A South African Humanities and Social Science Data Service

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The Open Microdata imperative

• The Post-2015 MDG report calls for “a data revolution” that will lead to more and better quality data, more detailed data and, more Open Data for better policies to improve people’s lives.
• Countries have created Research Data Infrastructure to make this happen.
HSS Data Archives/Services

- This includes a network of Data Archives to provide Open HSS Data
- These are based in universities or government structures
- Many archives have evolved to offer a range of data services, including supporting researchers with data curation, analysis, and citation

EUROPEAN ARCHIVES
DataFirst’s Mission Statement

DataFirst is a data service dedicated to making South African and other African survey and administrative microdata available to researchers and policy analysts.

We promote high quality research by providing the essential research infrastructure for discovering and accessing data and by developing skills among prospective users, particularly in South Africa.

We undertake research on the quality and usability of national data and encourage data usage and data sharing (DataFirst, 2014)
Current Organisational Structure

DIRECTOR OF DATAFIRST

MANAGER (GRADE 11)

TECHNICAL OFFICER (GRADE 8)

DATA ANALYST (GRADE 8)

DATA ANALYST (GRADE 8)

ADMIN ASSISTANT (GRADE 7)

SENIOR RESEARCH OFFICER
Desired Organisational Structure
QUALITY ASSURANCE
Quality control at DataFirst involves:

• Adherence to international data curation standards
• Ongoing consultation with stakeholders, and membership of expert organisations
• Participation in relevant Communities of Practice
• Regular upgrading of staff competencies
• Monitoring usage statistics and user feedback
Standards: Service is based on the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) model for digital repositories ISO 14721:2012 and ISO 16363:2012 and uses the Data Documentation Initiative and Dublin Core Metadata Standards.
In 2014 DataFirst was awarded the Data Seal of Approval, an international certification for trusted digital repositories.
Memberships:
CODATA South Africa Committee member since 2013
IASSIST members since 2008
Hub organisation for Southern African Membership of the ICPSR since 2011
Member of IFDO
WDS membership in 2013
Community of practice

2013-2014 Conference presentations:

• 5th African Conference for Digital Scholarship and Curation
• 1st Isibalo Conference on Evidence Based Decision-making
• 2013 eResearch Africa Conference

Publications

Leveraging data in African countries (DataFirst Technical Paper 22)
NEW OPPORTUNITIES
SECURE DATA SERVICE

1st Secure Data Service in Africa – began operation in 2013

For household and firm level data not currently available to researchers

Partnering with UCT and National and Local government authorities to share Administrative Data through the service
National Research Data Infrastructure

• DataFirst has been asked by the SA Department of Science and Technology to draw up specifications for a National Data Archive and Service.

• A well-funded, fully coordinated National Data Service could help SA leverage data for development

• We have modelled an ideal service which illustrates the virtuous cycle of data reuse
QUESTIONS?

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