ICPSR COUNCIL MINUTES
March 8 – 9, 2018

Council Members: Bobray Bordelon, Christine Borgman, Lisa Cook, Jane Fry, Elizabeth Groff, Michael Jones-Correa (Chair), Lindsay Malcom-Piqueux, Chandra L. Muller, Verna Keith, Robert Stine, Katherine Wallman, Keith Whitfield, and Esther Wilder

Guest: Matthew Woollard, UK Data

ICPSR Staff: Dharma Akmon, Trent Alexander, JD Alford, George Alter, Rita Bantom, Shuming Bao, Ashok Bhargav, Jon Brode, Srujith Cheruku, Swetha Chiurupati, Alina Conn, Edward Czilli, Linda Detterman, Sarah Donetti, Stephanie Douglass, Libby Hemphill, Lynette Hoelter, Laurie Howland, Stuart Hutchings, Dory Knight-Ingram, Sanda Ionescu, Susan Jekielek, Jeff Jones, Maggie Levenstein, Daphne Lin, Rufian Liu, Jared Lyle, John Marcotte, Jim McNally, Elizabeth Moss, Tom Murphy, Asmat Noori, Peggy Overcashier, Michelle Overholser, Vanessa Unkeless-Perez, Amy Pienta, Darleen Poisson, Dan Pritts, Raghu Ravi, Matthew Richardson, Karun Saleem, Jukka Savolainen, Saundra Schneider, Bing She, Mike Shove, Fillippo Stargell, Joshua Weller, Diane Winter, and Kristine Witkowski

Director's Report

Margaret Levenstein welcomed the returning council members as well as the new council members and guest Matthew Woollard from the UK Data to the March 2018 meeting and introduced David Lam, Director, Institute for Social Research (ISR). Dr. Lam welcomed Council members to the meeting and reviewed ICPSR's relationship with ISR and with the University of Michigan.

The October 2017 Council minutes were approved without changes.

Margaret Levenstein indicated that ICPSR has gone through an internal reorganization since October 2017, prompted in part by the Strategic Planning process. About a year ago we created our Data Curation Unit, bringing together curation staff from across the organization. Following that reorganization, a committee (chaired by Jukka Savolainen and including Rita Bantom, Susan Jekielek, Kaye Marz, Elizabeth Moss, Julia Roach) reviewed the role of ICPSR Project Managers are urged that we give them a greater role in membership activities and leadership in the organization. In order to implement that recommendation, to improve communication, and to clarify lines of decision-making, we have implemented further reorganization. We are now organized into eight units, two of which are brand new. The new organization chart is included in the Council binder. One new unit is PMUS, Project Management and User Support. This group is led by Dharma Akmon, who reports up to Associate Director Trent Alexander. This unit includes the senior staff that lead the topical archives; they are also staff that provide day-to-day support to external users and depositors. The other new unit is BCD, Business and Collection Development. This group is led by Amy Pienta, who reports up to Director

Levenstein. BCD includes the Professional Research Staff (PRS) who lead our topical archives and other grant-funded research projects. (Note that there are also PRS reporting directly to Alexander and indirectly through Jared Lyle, as part of the Metadata and Preservation unit.) We have also created a new leadership group, the Functional Unit Committee, FUNC, that consists of the leads of each of the eight units, as well as the Director and Associate Director. This group meets weekly ensure communication and coordination across the organization. We have also created a smaller "strategy group" (Levenstein, Alexander, Pienta, Detterman, and Murphy) to think about longer term, strategic issues. We have also maintained the Staff Advisory Committee to work on both social events and communicate staff concerns. Alexander leads that committee. We have also continued the Archonnex Working Group, now led by Abay Israel. In addition to two faculty hires, Trent Alexander and Libby Hemphill, we have hired 8 staff members in Curation.

Levenstein will review the Strategic Plan with Council during the meeting. There are two parts of the Strategic Plan, the public facing part is two pages and is summarized in the light bulb diagram. The forty page version is for internal use, giving guidance to each of the units on its responsibilities. We have not yet shared the current version of the Strategic Plan with the entire organization, but it has been reviewed by members of FUNC.

Administration, Marketing and Communication

Staff began the meeting by outlining the FY18 Budget Forecast and the draft FY 2019 Budget. Council raised questions about the Provost tax and how to include an estimate of the probability of receiving proposals that have been submitted but not awarded.

Levenstein stated that discussions at the University level on the Provost tax are being led by former Provost, and former ICPSR Council Member, Paul Courant. We might receive a rebate of the tax for awards with low indirect cost recovery rates. We will likely be informed of that decision in July when the Regents meet and approve the University's 2019 budget.

Council and staff discussed at length ICPSR's budgeting practice of including projects that have been funded for numerous years. Council urged staff to research a means of improving our forecasting so that we aren't planning for an unhealthy budget with significant deficits, when in reality the actuals by year are nearly balanced or better.

Council suggested that with this being a competitive environment ICPSR should strengthen our award portfolio by submitting more proposals that are in partnership with member institutions and beyond. Could we use Archonnex to enhance membership partnerships? Could we branch out and provide IRB training? Could we market our IT development?

Staff explained that we have been strengthening membership partnerships with our data driven learning guides, this is why we believe we had an influx of BA schools. Schools that joined and began using the data, they stayed. We need to do more of that if we are going to expand into more educational institutions. This is addressed in our Strategic Plan.

Staff highlighted that our membership enrollment is doing well; we have 13 new paying institutions. The FY 2020 membership pricing will be up for council approval at the June meeting. Proposed pricing was outlined; the detailed is in the council book.

Council inquired about the data on minority institutions. Staff discussed with council the diversity of our holdings and where our efforts are focused for more diverse members. Staff does partner with current and past council members, where possible, to encourage new membership.

Council and staff discussed the Strategic Plan as it relates to membership and finance. Council noted that the strategic plan is mostly inward focused with very little attention to issues external to the organization. It's not so clear of ICPSR's intentions on building a community with the members. If connected, then it's much more difficult to walk away.

Overall, council expressed that we have a unique resource, the membership. Marketing and Communications are very prominent in the organization section of the strategic plan, but is missing from the product and services. It would be very strategic for us to look to see where we can competitively use our members.

Business and Collection Development

Amy Pienta gave a brief update on data acquisitions since Council last visited. ICPSR received: 12 general archive deposits, over 58 openICPSR projects published data, and ~60 topical archive deposits. We received a 2-year renewal of the Health and Medical Care Archive funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Additional proposals have been (or will be) submitted including a recent proposal submitted to the National Science Foundation to create a social media archive of data by Libby Hemphill.

Council encouraged ICPSR to set a goal for increasing deposits. Discussion focused on generating ideas to build ICPSR's collection of data through new acquisitions and additional enhancements. One suggestion is that ICPSR might connect with private foundations to ask them to recommend deposits for ICPSR (e.g., Arnold). Another idea was to develop data through offering data challenges (similar to Kaggle). Finally, there was discussion about the value in tagging variables to enrich the data collection that could also be used in new tools to enhance data discovery.

Education

Margaret Levenstein opened the discussion with a brief overview of ICPSR's new organizational structure. She noted that Sandy Schneider has been identified as the lead of the Education Unit at this point. Other members of the Education Unit will be determined will be as discussions about the educational mission of ICPSR are being planned. These discussions will focus on the scope and objectives of ICPSR's educational efforts in order to achieve an integrated educational approach.

The subcommittee discussed several questions related to defining and clarifying ICPSR's educational efforts, including how to reach audiences that have not traditionally been reached, expanding training and services for undergraduates, providing on-site instruction for professional and government constituencies, increasing ICPSR's presence at professional meetings (e.g., through presentations, workshops, etc.), reaching non-traditional universities (i.e., community colleges, historically Black institutions), and offering more online/remote training sessions. The pros and cons of many of these ideas were discussed. There was also a discussion about how to use ICPSR members (particularly OR's) to broaden the scope of ICPSR's educational activities.

Sandy Schneider provided a brief account of the 2018 ICPSR Summer Program. She announced a new ICPSR initiative to facilitate diversity in the methodological training of social scientists. The initiative is funded by ISR and UM's Office of the Provost. It contains two components: providing Summer Program scholarships to incoming graduate students and encouraging promising undergraduates from underrepresented groups to pursue graduate work. Applications are now being received for the first part of this initiative. The second part of the initiative was conducted on a trial basis last fall (via career fair at the University of Houston), and plans are underway to conduct a similar promotional/information session this fall at the University of Michigan.

Questions were also raised about the housing situation for Summer Program participants on the University of Michigan campus and around Ann Arbor. Levenstein and Schneider responded that ICPSR has been trying to address the housing situation– working with ISR, university housing officials, the inter-university co-operative organization, and private apartment complexes. But, the situation is likely to continue given the ever-growing demand for summer accommodations on the UM campus and in the Ann Arbor area.

The question was also asked about how the Summer Program selects off-site locations to offer workshops. Schneider responded that she is approached by various institutions and organizations that want to offer Summer Program courses. These requests are carefully reviewed and vetted to determine if the location will be a viable site (does it have adequate classroom space, appropriate IT support, available on-site administrative staff, contacts and channels for promotions, likely participant constituencies to take courses, etc.). Moreover, the workshops offered at off-site locations are monitored on an ongoing basis to insure adequate registrations during the summer and carefully reviewed at the end of the summer.

A question was also raised about where the resources will come from to facilitate an expansion of ICPSR's educational activities and whether such an expansion would dilute the ICPSR brand and reputation for educational training.

Information and Technology

I.   General Update

A general update was given regarding the current state of work within the CNS team. It was noted that it was a busy time, with over 700 development tickets completed in the last 5 months, mostly related to Archonnex development.

Responding to a Changing Environment

A discussion was held on how to respond to the changing environment that ICPSR finds itself in, in terms of both the needs and desires of researchers, as well as the competitive landscape around us. Suggestions were made that ICSPR should better partner with University members both for new initiatives and new development. These partnerships could be used as training for university students and to boost development at ICPSR, improving the value proposition for both. A focus on the schools that use ICPSR most effectively was suggested.

Further discussion was held around the idea of thinking about ICPSR as a portal for everyone's data – a one stop shop to connect to data no matter where it was held. Amazon.com was provided as an example, where they hold much of the product they sell, but also provide links and services for third parties as an aggregator. Suggestions were made that these types of integrations could be done with institutional repositories.

The conversation changed to new tools that could be developed. It was suggested that we look at output of research data as a way to reward researchers for data contributions. An example provided was the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF), a system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions. This helps shift the focus on the output of research as opposed to the input of research, and helps to reward individuals, departments, and institutions. It was hoped that better data usage tracking with Archonnex could help with providing reward system feedback to Universities to give them discoverability metrics to understand the impact of their research and data sharing.

Adding value to researchers for data sharing was a big emphasis of the conversation. As part of this is was suggested that more investments be made into the ICPSR bibliography and data tracking to improve the ability to collect more results efficiently. This could offer a strong payoff by automating harvesting and collecting end-user provided citations.

It was also suggested that ICPSR work to do more integration of services with other partners (DOI, CrossRef, ORCID). A short discussion followed regarding talks we have had with Center for Open Science and the Research Data Alliance. A suggestion was made to look at Force 11 and the FAIR principles.

II. New Types of Data

A discussion of how we differentiate ourselves from competition (Dataverse, Figshare, etc) resulted in conversation about new types of data ICPSR may want to explore. It was noted that ICPSR provides a high value add, especially in relation to our competitors, in how we handle sensitive data. Furthering our emphasis on being the experts in sensitive data sharing and handling was seen as a competitive advantage, and it was noted that the Researcher Credentialing Project could be a big part of this.

Further opportunities for new data types included mixed data of sensitive and other types, integrated dataset from different disciplines with different types of controls, medical and genetic data, and genomic data. It was noted that genomic data would get huge citations, especially genomics combined with social science data, but all of these data types would require new support architecture, including specific metadata.

It was noted that ICPSR cannot be everything to everyone, and with limited resources we would need to be strategic in where we spend our money. The largest questions are around compute and access, with the need to bring compute to the data (meaning we cannot rely on the standard data download for these large data types). We need to think more broadly on how this data is accessed. Storage can be an issue. While compressed storage is small, manipulations of these data explode the size.

III. Archonnex Licensing Models

A brief discussion was held regarding various models of Archonnex licensing, including licensing the software as a commercial product, creating a non-profit foundation (similar to Duraspace) and allowing for open source participation, or using the software for Repository as a Service offerings. Due to time this discussion was limited.