



## **Data Management through e-Social Science (DAMES)**

by Paul Lambert, University of Stirling



### **What is DAMES?**

DAMES is an ESRC-funded research Node based at the Universities of Stirling and Glasgow, involving academic staff from sociology, economics, public health research, and computer science\*. The project is, in general, concerned with processes of 'data management', by which we mean the organisation, preparation and enhancement of data for the purposes of research analysis. In practice, most of our work concerns resources relevant to the analysis of larger scale social survey datasets, such as information on harmonising and standardising variables, though we also have some resources relevant to other forms of data, such as administrative data and e-Health data.

DAMES is an 'e-Social Science' project. This means that we are concerned with online, technological solutions to data management challenges. We are developing a number of online services focused around case studies of specialist data topics (data on occupations, ethnicity, educational qualifications, social care, and e-Health records). We also have some more generic online tools, concerned with linking data and with collecting suitable documentation and metadata, and we are in the process of delivering training activities concerned with data preparation and organisation, documentation and replication. Our favourite package for organising survey data is Stata and – building upon earlier projects at Stirling which involved the same research team – we have several Stata oriented resources for data management available from our website.

### **What services do we offer?**

In February 2010 we entered the third year of the DAMES Node. We now have a number of prototype services available with varying levels of access control, and we are working hard on making them more user-friendly and effective. A list of our current resources is available at <http://www.dames.org.uk/resources.html>, and a list of our previous and forthcoming training events is at <http://www.dames.org.uk/workshops/>. We very much value feedback from applied researchers on the resources we are in the process of preparing – do please visit our site and let us know your input on what we're trying to do.

Recently, the Node has also been fortunate to secure funding for four concurrent PhD studentships linked to the Node. These involve research concerned with survey research into occupational careers and the analysis of e-Health infrastructural resources, and to secure small roles in two other related UK projects concerned with advanced social science data analysis (the National e-Infrastructure for Social Simulation ([www.neiss.ac.uk](http://www.neiss.ac.uk)) and the e-Stat project concerned with generic resources for statistical modelling ([www.cmm.bristol.ac.uk/research/NCESS-EStat/](http://www.cmm.bristol.ac.uk/research/NCESS-EStat/)).

### **Upcoming Events**

Members of AQMEN might be especially interested in two forthcoming events taking place in Stirling in the next months. On 10<sup>th</sup> May 2010, we will be holding a small 'expert workshop' on the topic of data resources on educational qualifications (we'll be introducing our prototype 'GEEDE' data portal, an online specialist data resource which brings together coding frames, documentation and other relevant data on taxonomies of educational qualifications). In August 2010 (exact dates to be confirmed) we'll be holding a 2-day training workshop on the topic of 'Documentation and Workflows in Social Survey Research'. Though we suspect such topics may not sound quite as hot as other courses in the methodology of social statistics, we have become quite convinced that these practical, data-oriented issues covered by these sessions are of far more relevance to social survey research than is sometimes appreciated!

\*Members of the DAMES Node are: Paul Lambert, Alison Bowes, Alison Dawson, Vernon Gayle (Sociology, Stirling); David Bell (Economics, Stirling); Margaret Maxwell, Nadine Dougall (Public health, Stirling); Simon Jones, Larry Tan, Ken Turner, Guy Warner (Computer Science, Stirling); and , Tom Doherty, Susan McCafferty, Richard Sinnott, John Watt (Computer Science, Glasgow).