Five Years at the Survey Research Centre

In January 2004, the mandate of the Survey Research Centre was up for review by the University Senate. With strong support from the Faculties of Mathematics, Arts, Applied Health Sciences and Environmental Studies, the Centre had its mandate renewed for another five year term.

Over the past five years, the SRC has achieved many accomplishments. We have offered 26 seminars exploring issues in survey methodology, communicating research findings, and giving university faculty, staff, and students opportunities to learn from experts in the field. We have put in place several graduate courses, and a diploma program in Survey Methodology available to master’s students in Sociology. The initiative to house the Southwestern Ontario Research Data Centre at UW began with the SRC.

Since 1998 we have conducted 15 surveys, by telephone, mail, or face to face interviews, on behalf of university researchers and external clients.

We have also consulted on 22 other surveys. In 2002, the call centre completed 952 interviews, while in 2003 we doubled that to complete 2,066 interviews. This year, we have already completed over 900 interviews in less than 2 months!

Over the next five years, the Survey Research Centre hopes to continue to conduct high quality, high standard surveys. We plan to expand the call centre, develop our web survey ability, and continue to offer a range of consulting services to the university and external clients. We are already in the process of updating our computer systems to ensure security and reliability as demands for our services increase.

We will continue to foster and assist research in survey methodology, and to encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration, particularly at the student level. In the next few years we expect to be developing further our affiliations with local organizations.

Our website: www.src.uwaterloo.ca
Survey Research Centre Call Centre Update

The Survey Research Centre, in cooperation with the Health Behaviour Research Group, runs a small computer assisted call centre in the Math and Computer Building. We work with HBR to provide quality telephone interviewing on smaller scale surveys. As well as maintaining 5 telephone stations, the SRC provides support in all aspects of a survey, from design to analysis.

The call centre is currently busy with 3 surveys for university researchers. We have an on-going commitment to the Centre for Behavioural Research and Program Evaluation to conduct telephone interviews with recruited callers to a smoker’s helpline. This survey is to evaluate the utility of the smoker’s helpline in aiding people in smoking cessation. We are also conducting a short-term survey evaluating a QuitCare program in Prince Edward Island.

The Survey Research Centre is in the midst of conducting a survey evaluating people who have sent inventions to the Inventor’s Assistance Program, a program of the Canadian Innovation Centre. This work is being done on behalf of Professor Thomas Astebro, previously with UW Management Sciences, now with the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto.

Last fall we worked with Paul McDonald, co-director of the Health Behaviour Research Group, and graduate student Taryn McKnight, on a survey to validate a treatment referral algorithm for smokers. Taryn is using the data gleaned from this survey in her master’s thesis, while Professor McDonald is continuing to research this area.

Interviews are conducted by our part time staff members. These are typically upper year undergraduate students. The interviewers go through two levels of training: the basic training required to understand our computer program and standard calling protocols, and additional training on each particular survey. Jason Lindo, the acting lab supervisor, has been busy overhauling our training process, creating a new manual and training modules. We can already see the results in improved completion rates.

The call centre’s workload has doubled over the past year. We are busier than ever, and hope the trend continues as we make plans to expand the number of stations so that we may meet the needs of larger research projects.

For more information about the call centre, contact Fiona Heath, SRC manager, at extension 5071.

Southwestern Ontario Research Data Centre (SWORDC) News

Wilfrid Laurier University Appoints New SWORDC Representative

Susan Johnson is the new SWORDC Representative from WLU, replacing Bruce Aral who has become active in the administration of Laurier’s Brantford campus. Susan joined the Department of Economics at Laurier in 2000, and was awarded her Ph.D. from McMaster in November 2001. Her research interest is in labour markets, and she has several articles published in Canadian Public Policy, including one in 2002 that won the Vanderkamp Prize for best paper published in the journal for that year.

Researchers at Laurier who would like advice on applying to conduct a project using Statistics Canada master file data at the SWORDC are invited to contact Susan Johnson at 884-1970 extension 2672 or via e-mail at: sjohnson@wlu.ca.
2004 Mini-Conference

The conference will take place on Friday, April 30th, in GVR ("Group Viewing Room"). The conference will be held at the University of Guelph. John Goyder will be contacting people with current SWORDC projects to invite their participation, but if he doesn’t know of you and you would like to present, get in touch with John (jgoyder@uwaterloo.ca). The SWORDC Mini-Conference is an informal one day gathering, in which researchers present both finished work, research in progress, and ideas that are still at the proposal stage. It is a chance, especially beneficial to graduate students, to get informed but supportive and friendly feedback.

The day’s events will begin at 10:00 am, to accommodate travelers. The program will include a brief presentation for the benefit of new potential users on how to apply to do an RDC project. See the SWORDC website for further details [www.rdc.uwaterloo.ca].

Activity at the SWORDC, February 5th, 2004

Money! - Faculty members preparing grant applications for projects that will involve the SWORDC: please include a budget line to assist SWORDC operating expenses. This support is vital. Guideline: about 5% of total budget (e.g., $5,000 on a $100,000 project) is very helpful.

SRC and SWORDC Speakers and Seminars

Held Last Fall (2003) Term:

**Held this Winter (2004) Term:**

An SRC seminar entitled *The Kitchener-Waterloo Metropolitan Area Survey 2003: Retrospective and Prospective*, was held on February 5th. Presentations were made by John Goyder, Gail Martinelli, Trody Moul, Kathleen McSpurren (all of UW, Sociology), Steve Brown (WLU Political Science and LISPOP), and April Eby and Ryan Kennedy (Region of Waterloo Department of Public Health). The presentations covered methodological issues, air quality, perceptions of crime and safety, the pesticide issue, and exposure to second hand smoke. The next KWMAS will be mounted as demand warrants, likely in 2005.

**Scheduled for Winter 2004:**

Mary Thompson, Statistics and Actuarial Science and Co-Director, UW SRC, will give a seminar on causality and statistics on Thursday, April 8th, 2004, beginning at 3:30, room MC 5158. This will be a good occasion to celebrate Mary’s recent appointment to a university professorship.

**Class Photo:**


Front, left to right:
- Kristen Frank, Gail Martinelli (Sociology), Pat Newcombe-Welch (SWORDC- instructor),
- Joanna Jacob, Alicia Clemance (Sociology), Woon No (Management Sciences),
- Rear: Jing Wu (Sociology),
- V.M. Atokan (Statistics and Actuarial Science), Ivan Io (Health Studies & Gerontology), Susan and David Johnson (WLU Economics faculty members),
- John Goyder (TA), Gorden Amondza (Management Sciences).