ICPSR | INTER-UNIVERSITY CONSORTIUM FOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RESEARCH
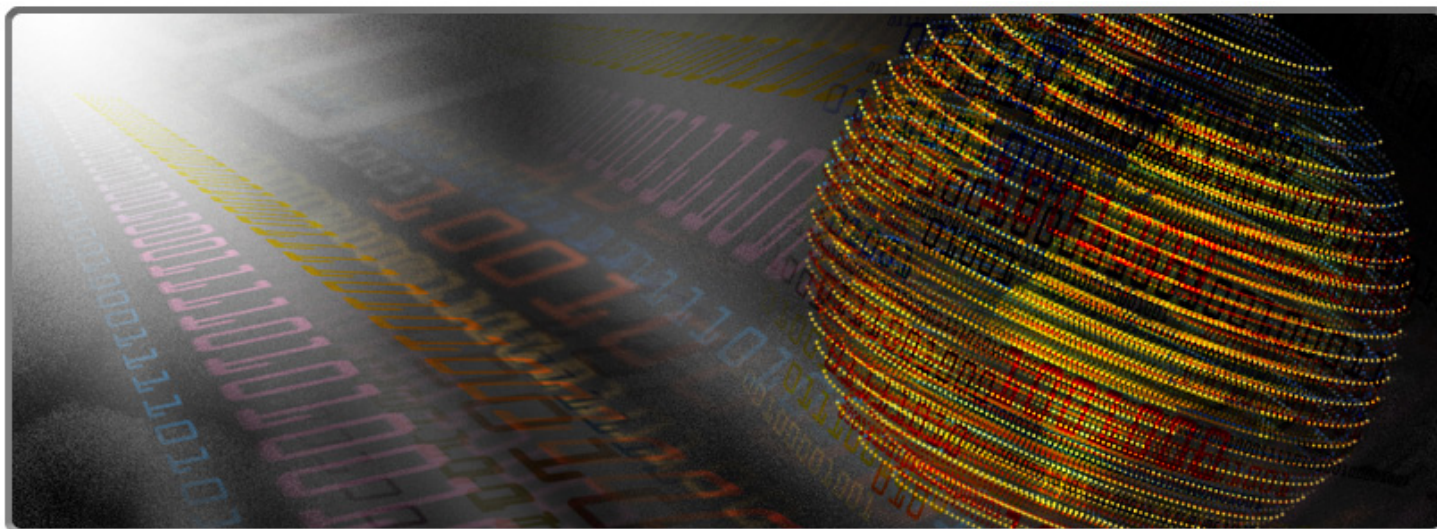
A PARTNER IN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

2008-2009 Annual Report

Leadership

Leadership is one of ICPSR's strategic directions and the organization strives to play a leadership role for the social science research community along several dimensions. This Annual Report illustrates ways that ICPSR has led in the field, often in partnership with others, during the past year. However, leadership is effective only if we are focusing in the right areas, so please feel free to contact us with your ideas and comments.

Inside

From the Director
Myron Gutmann

ICPSR has completed another excellent year. We have grown and flourished, our membership has increased, we have innovated in important ways, and we have begun a number of important new projects that promise to continue into 2010 and beyond. Moreover, we have accomplished all these things in the face of a difficult year for many of our members, which makes us especially proud of what we have done and thankful for your continued support.

A year ago we introduced our first-ever online Annual Report, together with the online version of our Strategic Plan, part of an effort to improve and streamline communication with our members and the varied communities that use ICPSR's resources. This year we have continued our development of new electronic means of communication, starting with our hugely successful virtual meeting of Official Representatives, and continuing with our development of new communication channels through Facebook and Twitter.

More than 300 people are currently following ICPSR on social networking sites, and our Web site saw 11 million hits from 430,000 visitors this past year. Membership grew by a net of 35 institutions in fiscal 2009, with much of the growth in Master's and international institutions. At the end of the fiscal year, ICPSR had 687 members.

The ICPSR Strategic Plan emphasizes our role as global leaders in data curation and preservation, education, and methods of analysis for our diverse communities. This year's new means of communication are only a small demonstration of ICPSR's leadership role. Our Summer Program in Quantitative Methods of Social Research continues to be the best place in the world to learn about social science methodology and new kinds of data.

Along with the Summer Program, ICPSR continues to build our leadership role in education and training. We are expanding programs like the Online Learning Center, which offers ways to improve quantitative literacy at the undergraduate level, and TeachingWithData.org, which provides instructors with data-related modules and exercises.

Elsewhere in this report, we write about new projects such as our partnership with the National Collegiate Athletic Association that make available new forms of data while protecting confidentiality. We also continue our leadership in digital preservation by training library and archive professionals around the world. And we have taken important steps in 2008-2009 to bring together a global partnership of data repositories to develop new technologies for data preservation and dissemination.

Writing this report gives me pleasure, because it allows me to tell you about ICPSR's accomplishments over the past year. It also gives me a touch of sadness. By the time we publish it I will have concluded my eight years at ICPSR and taken a new position as head of the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate at the U.S. National Science Foundation. That will bring me exciting new challenges. My time at ICPSR and my experiences working with our terrific staff, dedicated members, and everyone else in our community have prepared me well for the next steps. I'm grateful to everyone I have worked with and look forward to learning more from you in the future.

From the Council Chair
Aletha C. Huston

I complete my term as ICPSR Council member and Chair with continued admiration for this unique organization. My field of developmental psychology has been on the periphery of the social sciences that form the core of ICPSR, and I'm pleased to note the organization's expansion of scope into a wider range of disciplines, including my own. Partly because of the availability of large, high quality studies, developmental psychologists have become increasingly interested in secondary data analyses, with the result that a new body of research has emerged. ICPSR provides the setting and resources for important interdisciplinary research with state-of-the-art methods.

The Strategic Plan, adopted in 2008, defines the major goals and planned directions for ICPSR. One goal is to expand our horizons to provide services to a wider range of disciplines, including my own. For example, the organization houses the Child Care and Early Childhood Research Connections database that, in turn, offers access to a large body of writing and data about early childhood. It houses some major longitudinal studies of children's development, including the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care. Another goal in the strategic plan is to increase diversity among the people doing research and those being studied. Professor John Garcia oversees the Minority Data Resource Center and many other diversity initiatives. Garcia, who holds a professorship in the School of Government and Public Policy at the University of Arizona, has had a long-standing relationship with ICPSR, dating back to attending the Summer Program as a graduate student in 1969 and including roles as visiting researcher and instructor. His primary areas of research include minority group politics, especially Latinos, and political behavior and mobilization.

Myron Gutmann's departure from the directorship to head the Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences at the National Science Foundation was a loss to ICPSR, but a benefit for the field.

Fortunately, the transition has been smooth, thanks to George Alter, who has taken over as Acting Director, and to the competence and dedication of the ICPSR staff. Among the many challenges facing any director is the rapidly changing world of electronic data availability and technological innovations. I am continually impressed with the skill and knowledge with which the staff confront these daunting challenges, anticipating as well as responding to them. For example, one newly funded project is investigating new ways of making a range of sensitive data available while protecting the privacy of the participants. Staff are thinking creatively about ways to incorporate biological information, visual images, and spatial representations. They do an impressive job of anticipating and finding solutions for future needs in a world where technological changes move ever more rapidly.

ICPSR has long been a leader in training researchers in methods and statistics, filling a need that is increasing with the complexity, breadth, and depth of data. The Summer Program offers the entire spectrum of statistics ranging from basic courses to the newest state-of-the-art methods. Its quality and breadth have been sustained and expanded in the face of serious challenges in the last two years that resulted from reduced funding from the University of Michigan. The Online Learning Center is flourishing, offering a range of courses and data modules that are quite popular as resources for teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels and providing well-planned activities that include hands-on experience with real data.

My journey as Council member and Chair has been a wonderful learning experience as I have developed an increasing appreciation for the excellence, talent, and dedication at every level of this extraordinary organization. I am honored to chair a Council composed of people with wide-ranging expertise and experience in the many facets of ICPSR's activities. I feel especially privileged to be associated with the staff of the organization, each of whom has a wealth of knowledge along with a strong commitment to the goals of this unique organization.

Strategic Plan

Strategic Plan Progress

ICPSR made gains across all five directions of the Strategic Plan during the past fiscal year. On this page we summarize a sample of our accomplishments with links to more detail about the highlighted projects.

Direction 1 - Leadership Role

This direction pertains to ICPSR's role in promulgating standards and building effective tools for digital curation, and ICPSR is participating in several international initiatives in support of these goals. One such project is the Coalition for Data Archive Technologies, a partnership bringing together social science data archives from around the world in order to create shared tools. Another area in which ICPSR is leading is digital preservation and archiving. ICPSR holds workshops and supports an online tutorial on this topic and is also participating in the Data Seal of Approval project, an effort to promote long-term digital archiving.

Direction 2 - Membership Value

An important focus of this direction is to deliver expanded services to members, offering clear value and benefits. To that end, ICPSR designed and launched a system of *Digital Object Identifiers*, or DOIs, to uniquely identify each collection in the holdings and to ensure that data are always accessible from a given URL. Another important advance is the next-generation *Social Science Variables Database* (SSVD), providing variable-level search tools for data discovery and comparison.

Direction 3 - Broadened Collections

This direction centers on expanding the ICPSR collection to provide data of interest to new audiences. ICPSR has launched a number of projects targeting new substantive areas. The *National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)* project to archive data on NCAA activities is exciting because these data have not been available before for research purposes. The *Center for Population Research in LGBT Health*, a collaboration with The Fenway Institute of Boston, provides data on the health of sexual and gender minorities. ICPSR also worked on two new data resources for demographers: the *Integrated Fertility Survey Series*, a harmonization of three important data series on fertility in the U.S., and Add-Health, a longitudinal survey of U.S. adolescents that has had a huge impact on research in a variety of social science areas.

Direction 4 - Education Strength

The aim of this direction is to build and expand ICPSR's training mission, strengthening not only the traditional core Summer Program but also ICPSR's capacity to train in new content areas. In keeping with this direction, ICPSR held another successful *Summer Program* with high enrollment and several new courses on the frontier of quantitative methods. In addition, ICPSR continues to expand its offerings in the *Online Learning Center*, which is intended to encourage quantitative literacy and to integrate data use into the undergraduate curriculum. *TeachingWithData.org* is another initiative focused on using data for instruction. Funded by the National Science Foundation as part of the National Science Digital Library, TWD provides instructors with a library of data-related modules and exercises.

Direction 5 - Resource Capacity

Intended to create an effective foundation for the other strategic directions, Direction 5 focuses on ICPSR's people, the systems they rely on, and their workplace environment to assure innovation and leadership in the future. Highlights and accomplishments in this area include the creation of a transparent career path for ICPSR's data processing and management staff, as well as a renewed commitment to effective internal communications. Investing in its people enables ICPSR to be successful, and staff continue to exhibit excellent leadership skills, serving as role models for others.

New Initiatives

NCAA Student-Athlete Experiences Data Archive

The ICPSR secured an agreement with the National Collegiate Athletic Association in summer 2009 to archive and deliver the *NCAA Student-Athlete Experiences Data Archive.*

The Student-Athlete Experiences Data Archive includes user-friendly data collections related to graduation rates; team-level Academic Progress Rates in Division I; and individual-level data on the experiences of current and former student-athletes from the NCAA's Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations and Learning of Students in college study (GOALS), and the Study of College Outcomes and Recent Experiences (SCORE). In the long run, the NCAA expects to follow this initial release with the publication of as much data as possible from its archives.
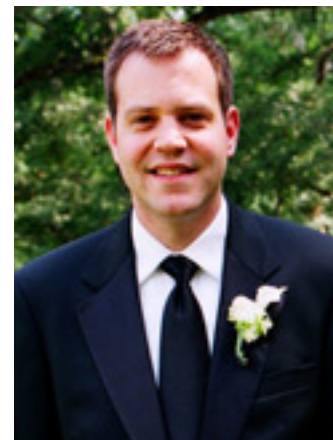
These data represent a valuable source of information for addressing a variety of issues related to both intercollegiate athletics and higher education generally. These data are collected to help answer research questions posed by college presidents, athletics personnel, faculty, student-athlete groups, the media, researchers and others in the higher education community and to assist in the development of national athletics policies.

The *NCAA Division I Academic Progress Rate, 2009* data are the first to be released. Team level academic performances can be obtained by division, by conference, and by school.

Coalition for Data Archive Technologies

This project is a collaboration of social science data archives from around the world intended to facilitate shared tools development. Led by ICPSR, the Australian Social Science Data Archive, and the United Kingdom Data Archive, the Coalition met for the first time in October 2008 in Washington, DC, and again in Canberra, Australia, in July 2009, where the focus was on technology development. At the Canberra meeting, the group reached consensus on a broad view of the architecture required by data archives. Participants agreed that the common archive technology should be modular; support heterogeneity of data and function; respect the OAIS reference model; support interoperation between archives; be able to federate; and be extensible to allow for local customization.

ICPSR Director of Software Development Nathan Adams attended the Canberra meeting and reported that "one of the key elements of the meeting's outcomes was a lengthy discussion of workflows. I was encouraged that a significant investment in common platform technologies could result in cost benefits in the long run."

New Initiatives *(Continued)*

Integrated Fertility Survey Series (IFSS)

In January 2009, the *Integrated Fertility Survey Series (IFSS)* publicly released all of its ten component surveys on fertility. IFSS, a project of the Population Studies Center and ICPSR with funding from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute for Child Care, provides access to national studies encompassing the Growth of American Families (GAF), National Fertility Survey (NFS), and National Surveys of Family Growth (NSFG).

IFSS is also developing a single dataset composed of harmonized variables across all ten surveys. The goal is to provide researchers, educators, students, policy makers, and others with a data resource to examine issues related to families and fertility in the U.S. spanning five decades.

Analytic tools make it possible to quickly and easily explore the data and obtain information about changes in behaviors and attitudes across time. The IFSS provides a national resource that enhances knowledge about reproductive health, contraceptive use, pregnancy, and other issues vital to understanding and tracking trends in family and fertility. The primary analytic tool is the Survey Documentation and Analysis (SDA) system.

The project runs through spring 2012, and additional products will be released as they become available.

Data Seal of Approval

Initiated by Data Archiving and Networked Services (DANS) in the Netherlands to encourage durable storage and reuse of research data, the *Data Seal of Approval* (DSA) project has developed a set of 16 guidelines that reflect best community archival practice. These guidelines take a data life cycle approach and lay out responsibilities not only for data repositories but also for data producers and data consumers. ICPSR is one of the partners involved in this project.

According to Mary Vardigan, an ICPSR Assistant Director and a DSA Board member, "The Data Seal of Approval makes it possible for archives that are less well funded to demonstrate a commitment to digital preservation and transparency about their procedures."

The Data Seal of Approval is based on a trust model, and assessment is intended to be a relatively lightweight process. Each repository completes a DSA self-assessment and ranks its adherence to the guidelines. A team of reviewers examines the assessment and makes a recommendation to the DSA Board with respect to granting the Data Seal. After achieving the Seal, the repository displays the DSA logo on its Web site, with links to information explaining the Data Seal and describing the repository's compliance.

Educational Activities

Teaching With Data

Giving college professors the tools to teach using quantitative social science data is the goal of ICPSR's new Teaching With Data program led by Lynette Hoelter, Director of Instructional Resources and Development.

Through the Web site *TeachingWithData.org*, the program provides user-friendly, data-driven instructional materials for use in all levels of undergraduate teaching. Tabular and downloadable data, interactive and static data-based maps, student exercises, and games and simulations are available on the site. Additional resources for instructors include pedagogical research on teaching and learning with data, and materials that facilitate integration of data from a variety of sources.

The resources are particularly relevant for classes in demography, economics, geography, history, political science, public policy, social psychology, and sociology.

Including data in coursework will give students the chance to practice quantitative skills such as reading a table or translating numbers into a chart or graph, and will also pique their interest in doing empirical work.

Expansion of the site will involve addition of tools allowing instructors and students to create custom data extracts using only the variables needed for an exercise, and to display data in tabular, graphic, mapped and other formats.

Teaching With Data is a National Science Digital Library funded by the National Science Foundation. Other collaboration and support comes from the American Economic Association Committee on Economics Education, American Political Science Association, American Sociology Association, Association of American Geographers, Consortium for the Advancement of Undergraduate Statistics Education, MAA Mathematical Sciences Digital Library, National Numeracy Network, and the Science Education Resource Center at Carleton College.

Online Learning Center

ICPSR's Online Learning Center (OLC) is designed to provide an effective and reliable means of integrating data throughout the undergraduate social science curriculum. Self-contained data-driven learning guides can be used to introduce substantive content and to demonstrate the importance of research methods and statistics to students. Topics are drawn from concepts included in standard introductory-level social science textbooks.

Formally launched in fall 2008, the OLC has continuall added data-driven learning guides -- there are now 36 guides available for use in the classroom. These guides use data from over 25 of ICPSR's datasets to introduce a variety of topics ranging from democratization and identity politics to deviance and power in intimate relationships. A new feature allows users to choose guides based on the most complicated statistical analysis they contain so instructors can sequence the level of statistical sophistication as students explore the concepts. Additional resources have been added to the Related Links section as well.

In the last year, almost 17,200 unique users have visited the site, some as many as 200 times, resulting in 63,700 page views. Some popular guides are those about social class and health, the Second Shift, gender roles and attitudes in Japan, gambling, and terrorism.

Educational Activities *(Continued)*

Summer Program

The ICPSR *Summer Program*, which attracts participants from around over the world for classes, workshops and lectures on a wide range of methodological and substantive topics, featured several new offerings in 2009.

Three new statistical courses were provided: a class on "Empirical Models for Time Series Cross-Section Data," a workshop on "Programming in R," and a course on "Causal Inference for the Social Sciences."

New offerings with substantive emphases were a three-day workshop titled "Using National Juvenile Corrections Data Files: 1997-2006"; a four-day workshop on "Sentencing and Other Federal Case Data Analysis"; workshops on "Dyadic Data Analysis: Models and Methods for the Study of Couples" and "Data User Training for the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development"; and a four-day workshop on "Examining Quality in Publicly Supported Early Childhood Programs."

New lectures in the Hubert M. Blalock Lecture Series were given on the topics of "New Tools for Regression Analysis: Dimension Reduction and Inverse Regression"; "Group Comparisons in Logit and Probit Models"; "Creating Graphical Displays Using the 'Lattice' Package in R"; "Teaching Statistics: Thoughts and Advice for New Instructors"; "Principles of Workflow in Data Analysis"; and "Obama's Landslide Denied: Racial Costs in the 2008 Vote."

In addition, the Summer Program continued to experiment with an intensive format for workshops during the two four-week sessions -- with the workshops meeting for four hours a day for two weeks. The goal was to attract instructors who cannot spend an entire four-week period at the program.

The 2009 Summer Program had a total of 811 participants representing 286 different institutions, 26 academic disciplines, and 25 different nations.

The instructional staff consisted of 93 faculty and 50 teaching assistants, who offered a total of 60 courses. In addition, the Hubert M. Blalock Lecture Series presented 14 sets of lectures on statistical topics, substantive issues, and professional development.

Membership

Membership Institution Totals by Category

	Total	Increase
Doctoral Research Extensive	139	-
Doctoral Research Intensive	40	3
Master's Comprehensive	88	10
B.A. Universities	104	7
Specialized Institutions	6	(-1)
Associate/Community Colleges	9	1
US-Based Associates	23	4
Canadian Institutions	32	1
Other International Institutions	245	10
Total	**687**	**35**

Membership Trends
ICPSR continued to add members in FY 2009, with 35 new members joining to bring the total membership to 687. Master's-level and international institutions accounted for much of the growth.

Expanding Web Presence
Members and the general public accessed the ICPSR Web site in large numbers in FY 2009, with 11 million hits from more than 430,000 visitors who took part in more than 1.3 million separate sessions. ICPSR also has more than 300 followers on social media sites Twitter and Facebook.

Membership *(Continued)*

Digital Object Identifiers

During the year, ICPSR successfully integrated Digital Object Identifiers, or DOIs, into the collection. Web developer Matthew Richardson led this effort, working with others to assign unique identifiers to each of the over 7,500 studies in the ICPSR collection. This means that ICPSR data will always be discoverable and accessible from specific URLs that will not change over time. Citations for all ICPSR studies now contain the DOIs. A related activity involved obtaining DOIs for publications included in the ICPSR Bibliography of Data-Related Literature in order to associate data and findings in a persistent way.

Matthew notes that "by properly citing the data and including the DOI, you're giving proper credit to the investigators who conducted the research and giving the scholarly community a clearer picture of the impact of the research."

Social Science Variables Database

Providing variable-level search and access is another way that ICPSR adds value to the membership. During the past year, ICPSR launched a new iteration of its Social Science Variables Database with a new interface, greatly expanded content, and faceted search functionality. The variables search now encompasses nearly 3,500 files representing about 1,300 studies and 30 percent of the ICPSR holdings with setup files. Over a million variables can now be searched, and ICPSR continues to add content.

ICPSR Documentation Specialist Sanda Ionescu worked with others to create DDI markup for ingest into the variables database. Daphne Lin, an ICPSR software developer, created the database schema for the SSVD in collaboration with Survey Research Operations, the unit of the Institute for Social Research that fields computer-assisted surveys. An important goal for the shared database was to create DDI 3-based documentation early on in the data life cycle as output from CAI systems.

Sanda states that "by searching the complete description of individual variables, the SSVD stands out as an invaluable resource for users trying to find data on specific topics. Search results are presented across studies, facilitating comparative research as well as gathering documentation for the design of new projects. Full compatibility with two major versions of the DDI standard for data documentation, as well as the capacity to ingest a variety of formats, allows the database to serve as a tool for documentation conversion and data sharing, and promotes interoperability. In the next iterations we plan to add new features to enhance the functionality of this database, with a special focus on assisting comparison efforts."

Sanda Ionescu and Daphne Lin

Financial Reports

ICPSR closed fiscal year 2009 with revenues totaling $15.9 million, representing a 2 percent decrease from fiscal year 2008. Membership dues income, totaling $3.31 million, rose 3 percent since 2008 and contributed 21 percent of the organization's total revenue. Sponsored project awards contributed $8.1 million and accounted for 51 percent. Due to unfavorable market conditions and a change in University accounting practices, ICPSR is not reporting any investment income for 2009. ICPSR's overall expenses were $16.75 million, a 7 percent increase from fiscal year 2008.

The organization closed fiscal year 2009 with a deficit of $804,834. As of June 30, 2009, ICPSR maintains a total fund balance of $3,407,028.

Revenue	
General Fund Transfers	142,512
General Income	4,406,968
Gifts and Grants	7,519,189
Indirect Cost Recovered	2,502,343
Investment Transactions	(15,780)
Recovery from Rebilled Items	1,276,269
Transfers	114,639
TOTAL REVENUE	**$15,946,139**

Expenses	
Staff Salaries	8,011,926
Fringe Benefits	1,702,243
Consultants	12,990
Respondents/Subjects	750
Stipends	63,122
Student Aid	36,552
General Expenses	942,993
Data Processing	1,223,852
Postage	17,064
Telephone	44,478
Subcontract Under 25K	18,530
Subcontract Over 25K	421,695
Alterations and Renovations	666
Travel/Hosting	558,279
Equipment	39,033
Transfers	1,095,457
Transfers and Distributions	0
Other Spec Service Facil	59,001
Indirect Costs	2,502,341
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$16,750,973**

Revenue from Membership and Grants/Contracts		
Fiscal Year	Membership	Grants/Contracts
1989	1,654,781	1,413,092
1990	1,403,297	1,434,630
1991	1,690,709	1,578,484
1992	1,481,713	1,583,566
1993	1,712,031	1,832,865
1994	1,915,000	2,099,753
1995	1,969,783	1,893,296
1996	2,066,499	2,146,822
1997	2,181,661	2,310,968
1998	2,258,676	2,742,252
1999	2,307,856	2,651,291
2000	2,254,963	2,456,876
2001	2,835,791	3,358,040
2002	2,259,161	3,531,002
2003	2,656,468	4,151,227
2004	2,666,290	5,289,738
2005	2,791,442	5,770,366
2006	2,935,642	6,252,685
2007	3,093,900	6,776,695
2008	3,165,587	7,584,089
2009	3,311,411	8,138,624

People
Leaders at ICPSR

Profile: **Timothy S. Bynum, Director of NACJD, the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data**

"This approach allows an opportunity to work directly with communities and agencies in using data and information in their efforts to reduce crime and violence."

Timothy S. Bynum, Ph.D. brings more than three decades of research and applied criminology experience to his new position as director of ICPSR's *National Archive of Criminal Justice Data*.

Bynum, a professor of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University since 1977, is the former director of the Evaluation Research Division of the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research at MSU. His current research includes the study of community-based interventions to reduce gang and gun violence, the implementation and assessment of an innovative neighborhood approach to violence in nine communities, and an assessment of the impact of residency restrictions for sex offenders. He previously conducted research on reentry programs for offenders released from prison, programs to reduce school violence, community based correctional alternatives for both adult and juvenile offenders, and gang intervention programs.

This research has had a direct bearing on communities and individuals. Professor Bynum notes, "Many of my activities involve applied research in criminology. This approach allows an opportunity to work directly with communities and agencies in using data and information in their efforts to reduce crime and violence."

Much of this work focuses upon providing assistance in learning how to use data and analysis to drive decisions in the criminal justice system. For example, the analysis of factors associated with high numbers of calls to the police from specific locations can inform the efforts of police departments, prosecutors, and community organizations to reduce crime and criminal behavior.

"Professor Bynum brings the Justice Archive both an extraordinary record of academic accomplishments and the high esteem of policy makers and practitioners," said George Alter, Acting Director of ICPSR.

NACJD is a multi-faceted program at ICPSR that curates, preserves and makes available data about criminal justice to students, researchers, and policy makers.

Profile: **Felicia LeClere, Director of DSDR, Data Sharing for Demographic Research**

"We're now able to create unique systems and more options for researchers to access sensitive data, while still protecting the privacy of survey participants."

Felicia LeClere is serious about free and fair access to government-funded social science data, and she does not hesitate to motivate others, including major stakeholders like the National Institutes of Health, to help her achieve that goal.

In her role as director of *DSDR*, she collaborates with population studies centers across the country to support research investigators in dealing with complex data and data requiring special security in order to be released.

"Given access to sensitive data, people can do wonderful research," says LeClere. "Add Health is an excellent example." The NIDA-funded *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)* is the largest, most comprehensive longitudinal survey of adolescents ever undertaken. It is now distributed at ICPSR thanks to an agreement with the University of North Carolina Population Center that LeClere was instrumental in shaping. "This is publicly funded data, and the folks at Add Health felt they had an obligation to provide not just public-use files, but to find a way to provide access to the confidential data, as well," says LeClere. Such full access to such a rich dataset has made Add Health a national resource for over 3,500 researchers.

"They had been doing yeoman's work, granting full access to sensitive data for certified researchers, creating unique licensing contracts for each," says LeClere. That became unmanageable, so LeClere has marshaled ICPSR's computing resources to create a Web-based contract management system that will launch

People
Leaders at ICPSR *(continued)*

Felicia LeClere *(continued)* in 2010. It will feature remote system security checks, electronic downloads, and functionality that allows depositors to monitor contracts and run reports. Having these systems in place not only will assist Add Health data users, but should have a significant impact on ICPSR's ability to offer increased access to confidential data acquired in the future.

LeClere dreams of a way to marry the new online contracting system to a new virtual environment where licensed users could analyze sensitive data. She convinced the National Institutes of Health of the idea's

merit, as they recently funded the NIH Challenge grant proposal that LeClere submitted with Bryan Beecher, director of ICPSR's Computing and Network Services In it, they requested support to test the viability of creating a virtual space in the Amazon Cloud, where users could analyze sensitive data, with a choice of software to use, and be free of the burden of securing their computers from disclosure risk.

LeClere hopes that such a prototype could lead the way for other data licensing organizations to replace their existing systems, engendering even more access to valuable, publicly funded data.

Profile: Nancy McGovern, ICPSR Digital Preservation Officer and Society of American Archivists Fellow

"The goal is to make complex preservation issues less mysterious and more manageable."

Two years ago, Nancy McGovern joined ICPSR to set standards of excellence for digital curation here and in the broader archiving community. Under her guidance, ICPSR is strengthening its 50-year track record as a leader in data curation, with a renewed focus on digital preservation research, practice, and training.

"There are known approaches to digital preservation, but they don't necessarily extend into social science data," says McGovern. Because of this, ICPSR itself has been a proving ground for implementing her research-based approach to practice. She and her staff look for gaps in the standards and monitor developments in the digital preservation community. In doing so, they identify innovations that may be applicable to the ICPSR context and then integrate them into ICPSR practices and procedures.

McGovern has led ICPSR in creating carefully considered guidelines to govern ICPSR's data selection and appraisal, ingest, long-term preservation, secure data access and dissemination, and disaster planning. This is all part of adapting ICPSR procedures to comply with the OAIS Reference Model, the ISO standard that provides the functional framework for sustaining digital objects in managed repositories. McGovern also asserts the importance of complying with emerging auditing standards like TRAC (Trustworthy Repositories Audit and Certification). "This stresses transparency—so our preservation methods are not just trust-based, but evidence-based," she notes.

McGovern often cites the ICPSR as a good model when she leads the digital preservation management workshop that she co-developed. The workshop is meant to help digital content managers—who come from corporations, libraries, museums, archives, and government—to apply their management skills to digital preservation. "It starts by engaging your organization to have a long-term approach to good preservation practice, and defining the first major steps to getting there," she says.

A leader in the curation community, McGovern received an award this year for her outstanding contributions to the archival profession from the Society of American Archivists. The organization named her a Fellow, the highest honor that they bestow on individuals.

People
Career Path Project

In 2008-2009, ICPSR engaged an organizational development consultant to partner with Human Resources to develop unified job descriptions to provide a career path system for the Collection Development Research Assistants and Research Associates staff.

Several focus groups were held with staff to review the University job descriptions and make recommendations to customize the content for the specific data processing, archiving and dissemination work of ICPSR. These exercises resulted in an added benefit of staff working together from a variety of archives and projects, helped staff understand the core connection of their major areas of responsibility, and provided a greater sense of the similarities of their assignments.

One participant stated, "I feel that I was able to learn quite a bit about what others in my position do." Others appreciated having an opportunity to discuss career goals and learn about next steps in their careers.

The Career Path project resulted in a "Career Path Grid" that is now referenced for new job postings, reassignments and staff promotions. Also, ICPSR plans a future rollout of additional Career Path Grids for other classifications in which there are a large number of incumbents.