

ACTION GROUP REPORTS

The Action Group reports which follow are a result of the Action Group discussions at the IASSIST Annual Conference, Itasca, Illinois, in February, 1978. Those not appearing in this issue of the Newsletter will be published in subsequent issues. The Reports are printed as filed by the chairpersons of the action groups.

ACTION IN THE DOCUMENTATION ACTION GROUP

The Documentation Action Group is currently working on two projects of interest to IASSIST members; a study description form and a style manual for documentation of machine readable data.

The study description form has been under development for some time, mostly in Europe, under the auspices of the International Federation of Data Organizations (IFDO). The purpose of the study description form is to present in a standard outline format the essential facts about a machine-readable data file. The main sections are: identification and acknowledgements (study title, principal investigator, data distributor); analysis conditions (purpose of study, number of units and variables, etc.); reanalysis conditions (data condition, accessibility, documentation, etc.); references to publications; and background variables (demographic and socioeconomic). Batch and interactive programs in IBM OS/360 Assembler Language and PL/1 are available for entering and printing study descriptions.

The style manual for documentation of machine-readable data is the product of a research project undertaken by the University of Illinois for the US Department of Justice. The manual is intended to be a general guide for the format and contents of user's guides (those things we sometimes call "codebooks") for MRDF. The basic sections of a user's guide discussed are: title page, abstract, project history, processing history, codebook, and appendices.

The Documentation Action Group and the projects' sponsors are interested in field testing both the study description form and the user's guide style manual, and in any comments or suggestions.

For more information about the study description project contact: Dr. Elliott M. Avendon, Leisure Studies Data Bank, Waterloo Research Institute, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario N2L, 3G1, telephone (519) 885-1211.

If you would like a copy of the style manual, contact: Barbara B. Noble, Center for Advanced Computation, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL 61801, telephone, (217) 333-3234 before April 1, 1978, or at Bureau of Social Science Research, Suite 700, 1990 M St. N.W., Washington, DC 20036 after April 1.

Sheldon Laube, Chair

DATA ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT ACTION GROUP

The DOM AG met for two sessions on Thursday, February 9th at the meeting held in Itasca. During these sessions the following activities were carried out:

1. Ms. Nancy Morrison from the University of Illinois has been active in the formation of the new SPSS User's Group. Nancy provided the AG with a report on the progress of the User's group. This report stressed four major points.
  - a) An organizing committee is presently preparing the by-laws for the group that will make it separate from SPSS, Inc..
  - b) A membership drive is planned for April, 1978. Individuals interested in being placed on the mailing list for membership materials should write to Ms. Nancy Morrison, Social Sciences Quantitative Laboratory, Lincoln Hall, University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill. 61801.
  - c) The group plans to act as a communication vehicle among SPSS users.
  - d) It will act as a coherent group that can provide input to SPSS, Inc.

2. A workshop was conducted on the treatment of multiply-punched data. A round-table approach was employed and individuals discussed procedures used by the organizations they represent. We were fortunate to have present during this session Roald Buhler of Princeton University. Dr. Buhler discussed a program (stand alone) at Princeton that he uses in conjunction with P-STAT. In addition, Mr. William Gjertsen of the SAS Institute reported that the new version of SAS will be capable of handling multi-punch data. Terry Stewart of the Leisure Studies Data Bank, University of Waterloo and Bill Gammell and Gary Grandon, both from the University of Connecticut, shared information on procedures used at their respective installations.

3. Dr. Richard Roistacher reported on the progress of the Data Inter-change File concept which was first introduced to the DOM AG at the first IASIST North American Working Conference in Florida last year.

At the Itasca conference, Dick met with representatives of SPSS, SAS, P-STAT, OSIRIS III, OSIRIS IV and TPL. The outcome of this meeting was that everyone was in agreement that the time had come for an interchange file prototype to be developed and the actual coding should start in the near future. In addition, a national on-line conference will be set up this spring to keep the discussion of the interchange file active. Future developments on this subject will be reported in IASIST newsletters.

4. There was an active discussion on the effectiveness of the DOM AG in its present format. Those of us who have been with this action group since its inception have become increasingly distressed with our inability to achieve a high level of

activity on all the items in our AG mandate (see Newsletter Vol. 1, No. 1)

We have experienced considerable success in providing a form for the transfer of information and informal training. Unfortunately, the larger task of investigating and evaluating "existing procedures for data and documentation preparation and data management software and hardware capabilities" has only been marginally attended to. Some of the reasons offered for this problem were lack of time together and resources, over ambitious expectations, and an overlapping of interests with other AG's. Whatever the reason, it appears that this is a point of discussion that should involve all interested parties. You are encouraged to provide input to Bill Gammell, Box U-164, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut. 06268

5. On the brighter side of things, Alice Robbin (DAD AG) reported to us that our group supplied 5 of the 9 abstracts received for portions of A guide to Providing Social Science Data Service. Please refer to the DAD AG report in this issue for details concerning this project.

William Gammell, Chair

ACTION GROUP ON PROCESS-  
PRODUCED DATA

Priority #1

We wound up discussions on our highest priority project, the Directory of Directories (D of D's). Satisfied that we published a good start of the American list, (Newsletter Vol. 1, No. 4), we turned our discussions to the Canadian list. It was agreed the best way to proceed would be to tap the resources of the Data Clearinghouse. We estimate that some information will be ready by March 31 and will be published in the forthcoming June issue of the Newsletter. This would be appended by addenda to the American list. This addenda will be additional listings of directo-

ries, and another category of announcements and bulletins that are published separately from directories. What immediately came to mind was announcements of recent publically available data in the Statistical Reporter, the Federal Register, the Data Clearinghouse, and others. When the entire project is printed once (by stages as it were) the action group will attempt to edit a complete D of D's, which can be updated on a yearly basis after that. The essential elements for each entry (Newsletter Vol. 1 No. 3 p. 13) will be considered in that final edition. We envision this to be completed before the projected next North American meeting in Ottawa, May 1979. This is later than our projected publication for the Uppsala meeting. However, absences from the Itasca conference and other exigencies have retarded our progress. Our assessment of Priority #1 has been all along that it was small enough to be mastered and large enough to be significant. On that count, we have been successful.

### Priorities #2 and #3

Regarding our second priority, An Inventory of Existing Guidelines, etc., and our third priority project, An Inventory of Procedures, etc. (Newsletter Vol. 1 Nr. 2 pp. 14-15) we decided to divide into subcommittees as follows: Don Harrison will begin to bring together into one package a discussion of the guidelines and procedures existing today in the United States Federal government both in the National Archives and in those Federal agencies that create MRDF's. Tony Falsetto will bring together a similar document for the Canadian Federal government. Charlotte Bochan and Harriet Dhanak will form a subcommittee to explore a number of alternatives necessary to proceed with institutions in the private sector. The larger corporations such as Rand and AT&T might provide a basis for a representative sampling of guidelines and procedures. Smaller corporations might also be queried but might not provide such a return. United States state governments and Canadian provincial governments, while still on the threshold of creating and servicing MRDF's will also be significant. A projected telephone survey by the Society of American Archivists, when completed, might add to this and other projects by

PPDAG. Don Harrison was asked to look into this survey. Also, a subcommittee composed of members in the Washington, DC metropolitan area will attempt to tie some of these concepts together with frequent local meetings. These members include Don Harrison, Elizabeth Powell, Mimi Schade, and our newest member, Debbie Pomerance. Subcommittee reports will be due back to Don by Friday March 31.

### Priority #4

This project cannot be initiated before projects #2 and #3 are complete. Therefore, no progress was reported.

### Inter-Action Group Cooperation

PPDAG will provide feedback to the Documentation Action Group on the application of the study description form which has been developed by several members. A member of PPDAG will work with this AG to review the form for general use with non-survey data. We will also provide feedback to the documentation AG regarding any potential problems in its application to PPD. This should be completed in about a month.

### Deaccessioning PPD

During the workshops of the Itasca meeting, participants identified a serious problem, data centers deaccessioning unique MRDF's without consideration of potential research value. Don Harrison agreed to work on this project in the absence of a formally constituted action group for acquisition. He will prepare something for the Newsletter that will identify the problem and call for comments and critiques in preparation for a session at the Ottawa meeting.

### Glossary

PPDAG expressed an interest in the DADAG's glossary that will be completed momentarily. Don Harrison has asked that the glossary be made available to PPDAG before release to sources outside IASSIST.

Donald Harrison, Chair