The UK Data Audit

Researchers

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Background

ESRC provide considerable support to the social science research community in respect to the provision of data and this role is unique among social science research funders. However, ESRC recognises that a datasets strategy is required to make sure that the limited funds available for this are shared equitably between the competing needs of different researchers. It has also recognised that the strategy for providing money for dataset procurement or establishment is unclear and requires formulation. A major aspect of any revised strategy will be to encourage collaborations among inter-disciplinary academics, and therefore ESRC is keen to explore potential funding and working collaborations with other funding councils and organisations involved in data collection and provision. The 'UK Data Audit' has been funded to help recommend future ESRC strategy on data.

Aims of Study

- To identify where ESRC can consolidate and build upon existing areas of strength
- To identify key weaknesses and gaps in current provision
- To identify key datasets which interface with other scientific traditions
- To identify key factors that promote successful use and exploration of social science datasets
- To identify key factors that are barriers to effective access to, and use of, social science datasets
- To recommend particular data types and sources ESRC may seek to acquire for the benefit of the social science community, and to identify potential co-funding opportunities

Methods of Working

Phase I, which involved a desktop analysis has been completed and a small consultation exercise is complete. Phase II which involves a wider consultation of social scientists will begin in mid 2004.

Funding