With Southwestern Ontario Research Data Centre News

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Two Announcements:

NATIONAL RDC NETWORK CALL FOR PAPERS:

3rd Conference of the Canadian Research Data Centre Network. Theme: Canadian families under pressure? Montreal, 19 and 20 May, 2005. Abstracts due by December 10th, to e-mail cgrss@umontreal.ca
Further information: Denise Harvey (denise.harvey@umontreal.ca)

UW-SRC SPEAKER:

Gary Edwards, Executive Vice-President, Client Services, Empathica, will be visiting Waterloo to give a talk on Thursday November 4th, 2004. PAS 2030, beginning at 3:30 pm. Topic: research Empathica is doing on the linkage between customer satisfaction and sales at Swiss Chalet restaurants.

Kitchener-Waterloo Metropolitan Area Survey Plans

Barry McClinchey of the Department of Sociology will be directing the 2005 KWMAS. This is an omnibus survey in which faculty, students, and local agency researchers share space. Students can have their own questions in the survey in return for labour on the project. See the SRC website for further details. Barry can be reached at UW extension 3547 or at bmccle1nc@uwaterloo.ca

Our website: www.src.uwaterloo.ca
Southwestern Ontario Research Data Centre (SWORDC) News

2004 Mini-Conference

The Mini-Conference returned to the University of Guelph in 2004, and another fruitful all-day seminar took place. Of the nine presentations, seven were by graduate students. Four of the papers were from the University of Guelph, two from Western, two from Waterloo, one from McMaster. Disciplines represented were clinical health sciences, economics, family relations, health studies and gerontology, marketing and consumer studies, psychology, statistical and actuarial sciences.

Photos, above: attentive audience members at the Mini-Conference

Brock University RDC News

Brock has opened a “Data Research Service” located at their main library. This room with computers and public use versions of Statistics Canada files was funded from the SWORDC CFI grant and is a precursor to a full Mini-RDC. John Goyder and Keith Warriner attended the opening, earlier this year.

Photo: Aba Ansah (left) and Anjali Raghunath (right)

Brian Cozzarin: New Co-Director of SWORDC

Keith Warriner began a sabbatical as of September 2004, and Brian Cozzarin has taken over as Co-Director (with John Goyder). Brian is with the Department of Management Sciences at UW. He has considerable experience working with Statistics Canada data, and is an active RDC user. Brian will be in charge of a program of modernizing the computers at the SWORDC.
Report from Pat Newcombe-Welch, Statistics Canada Analyst at the SWORDC

The South Western Ontario Research Data Centre is now approaching the end of its third year of operation, having officially opened in December, 2001. The RDC currently houses roughly forty research projects, spanning the disciplines of sociology, economics, psychology and applied health science amongst others. The RDC has received several new data sets in the past year, including the General Social Survey cycle 17, the Ethnic Diversity Survey, the Participation and Activity Limitations Survey, the second cycle of the Canadian Community Health Survey and the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada. Recent developments include the decision by the SWORDC directors to upgrade the computer equipment in response to researcher requirements and an initiative which promotes the cooperation of the Research Data Centres program and the Data Liberation Initiative (which deals with the public use versions of Statistics Canada Data files) in order to share expertise and resources.

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.

All SWORDC users are very grateful to the administrations at Waterloo, Guelph, Brock and Laurier for financial support toward SWORDC operating costs. This support has recently been extended for another five years, and makes it possible for SWORDC to be part of a national application to SSHRC for further operating support. Without the university commitments, the centre would simply have to shut down.

SRC and SWORDC Speakers and Seminars

Held in the Winter 2004 Term:

Mary Thompson, Statistics and Actuarial Science and Co-Director, UW-SRC, presented a seminar on causality and statistics on Thursday, April 8th, 2004.

This well-attended event combined the philosophy of David Hume with mathematical notation and used research on TV violence and aggression to illustrate the role of longitudinal surveys in trying to make sense of associations. The talk was a prequel to Mary’s Presidential Address at the Spring 2004 meetings of the Statistical Society of Canada.
Course Review


By John Goyder

York ISR has been offering a set of one-day course-workshops for a number of years. In Spring 2004, nine courses were offered, covering the methodological waterfront from interpreting qualitative data to data analysis using SAS. Instructors are drawn both locally from York and from out of town. The instructor for the web course, Mick Couper, was not just out of town but out of country. As many readers will know, Couper is part of the highly productive team of survey methodology researchers at the University of Michigan Survey Research Centre and is active in the Michigan-Maryland joint program in survey methodology.

The course was excellent; I highly recommend it both for graduate students and faculty interested in web surveys. If Don Dillman is “Mr. Mailed Survey,” Mick Couper has carved out a niche for himself as “Mr. Web Survey.” The course is superbly well organized and richly illustrated with some 200 Power Point Slides. The information age capacity to read not just left to right but fore and aft was well-exploited. Here I refer to the “example” clickables embedded into many of the slides. If, for example, Couper had a slide warning against overly cute and distracting graphics, he could then bring up as many examples as he wished of real-life examples of graphically ambiguous web surveys. He has a wealth of examples, covering an array of web survey topics and issues. The course has obviously been presented many times, and continually cumulates.

The class was engaged throughout, with lots of questions and comments from a mixed group which combined the less experienced with some clearly well-versed web surveys buffs attending to pick up the latest research results from Mick Couper. There were no “yellow lecture notes” in Mick’s presentation. Findings about to be presented at the spring AAPOR conference were already embedded into the web course, giving a nice cutting edge feel to the event.

The scheduling of the course, with its 9:30 start time, worked well for travel from Kitchener-Waterloo. The drive to York University has become much easier with the 407 toll road, with the campus just a couple of minutes from the Jane Street exit off 407. By 3:45, head stuffed with knowledge, I was on the road home and, again thanks to 407, avoided the Toronto rush hour.

All-in-all, I enjoyed this course even more than the mixed models SPIDA course from two years ago (see review in the Fall 2002 Newsletter), useful though the latter was. The one-day format worked well, and the audience (around 30) was small enough for something of a seminar-like feel. It must have been a long day for Mick Couper, talking continually for five hours with just an hour’s break for lunch, but for this reviewer the time passed quickly.

SRC Graduate Courses, Spring 2004 Term

STAT 890

SOC 697