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Reflecting on Years of Leadership

After six months away from ICPSR, Dr. Myron Gutmann considers his time as director

After spending most of the 2000s as ICPSR's director, Myron Gutmann left last November to lead the National Science Foundation's [Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences](#) [directorate](#). Gutmann visited Ann Arbor this spring and reflected on his time at ICPSR.

Question: With the benefit of some distance, what is your perspective on your time at ICPSR and the place of the organization in the social science community?

Answer: It's an extraordinary place to work with an extraordinary impact. A few weeks ago I was on a panel at

a meeting of education researchers ... it was great because the chair of the session and then one of the other presenters actually spent a lot of time talking about ICPSR. It showed ICPSR as this unique place in the research world.

When you're in the middle of it, it seems like that's just everything in the world. But when you step back from it, it's still in the middle of everything that happens in the social science research community. It's everyone's point of reference about data.

What I took away from that experience is that ICPSR is still the place where interesting things happen and where, whatever we believe may not be perfect [at ICPSR], it's still way ahead of every other place. And that goes from how people get along to cutting-edge activities in support of research and data.



Myron Gutmann is an assistant director at the National Science Foundation in charge of the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences directorate. He was director of ICPSR from August 2001 to October 2009. He has authored and edited numerous books and articles; his research interests include interdisciplinary historical population studies, the preservation and sharing of digital material, and the most effective ways to protect the confidentiality of research subjects. He has a Ph.D. from Princeton University.

Q: What do you consider some of your greatest accomplishments during your time at ICPSR?

A: I think that confirming ICPSR's place as the most forward-looking data archive is certainly something that all of us should be really proud of. Over

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the eight and a half years that I was here, that's very much something that we established.

A second thing would be broadening the subject matter by adding to the topical archives. We added the topical archive in demography, we added the topical archive in minority data, we added the topical archive in child care, we added the Data-PASS partnership. Continuing to broaden the collection is a really important thing.

Q: What fields are ripe for further expansion of the collection here?

A: I think that the next area certainly needs to be education, both because there is a lot of work going on in that area and because, as a policy-related issue, the federal government is investing massively now in improving education.

[ICPSR is] not going to wind up necessarily holding all of those data collections. There's a big investment being passed along to the states to systematize their educational data. Essentially, they want to do what a few states like Florida have already done: to collect data about children from the time they enter preschool until they finish university, in order to have a systemic body of data that tells us how well students are doing and how well schools are doing.

ICPSR has a really important role to play potentially in terms of collections, but also in terms of being a resource on how to maintain the collections that are in public hands, and for the tools and techniques that are needed to manage them for research.

The second area would be some of the things that we're doing as part of the pending proposals for the

DataNet competition at NSF ... Activities that span social science and the environment, or that span the social sciences and health are key areas for the future and data that are the seeds of leading-edge things that will take ICPSR into the future.

Q: What implications for ICPSR do you see in the trend toward interdisciplinary research?

A: In the area of the things that ICPSR does, [there are] lots of opportunities to capitalize on the trend toward interdisciplinary research. There are big challenges in moving in this direction because it's not necessarily clear that ICPSR should hold all the environmental data or all the biomedical data. Rather, [ICPSR needs] to find ways to partner with other collections to make the most of the environmental and health data that will support research together with the social science data in ICPSR's collections. [ICPSR needs] to visualize a mechanism for interchange.

The same thing goes for national boundaries. Internationalization will stretch the social sciences, and ICPSR needs to stay at the forefront. If you think about the traditional social science data and survey data, most samples are national or involve parallel surveys replicated in different countries. Some of the newest social and behavioral research these days goes beyond those sources, to use information from commercial transactions or the events in online multiplayer games or from Facebook pages. If that's the case, how do you define national boundaries in an archive of Facebook pages?

Q: Can you think of any missed opportunities or unfinished business from your time at ICPSR?

A: There are always missed opportunities, many of which arise out of our accomplishments, as well as the fact that the world is changing very rapidly. ICPSR needs to position itself really well for a world that is not going to look the same in two years as it does now. That's both the biggest opportunity and challenge.

At the same time, so much of ICPSR's work involves providing services to government agencies. That's unlikely to change, but the federal government's new emphasis on open government and access to information may complicate ICPSR's role, both by bringing new competitors and by increasing the volume of information that needs to be distributed. I'm convinced that ICPSR's staff and leadership is more than adequate to stay ahead of these challenges.

Q: When you were director, grant funding grew significantly while membership revenue was stable. Is there much more room for growth in that area, or any danger of devaluing the membership side of it?

A: This is an old question. I raised this to Council every year I was ICPSR director. Is there room for more growth? That links back to the last question about open government. I believe that there will be continued opportunities for substantial growth in sponsor revenue from grants and contracts, both because there's an increasing recognition in the science community that data need to be redistributed, and ICPSR has a unique capacity to support that; and because of the recognition in

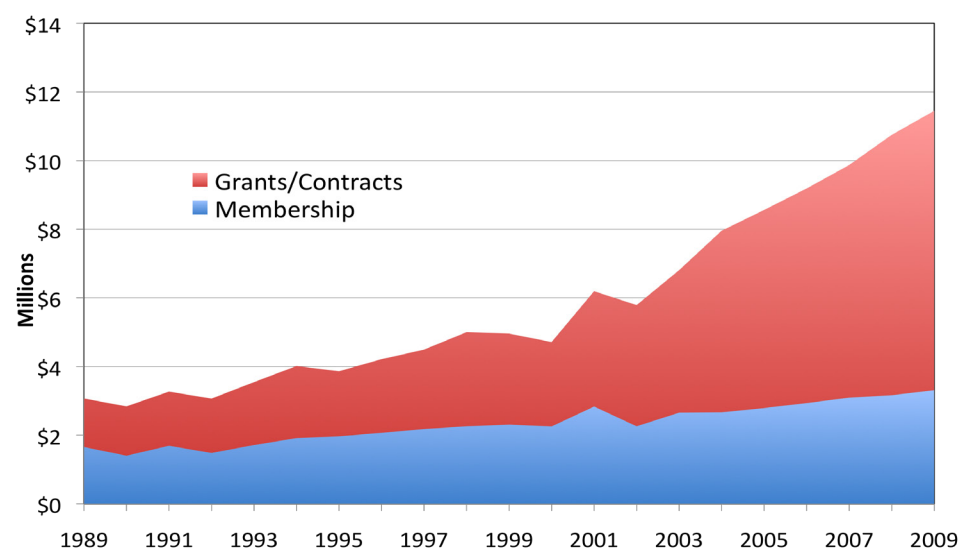
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Gutmann (cont. from page 2)

the government data community that there is now going to be a permanent expectation, no matter which party is in power, that data will be made

students or their faculty contribute to the curation process?



ICPSR Grant/Contract Revenue vs. Membership Revenue

available for widespread use.

ICPSR's membership needs to be sensitive to the changing structure of the revenue stream.

Just before I started as Director in 2001, membership and Summer Program revenue combined were about equal to sponsored revenue. Now it's about half as much, and I believe the trend is going to continue in that way ... If the membership can't keep up financially, it may need to find other ways to contribute. Are there ways they can contribute in kind as opposed to money, and what would those in-kind contributions be? In a world of distributed computing, are they contributing on the computing side? In a world of distributed curation, could their staff or their

Q: Considering ICPSR's new partnership with Thomson-Reuters, do you see much potential for partnerships with the private sector?

A: In an environment that is increasingly integrated, there's a strong role for partnerships with the private sector, especially if they provide ICPSR with opportunities and content that were not otherwise available. But I don't see them as a major way of generating revenue.

Q: Tell us a bit about what your job at NSF is like.

A: My job, on top of the day-to-day management role, is to make sure that NSF's investment in the [social, behavioral, and economic] sciences is appropriate and moving forward to solve the most important public and

scientific challenges. I'm involved in science policy at the federal level to make sure that we identify those challenges and then select the best scientists with the most creative ideas to work on them. I'm also an advocate for the social and behavioral sciences, in order to make sure that the broader scientific community is including the human sciences in everything they do. The current moment is wonderful because the social and behavioral sciences are part of what almost everyone in the scientific world is thinking about. ICPSR taught me to think very broadly about areas of research. That preparation allows me to bring a well-informed approach to what I'm now doing on the science policy side. We're working on subjects like research into behavior and education, research about human decision-making as it applies to the environment and energy use, and about how human behavior matters as we roll out more and more technology in our schools, in health care and health records, and in our lives more generally. With good science will come better knowledge about ourselves and our society, and better ways to develop policy to serve our country. ■

For more information

Financial figures on grant and contract revenue vs. membership are available in our [Annual Report](#).

A listing of all [grants and contracts](#) secured by ICPSR researchers was recently added to our Web site.

RCMD acquires data on Mexican Americans that were lost for decades and rediscovered at UCLA

By John Garcia

Director, Resource Center for Minority Data

In the early 1990s, construction workers at the University of California, Los Angeles, discovered a box full of papers and magnetic tapes. The [material](#) turned out to be a decades-old study of the social, economic, and political conditions of Mexican Americans living in the southwest known as the [Mexican American Study Project](#) (MASP). Now, with processing of the data under way at ICPSR for inclusion in our data collection, the MASP will add another dimension to its reinvigorated status.

MASP was a three-year study of more than 3.5 million Mexican Americans from the mid-1960s. Acquisition of the data fits with the mission of ICPSR, and specifically the pursuit by the [Resource Center for Minority Data](#) (RCMD) of a more pro-active posture in the identification of important studies focusing on minority populations and their experiences in the United States.

RCMD contacted UCLA researchers in the fall about depositing the study, and this spring received the data to begin processing. UCLA archivists Elizabeth Stephenson and Charlotte Brown rediscovered the MASP. Two UCLA sociologists, Vilma Ortiz and Edward Telles, designed a new project based on the data, resulting in the book [Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation, and Race](#) (Sage Foundation Press, 2008). This study located the surviving respondents of the MASP and re-interviewed them and their children and grandchildren, if applicable.

They then combined the findings to construct a 35-year analysis of Mexican American integration into American society.

ICPSR will process, archive, and disseminate not only the original MASP files, but also the new data collected by Telles and Ortiz.

Generations of Exclusion measures Mexican American integration across a number of dimensions: education, English and Spanish language use, socioeconomic status, intermarriage, residential segregation, ethnic identity, and political participation. The study provided some encouraging findings, but many more that are troubling. Linguistically, Mexican Americans assimilate into mainstream America quite well — by the second generation, nearly all Mexican Americans achieve English proficiency. In many domains, however, the Mexican American story doesn't fit with traditional models of assimilation. The majority of fourth-generation Mexican Americans continue to live in Latino neighborhoods and marry other Latinos. They continue to think of themselves as Mexicans. Economic mobility was notable from the first to second generation, but economic progress halts beyond the second generation and poverty rates remain high for later generations. Educational achievement also peaks among the second generation, but degenerates for subsequent generations.

RCMD's role in this discovery chain lies in insuring the preservation of this important study and



John Garcia, director of the Resource Center for Minority Data, has a Ph.D. from Florida State University and holds a

professorship at the University of Arizona. His relationship with ICPSR dates back to attending the Summer Program as a graduate student in 1969 and includes roles as visiting researcher and instructor. His primary areas of research include minority group politics, and political behavior and mobilization.

expanding its accessibility for further examination by the larger research community. In addition, the extension of the MASP into a multi-generational study of more contemporary relevance allows the possibility of linking the findings to more recent outcomes. The subsequent research by Telles and Ortiz has provided a troubling glimpse of what other immigrant groups may experience in the future.

RCMD seeks to serve as a portal to explore minority groups in America by assisting in the public dissemination and preservation of quality data to generate more “good science” for years to come. This acquisition hopefully represents one of many more discoveries by RCMD to make possible the broadest scope of research endeavors and examinations. ■



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News and Notes ...

Search begins for new director

With the appointment of Myron Gutmann to a position at the National Science Foundation, ICPSR has begun the search process for a new director.

A search committee has been formed, chaired by Pamela Smock of the Population Studies Center at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. ICPSR is one of five research centers within ISR. Other members of the search committee include five ICPSR Council members and two ICPSR researchers.

The services of J. Robert Scott Executive Search of Boston have also been enlisted.

ICPSR seeks candidates who can provide innovative leadership in all aspects of the institute's mission. Candidates must have significant experience with quantitative social science research and instruction, and a strong record of peer-reviewed publications and grant funding.

For more information, see our [Careers and Internships](#) page.

IFSS releases harmonized dataset

The [Integrated Fertility Survey Series](#) (IFSS) project at ICPSR is pleased to announce the release of a harmonized dataset. The data, consisting of more than 90 sociodemographic variables spanning 10 studies, five decades, and more than 71,000 respondents, have been harmonized to facilitate easy comparisons between the component surveys. Online analysis functionality is available for this first release.

With funding from the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the IFSS project seeks to 1) develop a harmonized data file and accompanying metadata for users interested in changes in fertility and the family; 2) create, archive, and distribute clean, standardized electronic data files and documentation for the 10 component surveys; 3) equip IFSS studies with online data analysis tools to allow for quick analyses; and 4) offer complete documentation, tutorials, and other user support.

Feedback sought on download process

In the next few months, ICPSR will begin an evaluation of its download mechanism. Specifically we want to look at how the data download can be improved/streamlined. To that end, we'd appreciate your feedback. Please take a moment to let us know what you think of our data download mechanisms, and suggest areas for improvement. You can either email us your suggestions at web-support@icpsr.umich.edu or fill out a simple [Web form](#).

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