

# DATA FIRST RESOURCE UNIT

The Data First Resource Unit (known as 'Data First') is an important part of the CSSR's operation and identity. It is tasked with the following four functions:

- ▶ to provide access to digital resources and specialised published material;
- ▶ to facilitate the collection, exchange and use of datasets on a collaborative basis (particularly in Southern Africa);
- ▶ to provide basic and advanced training in data analysis (in collaboration with the School of Economics and the Institute for Social Research at Michigan); and
- ▶ to develop a web site to promote the dissemination of data and research output via the internet.

## The Resource Centre



The Resource Centre has been equipped with fast Pentium 4 class computers to provide access to our online resources as well as facilities for the presentation of small training courses and seminars. The computers have all been equipped with the latest version of the statistical package STATA which can be used to analyse the online datasets.

The Resource Centre's holdings are geared towards supporting social survey research. The collection includes the data from surveys conducted in South Africa and other African countries, as well as the questionnaires and codebooks relevant to these surveys. The Resource Centre also maintains a collection of publications based on the survey data as well as monographs specifically dealing with the implementation and analysis of household surveys.

The Resource Centre is currently open to all postgraduate students and staff at the University. A web-based version of the catalogue is available online to researchers. Widening access to the datasets in the Resource Centre will be achieved via our website which will include software to conduct online analysis of the datasets.

## Data Collection

Data First currently holds datasets from the Household Surveys conducted by Statistics South Africa from 1994 through to 2001, the Population Census of 1996 and the Demographic and Health Surveys for South Africa and other Southern African countries.

**Director:** Francis Wilson

**Deputy Director:** Matthew Welch

**Resource Centre Manager:** Lynn Woolfrey

**Technical Officer:** Alison Siljeur

## The formation of Data First

Data First was the brain-child of Francis Wilson and the product of the restructuring of the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU). In July 2001 SALDRU transferred its library and digital resources to the newly formed Data First Resource Unit. The labour and development research interests remained with SALDRU in the School of Economics until October 2002 when SALDRU joined the CSSR as one of the research units.

Two of SALDRU's former staff members became full time members of staff in Data First. Lynn Woolfrey was

appointed as manager of the new Resource Centre within the Unit and Alison Siljeur was appointed as a technical officer. Professor Francis Wilson, previously the director of SALDRU, became the director of Data First and Matthew Welch, a researcher at SALDRU, was appointed as the deputy director. Both Professor Wilson and Matthew Welch continue to hold positions within the School of Economics, with fifty percent of Matthew Welch's Data First time being bought out by the School of Economics.



These have been converted to a form usable by Stata as configured in the Resource Centre. A complete list of the data available and information on these data sets can be obtained from the Data First website at <http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/cssr/dfrurs.html>.

We are also in the process of constructing bibliographies of research using these datasets for publication on our website along with all the codebooks and questionnaires for the surveys.

The Institute for Social Research (ISR) at the University of Michigan has been very supportive of Data First. The ISR has provided Data First with a complementary link with the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) which enables researchers in Data First to access the ICPSR's extensive data holdings. Data First also has links with the African Census Analysis Project (ACAP) at the University of Pennsylvania. The ACAP is a collaborative initiative between the University of Pennsylvania and African institutions specializing in demographic research and training. ACAP houses census micro-data for nearly all African countries and aims to maximize the use of African census micro-data for academic and policy-oriented research. These links were further strengthened when the director of ACAP, Professor Tukufu Zuberi, visited us in June 2002 and presented a seminar under the auspices of Data First and the CSSR.

### Web Site

Data First's Technical Officer completed a course in advanced web design at the Engineering department at the University of Cape Town and has designed the current CSSR web site. It is accessible at <http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/cssr/dfru.html> and forms part of our attempt to fulfil our data dissemination role. At present all CSSR research output is available from the website including the codebooks and questionnaires for datasets housed in the Resource Centre. The web site is currently hosted by UCT at no charge to Data First, but in order to fulfil our function of allowing web access to our data sets it is likely that we will need to install and manage our own web server with the necessary software for online analysis.

### Links with other CSSR projects

Mathew Welch, Data First's Deputy Director, is involved with the Cape Area Study currently being conducted by the SSU. His involvement is in the sample and data design aspects of the survey.

### Training

The Deputy Director of Data First is involved in an ongoing summer training program run in cooperation with the School of Economics at UCT and the Population Studies Centre at the ISR. The course takes place at UCT in January every year. It covers an introduction to Household Surveys and training in statistical package Stata.

The web based tutorial developed for the above project has been made available for training in the Resource Centre. Data First in collaboration with Statistics South Africa has also conducted a number of short training sessions on the use of the 1996 Population Census.

Data First have recently appointed post-graduate student interns. One of the students, Eyob Ghebretsadik, is a masters student in the School of Economics and the other two students Charlton Ziervogel and Chantel le Fleur, are Honours students in Sociology. It is hoped that through training offered at Data First and by working as assistants in the Resource Centre they will develop the necessary skills to work with survey data.

### Conclusion

Data First has gone a long way in its first year towards fulfilling all of its stated objectives. We have set up a Resource Centre as well as forged some very important international institutional links.

It is our goal for next year to continue to develop our data holdings and training capacity in order to become a portal for high quality, internationally comparable quantitative analysis in the Social Sciences.