ICPSR Strategic Plan

Mission

ICPSR provides leadership and training in data access, curation, and methods of analysis for a diverse and expanding social science research community.

Strategic Directions

I. Through global leadership and strong partnerships, set standards for excellence in data curation and in the ethics of data access and protection for the social sciences and related disciplines.

Rationale

ICPSR is already recognized as a leader in data archiving, curation, preservation, and validation in the social sciences and related fields. Building on this solid core, ICPSR is uniquely positioned to lead in a complex new environment characterized by growing concerns about data confidentiality, increasingly porous boundaries between different research disciplines, and expectations for increased community involvement driven by Web 2.0. In addition, although data science is relatively new as an academic discipline, it is likely to gain momentum quickly, and ICPSR needs to be an active participant. Looking forward, ICPSR should take a more aggressive role as a leader in adapting and prototyping innovative technology to advance data science and to meet the future needs of members and other data users.

Strategies to support this direction

A. Drive the development of next-generation tools and standards for data curation – the active management and enhancement of trusted digital resources across the life cycle.
B. Create, model, and promote policies, procedures, and necessary technologies to enable access to social science research while protecting the rights of research participants.
C. Build effective partnerships with other data and technology innovators to help researchers integrate data and content located anywhere in the world.

II. Enhance the value of membership in ICPSR and attract new members by providing high-quality, innovative, and responsive services and products.

Rationale
Through the years, ICPSR has built close ties with its members and sponsors (including academic institutions, federal agencies, foundations, and other data users) by staying focused on understanding their needs and delivering services to meet those needs. As ICPSR looks to the future, it has an opportunity to serve its audiences even more effectively by enriching the services that it offers, and by working closely with members and sponsors to understand their needs – and to envision how those needs will evolve. At the same time, ICPSR can broaden its sphere of influence and its sources of funding by expanding the number and diversity of organizations utilizing its services. To achieve that end, ICPSR must continue to provide its current members with highest quality service, responsiveness, education, and technology solutions. Moreover, ICPSR will need to market itself more successfully than competitors in order to let a wider set of potential members, sponsors, and other data users understand why they too should choose ICPSR.

**Strategies to support this direction**

A. Identify and attract new kinds of members and new constituencies within member institutions and organizations.

B. Design and deliver expanded services to members and their representatives, offering clear value and benefits.

C. Develop a strong community that consists of ICPSR members and others in the broader world of education, science, and public policy.

**III. Advance ICPSR's critical role in social science research by broadening the collection, conducting research in the emerging field of data science, and embedding primary social science research in the organization.**

**Rationale**

As academic fields have become increasingly interconnected, the data needs of ICPSR members, sponsoring organizations, and other researchers have expanded beyond the social sciences to include a broader set of academic disciplines – such as geoscience, public health and epidemiology, bioinformatics, biomedical studies, and environmental science. ICPSR has a need and an opportunity to widen its data horizon to meet the expanding needs of the social sciences and related fields.

ICPSR operates in an environment in which research is itself a critical activity, which means that ICPSR staff must include active researchers. Some of this research needs to take place in the emerging field of data science, especially in the realms of metadata development, preservation, and the protection of research participants. Just as important, for ICPSR to be a part of the academic and policy communities, its staff needs to be undertaking research in the topical areas where ICPSR has a data stewardship role or other expertise.
Strategies to support this direction

A. Promote new and emerging areas of research by developing the expertise, funding, technology, and timetable required to add data from those new areas to the ICPSR collection.

B. Articulate and realize a research vision related to data science, which encompasses digital preservation, metadata, data integration, and dissemination.

C. Strengthen ICPSR’s commitment to basic and applied research that grows out of the dynamic expertise of the staff.

IV. Leverage the success of ICPSR's training programs and increase their impact by expanding the curriculum, broadening the faculty, and reaching new audiences.

Rationale

ICPSR is the leading educational and training organization in quantitative methods for social science research, and has the potential to provide training of the same stature for the entire social science research data lifecycle. Moreover, as the educational arm of ICPSR, the Summer Program has the potential to be an educational engine that can take on an even more pivotal role than in the past to expand the influence of ICPSR in the field of social science data research – drawing in high-level students from a range of organizations and audiences. The ICPSR training programs can meet the future needs of new constituencies by expanding the curriculum, developing best-in-class programs and training materials, partnering with complementary educational organizations, and working with other technology leaders to develop innovations in training technology.

Strategies to support this direction

A. Build on the Summer Program's excellence in quantitative methods through continued development of the traditional curriculum and expansion into areas that reflect ICPSR's evolving role and mission.

B. Broaden the base of skilled faculty through increased recruitment, mentoring, and professional development programs to increase ICPSR's ability to provide instruction and educational services to wider audiences.

C. Extend the reach of ICPSR's training mission into new audiences, locations, and delivery mechanisms.

V. Invest in ICPSR's people, the systems they rely on, and their workplace environment to assure ICPSR's innovation and leadership in the future.
Rationale

As ICPSR continues to expand its reach, its level of services, and its role as an innovator in the field, an appropriate organizational capacity is vital to success. The objective is to strengthen and support the staff in order to ensure that ICPSR has the capacity and systems in place to meet the needs of the future organization, to build upon the current technological and communications infrastructure that supports it, to firm up current financial support and open new revenue streams, and to look closely at the extent to which ICPSR is able to act upon its core values – by identifying and implementing new ways to realize them.

Strategies to support this direction

A. Foster a vibrant workplace culture that attracts, encourages, and rewards excellent people at every stage of their careers.
B. Broaden ICPSR's commitment to diversity, within the organization and externally through our work.
C. Empower ICPSR's staff by providing world-leading technologies and advanced workflow systems.
D. Strengthen ICPSR's sustainable financial model by diversifying its funding streams and exploring new options.