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DISC News contains articles about local, national and international data issues. It is published twice a semester by the library staff and sent to faculty, graduate students, and librarians, with a focus on the Social Science departments.

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Note: DISC will be open regular hours during Spring Break (March 16-20)

DOWNTURN DATA: EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

by Joanne Juhnke

Given the current economic situation in the United States, much media focus has turned toward employment and unemployment statistics. The range of available measures provides considerably more nuance than the single “official unemployment rate” that is most widely reported.

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) conducts two major monthly surveys of U.S. unemployment and employment. The Current Population Survey (CPS) is the one from which the official unemployment rate is generated. The CPS is a household survey that samples about 60,000 households nationwide. The Current Employment Statistics Survey (CES), also known as the Payroll Survey, samples payroll tax filings of about 10,000 US businesses and government agencies, generating an estimate of the number of non-farm jobs.

The official unemployment rates reported monthly based on CPS data are actually one of six unemployment measures.

The official unemployment rates reported monthly based on CPS data, at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/home.htm> (see the right-hand menu bar for latest and historical rates), are actually one of six unemployment measures. The official unemployment rate is known as U3, and is defined as “Total unemployed, as a percent of the civilian labor force.” Persons are classified as unemployed if they do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior 4 weeks, and are currently available for work. However, the additional measures range from narrower to broader definitions. U1, the narrowest, only counts persons unemployed for 15 weeks or longer. U6, the broadest, also includes the underemployed (part-time employees who are not working more hours for economic reasons) and “marginally-attached workers” who “currently are neither working nor looking for work but indicate that they want and are available for a job and have looked for work sometime in the recent past.” Alternative measures of labor utilization based on CPS data can be found in table A-12 at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.toc.htm>. The indicators in their present form have been used since 1994.

The Current Employment Statistics employment numbers, on the BLS web site at <http://www.bls.gov/ces/>, are framed in terms of jobs gained or lost rather than in terms of employment percentages. This is necessary because the CES does not cover farms, domestic work, or self-

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2009 ICPSR SUMMER PROGRAM

by Cindy Severt

ICPSR is once again offering its Summer Program in research design, statistics, data analysis, and social science methodology. Open to all students, staff, and faculty of UW-Madison -- not just those in the social sciences -- the ICPSR Summer Program will consist of two four-week sessions (June 22 through July 17 and July 20 through August 14); and a variety of three- to five-day workshops in locations across the country as well as in Ann Arbor. Some of the workshops cover substantive topics that focus on applying quantitative analytic methods to particular subject areas, e.g. Using Secondary Data for the Analysis of Marriage and Family, rather than learning new mathematical and statistical techniques.

Complete information on course descriptions, fees, registration, instructors, and housing can be found at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/sumprog/2009/>.

Unlike previous years, the single stipend available to a participant to defray travel costs has been reconfigured by ICPSR so that the funds are now incorporated automatically into the fees charged to every ICPSR Summer Program participant from an ICPSR member institution. The net result is that the 2009 fees are lower than they would have been had the old stipend system remained in place.

ECLS/NHES DATA TRAINING SEMINAR

by Lu Chou

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K), the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort of 2001 (ECLS-B), and the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) are three large-scale early childhood studies conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). A one-day seminar on these three datasets will be offered at the 2009 Biennial meeting of the Society for Research and Child Development (SRCD) in Denver.

This free seminar is scheduled for Wednesday, April 1, 2009 from 9:00am - 5:00pm. Graduate students, faculty, and researchers who have a solid background in statistics and limited familiarity with the ECLS and NHES data can learn the study designs and technical issues related to the data and how these surveys complement each other. To learn more about the 2009 SRCD Biennial Meeting, please visit: <http://nces.ed.gov/ecls/news.asp>.

To register for this free seminar, send e-mail to ecls@air.org.

COMPARATIVE VALUES SURVEY OF ISLAMIC COUNTRIES, 1999-2006

by Lu Chou

DISC recently obtained the Comparative Values Survey of Islamic Countries, consisting of 18 public opinion surveys conducted in 15 Islamic countries from 1999 to 2006.

The countries represented are Albania (2002), Algeria (2002), Bangladesh (2002), Egypt (2000 and 2002), Indonesia (2001), Iran (2000), Iraq (2004 and 2006), Morocco (2001 pre-9/11 and 2002), Nigeria (2000), Pakistan (2001), Saudi Arabia (2003), Tanzania (2001), Turkey (2001) and United States (1999).

Topics included in these surveys are perceptions of life, environment, work, family, women and gender relations, politics and society, religion and morale, and national identity. Demographic information was collected as well. These surveys used nationally representative samples of the adult population of each respective country. Their sample sizes range from 1,000 to 3,400. The questionnaires were translated into the native language of the country where the survey was administered, prior to data collection.

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employment, but also because the CES counts jobs rather than employees (and one person may hold more than one job.) In addition, unlike the CPS results, the CES figures are adjusted in each of the two months following their release, and then again on an annual basis in comparison to full counts from unemployment insurance tax records. The Employment Situation Summary monthly press release, linked at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.toc.htm>, draws on both the CPS and CES figures.

The monthly Mass Layoff Statistics, on the BLS site at <http://www.bls.gov/mls/home.htm>, are triggered by unemployment insurance claims. Any establishment that has over 50 initial unemployment insurance claims against it in a five-week period is surveyed to determine the number of job separations, expected length of layoffs, and the characteristics of those affected. A quarterly report on Extended Mass Layoffs focuses on mass layoffs in which the separations have lasted for over 31 days.

Unemployment insurance filings are also integrated in Current Employment Statistics data, and in two other establishment-based programs as well: the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>, and the Business Employment Dynamics program, at <http://www.bls.gov/bdm/>. The QCEW provides a quarterly and annual count of businesses, employment, and wages at the county, MSA, state, and national level, by industry. The Business Employment Dynamics uses the same data to link records across quarters for individual businesses, allowing the tracking of employment changes at the establishment level.

All these and much more can be found on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics web site, at <http://www.bls.gov/>.

COUNTRY STATISTICAL YEARBOOKS, REVISITED

by Joanne Jubnke

DISC's growing collection of links to Country Statistical Yearbooks worldwide has a new online home. The pages are now part of the Research Guides on the UW-Madison library site, and use the same streamlined format as the other Research Guides on the site.

DISC's guide to Country Statistical Yearbooks now covers 111 countries and continues to grow. Most of the yearbooks are available online. For a few countries, where the yearbook itself is not online, the guide points instead to information on how the yearbook may be acquired. The Country Statistical Yearbooks guide can be reached from the DISC home page at <http://www.disc.wisc.edu>, or directly at <http://researchguides.library.wisc.edu/yearbooks>.

FLOWINGDATA

by Joanne Jubnke

Since mid-2007, a PhD candidate in Statistics at UCLA named Nathan Vau has been running a blog called FlowingData, at <http://flowingdata.com/>. His interest is in data visualization, and his blog has attracted other like-minded data enthusiasts. The result is a fascinating conversation, with lots of thought-provoking images and animations, on how data can be presented.

One useful category of post takes aim at data graphics from the media, holding them up for critique by the FlowingData community. A recent example was a post called "9 Ways to Visualize Consumer Spending," that pulled graphics from *GOOD Magazine*, the *New York Times*, *Wired Magazine* and others, to compare the effectiveness of various graphical representations.

Another category presents visualizations created by the blog author himself, with animations on such topics as mapping the expansion of WalMart in the United States over time (<http://projects.flowingdata.com/walmart/>), and mapping the use of the word "inauguration" on Twitter messages worldwide in the hours surrounding the events of January 20, 2009 in Washington DC. (<http://projects.flowingdata.com/inauguration/>).

FlowingData holds contests for its readers to contribute visualizations based on a given dataset. A forum page also adds opportunities for reader input.

Crossroads Corner highlights web sites recently added to the searchable Internet Crossroads in Social Science Data, available on the DISC web site at <http://www.disc.wisc.edu/newcrossroads/index.asp>. In this issue we feature three sites related to February, which is both African American History Month, and winter in Wisconsin!

TransAtlantic Slave Database

The TransAtlantic Slave Database was initially published on CD-ROM in 1999, and is in the DISC collection. However, the project has since expanded, and was recently placed online at <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces>. The Voyages database on the site includes voyages spanning the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, some 35,000 in all. Users can construct queries, select variables to be displayed in tables and downloaded, and view summary statistics, maps, and timelines.

The site provides an interactive page for examining and fine-tuning estimates of undocumented slave voyages as well. Also on the site is an African Names database of over 67,000 individuals aboard slave ships, of great potential interest to genealogists.

The DISC Online Archive carries a related study: *Slave Movement During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, publicly downloadable at <http://www.disc.wisc.edu/slavedata/>. The Slave Movement datasets are also available in the BADGIR catalog for online analysis using the Nesstar interface, at <http://nesstar.ssc.wisc.edu/>.

Virginia Emigrants to Liberia Database

From 1820 to 1865, the state of Virginia sent more emigrants to the newly-created independent African republic of Liberia than any other U.S. state. A 2007 book by historian Marie Tyler-McGraw, recounting Virginia's participation in the Liberian colonization movement, led to a collaboration in which two related data-

bases were placed online under the auspices of the Virginia Center for Digital History: a database of 3,700 emigrants and one of 250 emancipators. Stories, timelines and other resources are included on the site as well: <http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/liberia/>.

The Emigrants Database includes variables for names, gender, age, place of origin, emancipator, ship name, and Liberian destination, among others. The Emancipators Database includes names, locale, occupation, year of emancipation, ship name, emancipated names, and notes. Both databases are searchable by selected fields. If all selections are set to "any," all records are included in the resulting table. No download option is readily apparent.

The DISC Online Archive carries a related study: *Emigrants to Liberia/Liberian Census Data* (<http://www.disc.wisc.edu/Liberia/>). DISC's Liberia datasets are also available in the BADGIR catalog for online analysis using the Nesstar interface, at <http://nesstar.ssc.wisc.edu/>.

National Snow and Ice Data Center

The National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC), located at the University of Colorado in Boulder and online at <http://nsidc.org/>, disseminates data and supports study of earth's snow and ice in their various forms, also known as the cryosphere. The heart of the site is its over 500 data products, most of which are available free of charge. The site helpfully groups one set of data products together under the heading of "Easy to Use," denoting products that require minimal programming or processing, including a Sea Ice Index, Frozen Ground Maps, an animated Atlas of the Cryosphere, and a glacier photograph collection. The larger collection topic areas with potential interdisciplinary overlap with the social sciences include terrain and vegetation, ground and surface water, frozen ground, snow cover and lake ice data.