainer to StatsCan!

Of course with all these new arrivals there is bound to be a departure. We are sad to see Marie-Josée Bourgeois leave us... but not too far! She has joined ranks with Special Surveys Division she is now the communications officer which means she'll be the one answering our requests. She will also be training people on DDI as well as continue to be a part of Statcan DDI and CanDDI working groups.



Michel Séguin



Jocelyn Geha



Linda Harding-Devries



Marie-Josée Bourgeois

Projects

Ever wondered what actually happens at the DLI office? Well other than responding to your requests and putting new products up on the ftp and website we actually have quite a few other projects on the go and we thought it would be fun to share them with you.

DLI Website

As you have noticed Statistics Canada has changed the look and feel of their website to conform to government standards. Subsequently the DLI is also working on the change. Not to worry the only change will be in the look, the content will remain!

FTP Mirror Site

If you've been keeping up with reading the minutes to the EAC meeting you might have noticed there's been talk about a mirror site for quite a while. Well, the long awaited moment is almost here. We now

have a location for the site which will be at the University of Alberta (thank you Chuck). What does this mean for you? Well since the mirror site will be an exact replica of our ftp site, this means that should ever the statcan ftp site go down there will always be a copy of our collection available at the University of Alberta. And as a plus, U of A can offer you secure shell, whereas we at Statcan cannot.

The Compleat DLI Survival Kit

This is another great project based on the University of New Brunswick's First Aid Kit. It's basically a user manual for DLI contacts. It will be a web based document that can help guide you around DLI and the surrounding environment and not just for the new contacts! We hope this product will be of use for everyone since it also will include product highlights, administrative information and technical help. We will be presenting the draft version at the National Training session in May.

Quality and standardization of the metadata within the DLI collection

This is our most challenging project. We are looking at each survey over time to ensure that the documentation matches the data, is complete, and available in both languages. If any parts are missing, we go back to author divisions to try to obtain them or in the worst case scenario try to find someone that is knowledgeable about the product. This will be an on-going project that hopefully will allow the DLI to have a warehouse of good, complete archived information.

DLI collection expansion

Since our student Jocelyn has finished scanning/digitizing all of our paper documentation we have her now working on adding the Basic Summary Tables and accompanying documentation from the 1971 to 1981 Census.

We also continue to work with other divisions such as International Trade to see what else could be made available to the DLI. We have had outside organizations approach as well, however there are some aspects of their data which are too controversial for a Statistics Canada site but we don't want to turn away data so the issue of where to host it will be raised at the next EAC.

DDI in Canada

In order to move the initiative forward two working groups have been created (or recreated).

The first is the CanDDI Working Group. Currently, the working members are: from Guelph University, Michelle Edwards, from Carleton University, Jane Fry, from Special Surveys, Mary DeCuypere, Marie-Josée Bourgeois, John Ladds and Louise Marmen and from the DLI Linda Harding-Devries and Michel Séguin. The group started by sharing all DDI tagged files. From there they are working on creating a best practices document, once this document is complete they will share it with the community.

The second working group is the Statistics Canada DDI Working Group which is comprised of representatives from DLI, Special Surveys, Health, Labour Force Survey with expectations that other divisions will join in the near future. The main purpose of this group is to look at tagging files in DDI format (this means having files delivered from the source already tagged in DDI format) and to look at the process starting with the draft of the questionnaire all the way to the output in order to make sure DDI output is generated in an automated fashion. The objective is to work on the process in order to facilitate the work for everyone.

Jackie's Tips: Unlocker

Ever gotten one of these annoying messages from Windows?

- Cannot delete file: Access is denied
- There has been a sharing violation.
- The source or destination file may be in use.
- The file is in use by another program or user.
- Make sure the disk is not full or write-protected and that the file is not currently in use.

Enter *Unlocker* to save the day!

To download click on the link. <http://ccollomb.free.fr/unlocker/unlocker1.8.5.exe>

Once installed

1. Simply right click the folder or file and select Unlocker
2. If the folder or file is locked, a window listing of lockers will appear
3. Simply click Unlock All and you are done!

Workshop Sessions – Goodies from the DLI Training Repository

The DLI Training Repository is now located at OZone: ospace.scholarsportal.info/handle/1873/69

Atlantic Training – April 19-21

Anticipating Great Things: A 2006 Census Preview <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/199>

Jewels Among the Stones: User Guides and Reference Sources <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/156>

The Labour Family <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/157>

Reference Mysteries <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/158>

Canadian Community Health Survey Cycle 2.2 <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/163>

The Crime Scene: Justice Data and the Case of Multiple Files in GSS 18 <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/155>

A Taste of SPSS <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/219>

Internet Data Library System (IDLS) <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/154>

Quebec Training/ CREPUQ – May 4-6

Produits du Recensement de 2006 <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/202>

IDD: Une mise à jour 2005 – 2006 <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/151>

Atelier IDD 2006: Échanges et Découvertes <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/196>

GéoSuite <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/201>

Centre Canadien de la Statistique Juridique <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/194>

CAPDU/Ontario Training – May 27-29

Update on the Census 2006 <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/261>

2006 Census Products and Services Line: Proposed Directions <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/141>

Canadian Community Health Survey Cycle 2.2 <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/200>

CANSIM: A Look at 3 Interfaces <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/140>

Environmental Statistics in E-STAT <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/145>

Canadian Business Patterns (CBP): Product Review <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/146>

Data Going Mainstream <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/147>

Labour Force Historical Review <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/91>

The DLI Community <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/231>

A DDI Primer: About DDI <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/159>

DDI Publishing: A Hands-on Workshop <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/218>

Input-Output: Structure of the Canadian Economy <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/150>

Using Statistics Canada Geospatial Data with ArcGIS 9x (ArcInfo) <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/221>

ACCOLEDS/ West Training - Dec 6-8

Surviving between ACCOLEDS Workshops – Panel <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/303>

Using SPOT Data: Academic Perspectives <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/292>

Product Reviews: Finding Jewels among the Stones <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/297>

Coping with SPSS Syntax Files on the DLI FTP Site <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/298>

DLI Communication Tools <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/291>

Alberta Terrestrial Imaging Centre (ATIC): SPOT Acquisition Opportunity <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/293>

Using SPOT Data: Academic Perspectives <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/292>

PCCF and its Use with GIS <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/305>

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/304>

DLI Update <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/302>

IASSIST Conference – May 23-26

An Update from Statistics Canada <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/223>

Developing a Social Science and GIS Data Service in a Predominantly Undergraduate Library: Past, Present, and Future <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/160>

Developing a Framework for Quantitative Literacy: Counting on IASSIST <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/227>

Basic Forms of Citation for Statistics and Data: Towards an Accepted Standard <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/226>

Creating a Repository of Training Materials: The Canadian Experience <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/225>

Building Infrastructure and Alliances to Meet Common Goals: The Creation of a Canadian Public Opinion Data Index <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/222>

International Comparative Data: Advice to Neophytes <http://hdl.handle.net/1873/220>