Council Meeting Minutes
October 6 – 7, 2021
Hybrid

Attendees

Council Members
Present: Dave Armstrong, Bobray Bordelon, Jon Cawthorne, Lisa Cook (Chair), James Doiron, Kristin Eschenfelder, Mark Hansen, Trevon Logan, Lindsey Malcom-Piqueux, Katherine Wallman, and Esther Wilder. Absent: Ken Smith

ICPSR Staff
Annahita Akbarifard, Dharma Akmon, Trent Alexander, Chinedu Amadi-Ndukwe, Ambyr Amen-Ra, David Arnold, Zachary Bennett, Ashok Bhargav, Jennifer Brady, Amber Bryant, Sarah Burchart, Stephanie Carpenter, Robert Choate, Becky Chu, Bethany Ciolek, Alina Conn, Lara Cooper, Gin Corden, Evan Cosby, Dale Couey, J.D. Alford, Sara Del Norte, Linda Detterman, Ren Dickson, Amanda Draft, Julie Eady, Alexandra Eastman, Allyson Flaster, Aubrey Garman, Robert Gessner, Libby Hemphill, Lynette Hoelter, Salvador Holguin, Rachel Huang, Stuart Hutchings, Samuel Imbody, Abay Israel, Edward J. Czilli, A J. Million, Jeannette Jackson, Meghan Jacobs, Joy Jang, Kevin Kapalla, Rebecca Kaplan, Kilsang Kim, Michal Kirkwood, Dory Knight-Ingram, Ashish Korpe, Jennifer Koski, Vijay Kotagiri, Piotr Krzystek, Trisha Kunst Martinez, Sara Lafia, Kathryn Lavender, Jumanne Lee, John Lemmer, Susan Leonard, Margaret Levenstein, Scott Liening, Daphne Lin, Jared Lyle, Lynn MacLeod, Vrinda Mahishi, John Marcotte, Corey Maylone, James McNally, Rob Meeker, Elizabeth Meier-Austic, Elizabeth Moss, Manjusha Nadipineni, Matt Nizol, Kelly Ogden-Schuette, Anna Ovchinnikova, Michelle Overholser, Eszter Palvolgyi-Polyak, Deepti Pandey, Sarah Pearson, Shelly Petrinko, Amy Pienta, Katey Pillars, Darleen Poisson, Daniel Pritts, Tamara Qawasmeh, Narmadha Rajendran, Kyle Ralston, Shane Redman, Kyrani Reneau, Sarah Rush, Chelsea Samples-Steele, Sai Sandeep Reddy Bedadala, Joseph Saul, Mike Shallcross, Annalee Shelton, Michael Shove, Brenae Smith, Cory Steiner, Sharvetta Sylvester, David Thomas, Michael Traugott, Rujuta Umarji, Jay Winkler, and LingLing Zhang

Approval of the Minutes

David Armstrong called the meeting to order and called for approval of the April 2021 Council minutes with a typographical edit. The revised April 2021 minutes were approved unanimously.

Director's Update

ICPSR Director, Margaret (Maggie) Levenstein gave the State of ICPSR address. The address covered five major themes: growth and hybrid work, changes at ISR, Summer Program milestones, new projects, and the new Research Data Ecosystem project.

ICPSR has grown by 50% since November 2019 (from 102 to 154 employees). The growth was across all of ICPSR, but particularly in our computing area. For this reason, and with the experience of the pandemic, ICPSR is following a hybrid approach where most employees work a hybrid schedule (part time in the office and part time at home) or a fully remote schedule. Hybrid workers are in the office an average of 2.3 days per week.

The Institute for Social Research has a new Director, a new Director of Development, and a new Director of Human Resources. The Summer Program had the largest participation ever in 2021. The Program generated a surplus, which will be reinvested for scholarships.

We have numerous new projects over the past year. Two projects in particular are helping us to develop new technologies. The Millennium Challenge Corporation project is leading the development of a new ICPSR data model (we call it Data Model 3). The ResearchDataGov project is leading the development of a new restricted data access system (we call it ReDMAS, or the Restricted Data Management and Access System).

The new Research Data Ecosystem project (formerly known as COA3D) will significantly grow and fortify ICPSR's technical infrastructure. RDE will create 10 distinct and new products, including (for example) a video archive, a social media archive, and a cloud-based research environment. The RDE team is engaged in numerous planning activities and expects to start project work in January 2022.

ICPSR has continued to focus on strategic planning through regular retreats with the leadership team to identify major themes of focus for each year. For the next year, we will focus on five goals: growing our administration team, addressing faculty incentives and research resources, improve membership acquisition management and resources, address decision making for prioritizing IT projects, and communicating systematically and concretely about ICPSR's core mission and values (trust, collaboration, communication, fun, respect, and accountability).

Reports to Council

Budget and Finance

Jon Cawthorne delivered the Budget and Finance Committee report in his role as Chair of this committee. ICPSR's F.Y. 2021 ended with an $11 million reserve balance. The increase in ICPSR's reserve in F.Y. 2021 was $1.4 million, and this was mainly due to an operating surplus (reversing the expected deficit in operations).

ICPSR overhead expenses (such as the Provost's tax) have increased over time. Most operating expenses come from ICPSR salaries. ICPSR staff grew in size over the fiscal year. By increasing its reserves in F.Y 2021, ICPSR ended the year in a strong financial position. This is a notably positive financial performance given the uncertainty introduced by the pandemic on ICPSR's revenue streams. The committee also noted the strong budget management, controls, and better budget forecasting that ICPSR has developed and implemented over the past year.

In discussing the report, Council members noted the skill and leadership that John Lemmer has brought to the administration of ICPSR. Maggie Levenstein added that the Provost's tax is now capped (for most practical purposes) at the rate of inflation, which is good news and good for budget planning going forward. Council asked about how we are supporting the large growth in IT hiring when the large NSF project has not yet started. ICPSR responded that several near-term Federal projects have significant needs for IT work that has allowed us to ramp up the staffing.

Membership and Education Outreach

ICPSR has been successful at retaining membership during the pandemic without making many accommodations. Total account is still 790.

Council discussed the Project Educate Plan. As an outgrowth of a Council meeting back in in April about refreshing the educational materials, the team took the recommendation quite seriously and put together a great plan as to how they are going to look at things and what can be done in refreshing the education materials. The education and training people are trying to figure out what the priorities are and how those priorities can be addressed for challenges and opportunities in ICPSR.

It is not clear how some of the core functions of ICPSR are affected by new projects. In particular, there was concern that the RDE could overwhelm ICPSR's roots, its membership and the 790 institutions that it serves. How will that aspect of ICPSR work along with the exciting new projects at ICPSR? A fair amount of sensitivity was expressed to that challenge.

Summer Program

The 2021 Summer Program was very successful. Having a virtual option has driven a lot of the growth in the Program. Costs were lower because they did not need to rent physical space. The excess funds will be used for scholarships and fee waivers in subsequent Summer Program sessions. The Summer Program has entered into a five-year contract to use Helen Newberry Hall, and they have started using Canvas for course materials and will continue to do so into the future. The Summer Program plans to do heavier promotion of the Blalock lecture series via instructors in their classes. Discussions are underway about how to increase diversity of instructors and TAs. They have defined a recruiting strategy for this. They are deciding on the format of next year's program (hybrid, remote, on site).

ICPSR is planning to have an in-person option for the Summer Program this summer. They would also like to have remote options. Remote or hybrid options would allow participation that would not have been possible prior to the pandemic. It is not clear whether ICPSR should continue to offer all classes remotely or just some have some remote classes and some in-person classes. One of the most challenging things to do is to have a hybrid class. Mike Traugott, Director of the Summer Program, has been thinking about how to use the virtual content to be able to offer more virtual options in the future. There is real value to having in person

instruction. There is value in meeting, networking, and getting to know fellow participants and instructors.

Mike Traugott then spoke about the Summer Program, indicating that the Summer Program would like to establish a career-long set of relationships with attendees. He feels those are fostered more in person than virtually. The Summer Program is developing an alumni network and thinking about a set of services they can offer, including mentorship for job market opportunities, promotion, and grant writing. The Summer Program held a small experiment this summer by pairing 25 diversity scholars with previous scholars. It went pretty well, but there is a question about durability in a virtual environment. The development of an alumni network combined with an in person instructional format in 2022 will continue the experiment.

Council members offered questions and suggestions about the Summer Program. One Council member asked about the benefits of the online program, including warning about drifting back to the default of only holding an in-person meeting. Mike indicated the Summer Program does not have an overriding commitment to a solely in-person program since they know they have a set of students from the past two years who would not have been able to attend if a virtual option had not been available. Mike emphasized they are trying to figure out if there is a way to take advantage of the positives of each of the formats while overcoming technical obstacles.

Another Council member asked if each of the instructors have been asked if they think their class works just as well or better in an online format. The Council member said that some classes might work better in an online format. Mike responded that the Summer Program did conduct a post-session survey of all instructors, which included questions about instructors' interest in teaching online again (if required), or teaching their course during the academic year. Mike reported that 45% of the instructors were not interested in teaching online again. Mike emphasized that the response is not necessarily a reflection of their Summer Program experience but more of a reflection on how hard online instruction is for everyone. The Summer Program asked several open-ended questions relating to interests, content of courses, and what other services they can provide. The Summer Program is still analyzing those responses and can supply a report to the Council once it is completed.

Mike emphasized that online instruction is challenging. Eye contact is a critical part of instruction. One difficulty of online instruction is attendance at live instruction sessions is low (since many students view lectures later). Another challenge is that many students turn off their cameras. People who were attending appeared to be engaged, but there remains concern about overall engagement during each session.

---ACTION ITEM---
At the conclusion of the discussion, Council requested that the Summer Program check in with them within the next six weeks about their plans for the summer of 2022. (This update was provided in the text of a December 13, 2021 email to the committee.)

Technology and Standards

Metadata and Preservation:

Elizabeth Moss has been working on better placement for **Research Spotlight and Current Events in the Bib**. It is currently at the top level on the [Data-Related Literature page](). The Research Spotlights' main page is improved, with four new Spotlights and a more appealing presentation, with photos. Membership & Communication will be grabbing content for social media promotion when released, and for monthly Bulletins. When a new Spotlight is posted, it will be included in the ICPSR home page carousel that has room to highlight one spotlight, and it will remain until the next new Spotlight is highlighted there. Bibliography is working with Topical Archives to make the bibliography consistent on their pages.

Process exists to propose **new research spotlights**. First attempt will occur at Biennial Meeting, in which viewers will be able to vote on controlled list of topics. The form will be added to Spotlight with caveat: may not be able to be created if study does not support. (This form, Submit a Topic for a Research Spotlight, has been added to the [Research Spotlights page]() as of January 2022.)

Jared Lyle then discussed his work with the DDI Alliance. Council asked, do local institutions "join" the DDI Alliance? **The DDI Alliance** is member based. There is a section on the DDI site on how to join. https://ddialliance.org/membership/how-to-join (see membership levels). DDI Marketing & Training subcommittees hold webinars and invite potential members (example: https://ddialliance.org/announcement/ddi-alliance-codata-training-webinar-series-continues, which had over 300 registrants). AAPOR was an example of a past-targeted audience. CESSDA (European alliance) uses DDI and its members are encouraged to join. DDI Alliance does talk to other metadata groups.

Council asked, how will DDI not be sidelined by a new revolutionary approach? The Alliance is concerned about both maintaining the existing standards (DDI-Codebook and DDI-Lifecycle) while developing for new users (DDI-Cross Domain Integration). Much of the membership contributions are from "in-kind" contributions around areas the membership cares about. DDI is working with CODATA (Committee on Data of the International Science Council) which has strong partnerships with the Research Data Alliance. Have looked at other standards for guidance.

What are the 'ingest' issues for openICPSR? Ingest issues for the organization are not limited to openICPSR, but, due to the volume and process of getting data into the system. It is where the most issues arise. In the past, some files have been lost and could not be found. A dedicated team in CNS is working to fix ongoing issues. Changes are needed to guarantee the authenticity of a file in openICPSR. Once something is received, we need to ensure that nothing is changed (accidentally deleted, file name changed, etc.) Bugs in the deposit system continue to be worked on. Major work remains on ingest. Everything that is deposited is backed up. The Membership archive has multiple copies in multiple locations. It should now be possible to find any originals. Files are immediately backed up upon receipt. Still, we need to proactively ensure the system can guarantee the authenticity of all files accepted upon deposit by ICPSR.

A request was made for **longitudinal reporting of metrics** – how have numbers changed since previous reports? Metadata record reviews are tied to the number of curated studies sent for QC. This means other measures might be more appropriate to gauge success by metadata staff (e.g., satisfaction of staff with the new workflow, improved quality of records). ACTION ITEM: Will add these longitudinal metrics to future reports. ACTION ITEM: Will contextualize more about the Bibliography (this has been addressed in the April 28, 2022 Unit Report). For example, over the last two years, the Bibliography team has grown from one full time librarian and a temporary student assistant to three permanent employees with graduate degrees (in addition to the existing librarian). This has multiplied the number of records added to the Bibliography. Incredibly, nearly a quarter of the collection (22,000+ records) was added in the past three years.

Curation:

Potential changes to curation levels are still being considered. Currently time and calendar estimates vary with each level but are a flat amount for any study at a particular level. ICPSR is considering ways to more accurately estimate time. ICPSR is working to develop a formula to better reflect time. Currently a pain point. Curation task changes such as sentence case. Should we change case in labels? Perhaps just do by project request or at curator's discretion if value added. Perhaps reintroduce if a tool allows the change to be made automatically. Also looking at flexibility. Where can curation make a judgment call? Where can a project manager make decisions? Curation subcommittee reviewing line by line to determine if there can be flexibility. Currently no introduction to topic or reasoning as to why the actions are taken for the various levels. This highlights ongoing training needs. Another challenge is the request for add-on items, such as question/test and SDA in Level 1. Should there only be one level plus add-ons? What is the complexity of the study? That will determine everything else. Perhaps ICPSR should take more of a modular approach. Once that is done, it will be easier to provide a better time estimate. Perhaps could measure how complete is documentation or have a scale of requirements.

Retention (turnover). Staff are leaving for a mixture of reasons. Some moved on to graduate school or different jobs. One took a pay cut. Some are moving for long-term career goals. There are exit interviews. Salaries have been raised. Career paths have been better defined. Unit is approximately equally divided with senior curators and others. Lead curator between senior and supervisor role being defined. Paths forward for data not just supervision being looked at. More mentorship being discussed. Typically, about 5-6 curators per year leave.

The unit is looking at how to **make workflows more standard**. There are currently 4 to 5 ways of doing deposit review. Look at standardizing. Understand goals of each funder and try to standardize more. Would help empower the curators. Each project is currently very different. Would require a lot of work with the projects to have consensus support for standardization.

Recruitment is fairly standard at ICPSR. **Training** is in cohorts, which helps with onboarding and makes them feel like part of a unit. Piloted a mentorship program. Each person has someone they know they can go to with questions. One curator trains and another assists so multiple people have a turn to provide this leadership beyond just supervisor and team.

Computing and Network Services:

Follow up on **remote work**. A few people are out of state but most are in Ann Arbor or agreed will relocate to Ann Arbor. DevOps are challenging to fill. Always short-staffed so finding time to recruit is hard. Transition from servers to containers. Hard to find that skill set. Some could be remote. Committee of at least four with one outside unit is used for a search. Same committee can make multiple selections. Many hired after one interview. Getting good people. Seems to be working. Also using an outside contract house that after 4 months can convert to a permanent employee.

Current state of the NSF grant – timeline. NSF's cost estimate was above ICPSR's so they have asked for a revision of the budget and scope of the project. Waiting on approval of the changes.

New staffing – how much is replacement and how much is net growth. Has had to make a few retention offers and raised some salaries. So far, only one quit and worked out for all. Retention is working well. Staff turning down offers of $30K from outside. Family first attitude even if pace is fast helps with retentions.

"NSF reporting data flows": Earned value management (EVM) reporting required by NSF. Tracks infrastructure projects to ensure deliverables as well as spending are on track. Percentage complete is not something ICPSR has previously tracked. Transitioning to a new system to report EVM.
Starting a technical advisory committee and got first member last week – Kelsey Hightower at Google. Invented the container at Google. He will be able to provide advice on new technology based on needs. He will make introductions to CERN.

Six new professional designers hired in CNS and embedded.

Product Owners:

Increased standard size of deposit. Impact and future plans. Receive a few requests per month asking for increased size. Goal was to reduce support tickets in this area (on average 100 per year with approximately 251 requests received since 2019). Since the change earlier this year, we have only received a single request for the increase and that was an older project with the existing 2GB limit. This increase in size was for new deposits only. The unit is looking into existing deposits (about 2000 projects out of 16,000 had 2 GB limit). Mostly Open ICPSR asking rather than the archives. Impact – proactive as data grows; want to move out of FEDORA, which creates issues, and go to something like Amazon Bucket. FEDORA limits to 1000 files or folders and changes names of objects.

DM3 is the new data model which is designed to increase flexibility to allow new object types. Driven by schema (list of metadata fields and their rules). Will allow versioning of schema. Relationships: currently in ICPSR, the relationship is Archive---Series---Study. With DM3, can relate any object to any other object. Can have parent child as well as sibling relationships. A

generic editor based on metadata objects or schema is introduced which should reduce development time moving forward.

Beta version of new ICPSR search - Gives users more information quickly. Partner is the Millennium Challenge Corporation based on their requirements. One can now see results in boxes on one page rather than separate tabs. Can still revert to separate tabs. Over next year iterative improvements for other parts. ICPSR will be seeking feedback.

The three **incumbent staff** who moved into the Product Owners team are doing new work. Three additional were hired and one new to be hired. They are setting vision. Were holes left in other areas? Yes. One has been replaced. One responsibility area was shifted to Abay's unit along with the candidate.

ICPSR moved from **da|ra to DataCite**. Allows most updated schema. There is a small financial cost. New services are coming. ICPSR is participating in development.

[CITI support](#)is an online training initiative. Can move credentials and certifications into Researcher Passport. Could use to support other training. ICPSR is not creating classes but using credentials from CITI. Currently seeing if we can transport credentials from other data institutions.

Progress in hiring? Have been lucky with the team and hoping to continue to have that luck. Market has shifted this year and more being required by candidates. A new candidate may not necessarily be a senior position. It could be someone that comes in and grows.

Council Discussion

Council would like clarification about when Council terms end and how institutional knowledge is spread from one Council term to another.

Council members' terms: the Bylaws are not specific about when the transition takes place. Past members stayed on until the next Council meeting. Since ICPSR changed the frequency of Council meetings (from three to two meetings per year), if it is OK with everyone, the terms will continue until the next meeting in April. We will have an extra day of onboarding scheduled in April. ICPSR encourages new Council members to contact past Council members with questions. There is also a mailing list to ask questions.

The Council slate that ICPSR will announce at the State of the Consortium presentation of the Biennial Meeting includes six Council members and a Chair. Two Council members on the slate are existing members, with four new members. Dave Armstrong has agreed to serve as Council Chair. There is no need to vote on the Council nominations since the nominating committee makes the selection and the Official Representatives vote.

Council would like to know more about how the Research Data Ecosystem Technical Advisory group members are selected and who they are.

Regarding the Technical Advisory Board, Kelsey Hightower is the only person we have confirmed. We have a list of people the National Science Foundation (NSF) has recommended we contact. NSF is very concerned to make sure we have a plan in place with good estimates regarding schedule and cost, and good advice regarding technical decision making. We know software estimates have to change. That is why the emphasis on modularity is so important. For the Technical Advisory Board, ICPSR is interested in people who understand how to build a research team and how to build software for the research community, as well as software that interacts with people instead of software designed to run machines. ICPSR has also been in contact with UM computer scientists about recommendations. If people have recommendations or suggestions, please send them. There is also an external advisory board that includes the leadership of archives around the world, including the heads of CESSDA, GESIS, and Harvard Dataverse.

Council would like to know more concrete information about the Summer Program. They know the Summer Program is thinking about hybrid options. A year ago, Council took a vote about options. They do not feel the need to vote at this time, but they would like to know in six weeks more concrete plans for the hybrid options, including the constraints and opportunities that exist this year that may not have existed last year.

[NOTE: As indicated above, the Summer Program provided an updated report on its plans for Summer 2022 in December. All classes are being offered in a hybrid format.]

Council would like to know about sustainability plans relating to a new kind of workforce. What happens after the five years of this grant are over, especially for software developers? How will the labor force be managed at the end of the grant, including the qualitative composition of the labor force? What do comparable software development shops do when in a similar situation?

In terms of staffing at ICPSR, we are growing the organization and hiring many people who have a different skill set than what we have now. In the long run, what ICPSR will need to disseminate data is people with these new technical skills. It is anticipated that ICPSR will need to continue to find funding for IT development. Maggie is more worried that people will leave than she is that we will be stuck with people who have no place to go.

The other issue is about data curators. ICPSR has 42 people in the curation unit. We are living in a data-driven world. The job of curators will likely change as we get different types of data. However, we will probably need more people to do this work. Those jobs will probably change over time. Rujuta has been doing a lot to develop those people. Maggie is not worried about the unit shrinking, but the jobs will change as we reintroduce new tools. We hope to automate the boring parts of jobs.

Council wants to make sure that they are expressing their explicit support of the NSF infrastructure project and that they are confident that ICPSR can fairly and equitably execute that project. Council will circulate that statement before the October Council minutes are approved.