The GESIS Data Archive for the Social Sciences

A widely recognised data archive on its way towards a new level of trustworthiness
GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences

• Infrastructure institution for the Social Sciences
• GESIS provides services in the fields of
  – Data: archiving, research, social monitoring
  – Methodology: consultation, developing complex methods
  – Information: social science literature and research activities
Data Archive: Mission and Objectives

• Explicit mission: archiving social science research data
• Purpose of the GESIS Data Archive is to keep social science research data available for data sharing and data re-use
• International data exchange (CESSDA, IFDO)
Archiving Workflow

Acquisition → Ingest → Data Processing → Archival Storage → Access
Traditional scope of our work

- Concentration on domain specific aspects: strong expertise in curating empirical social research data
- Well-integrated into a network of European and international social science archives
- But: Until recently the archive had not perceived itself as part of the digital preservation community
Expanding our focus

• Becoming an active player in the dp community

• Involvement in initiatives and communities:
  – persistent identifiers
  – metadata standards
  – linked data
  – nestor partner
Trustworthiness

• Ensuring stakeholders that the data they are using, producing or funding is treated according to established standards and norms
• Need to prove trustworthiness is not only an issue for new players but also for established ones like the GESIS Data Archive
European Framework for Audit and Certification

- CCSDS/ISO Repository Audit and Certification Working Group (RAC)
- Data Seal of Approval (DSA)
- DIN/nestor Working Group “Trustworthy Archives – Certification”

signed a Memorandum of Understanding

16.01.2013
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
TO CREATE A
EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR AUDIT AND CERTIFICATION OF DIGITAL
REPOSITORIES

This agreement is made between:
• David Giaretta in his capacity as chair of the CCSDS/ISO Repository Audit
  and Certification Working Group (RAIC).
• Henke Hammes in his capacity as Chair of the Data Seal of Approval (DSA)
  Board and
• Christian Keitel in his capacity as Chair of the DIN Working Group
  “Trustworthy Archives – Certification”

WHEREAS the parties to this Memorandum of Understanding all lead separate
groups striving at certifying digital repositories, they wish to put in place mechanisms
to ensure that the groups can collaborate in setting up an integrated framework for
auditing and certifying digital repositories.

The framework will consist of a sequence of three levels, in increasing
trustworthiness:

• **BASIC CERTIFICATION** is granted to repositories which obtain DSA certification;
• **EXTENDED CERTIFICATION** is granted to Basic Certification repositories which
  in addition perform a structured, externally reviewed and publicly available
  self-audit based on ISO 16363 or DIN 31644;
• **FORMAL CERTIFICATION** is granted to repositories which in addition to Basic
  Certification obtain full external audit and certification based on ISO 16363 or
  equivalent DIN 31644.
How to begin

• Apply for the DSA
• Create compilation of available documentations:
  – workflows
  – policies
  – internal and external standards etc.
• Check these against requirements
• Create missing or improve existing documentations
Example: Preservation policy

• A central activity in the process so far: formulating a preservation policy
• Challenge: provide enough information without becoming too detailed as the policy should not be changed frequently
• The process includes and stimulates basic discussions within the organisation
Beyond technical aspects…

Keeping a functioning system running while adapting it to new requirements is a balancing act. Staff members…

• are used to work within the existing setting
• need to be convinced of the positive aspects associated with changed standards and workflows
• should be involved in the whole process to utilise their expertise and to ensure successful implementation
Transparency

- Changed perception regarding the importance of transparency
- Increasing and legitimate external demand for comprehensible information on how we ensure integrity and accessibility of our holdings for the long term
Benefits

• Awareness of the capabilities, strengths and, most importantly, weaknesses or gaps
• May lead to quality improvements in workflows and services
• Valuable effect of establishing a common understanding for the mission and goals of an institution
• Ensure fulfillment of the requirements of being a trusted digital repository and display this to the public
Data Seal of Approval

- Self-assessment approach
- Low-threshold and lightweight alternative to a regular certification
- Helpful for digital repositories that may not have the resources for a time and cost intensive ISO or DIN certification
- Good starting point for more advanced certification steps within the European Framework for Audit and Certification
- Openness takes into account the diversity of existing repositories and archives
- Strong support by DSA

The openness of the DSA approach especially forces institutions to reflect, interpret, or develop their own understanding of mission, roles, workflows and services.
Any questions?

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