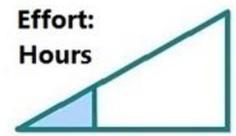


## Case study on user satisfaction surveys

Data Archive: Slovenian Social Science Data Archives (ADP)



### Introduction



This case study examines user satisfaction measurement via online surveys. It focuses on the overall picture for surveys in social science data archives and related organizations in general, and the specific experience of the Slovenian Social Science Data Archives (ADP). Related materials include an English translation of the ADP user satisfaction survey, and generic guidance on survey questionnaires in the toolkit User Guide.

ADP is a national research infrastructure for social sciences established in 1997. Its main mission is to manage data and data services to support research, education, and general well-being. The ADP serves as a national data service provider in the Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA) and is one of the smallest CESSDA member archives. Between 2009 and 2013 ADP had approximately 600 registered users annually. However, significantly more people were using openly accessible metadata and study related material such as questionnaires (approximately 7.000 hits on the web site were recorded per year).

ADP has a long tradition of collecting user statistics. Reports on registered users as well as web statistics date back to 1999. Measurements have changed over time with the development of measurement software. However, apart from feedback from workshops and other ADP events, ADP lacked detailed information about users' needs and satisfaction with its work. Hence, the decision was made to run a larger user satisfaction survey in 2016.

In planning for the user satisfaction survey, information was gathered on previous studies carried out in related organizations (e.g. other data archives, libraries and statistical offices). We found the measurements were mostly related to the narrow segments of the organization's operations, and only in rare cases covered all its services.



## User satisfaction surveys from related organizations

### UK Data Service (UKDS)

Among European archives, the UKDS measures its users most comprehensively. In April 2014, they began regular monitoring of user satisfaction with their website. Assessment is carried out for different sub-pages that are visited (for example, census data, materials access through Nesstar, access to the aggregate data). When exiting the website, the visitor receives a short questionnaire assessing their satisfaction with the service. These statistics are not always reliable, due to the small number of responses. However, the results are still useful for the analysis of individual segments and serve as the basis for strategic planning. Additionally, UKDS conducted two larger assessments in 2014. One of them evaluated website updates and advertising in mass media. Although users expressed general satisfaction with the website, they suggested some minor adjustments, primarily in design, e.g. to make it simpler and to provide clearer access to information. Respondents supported the idea of animation layers on the website, which would be in the form of "How to" guides aimed specifically at new users (AudienceNet 2015). In another evaluation, focus groups with users and data depositors were conducted. In 2014 and 2015 UKDS carried out a number of other surveys among its users (students, researchers, professors, commercial and non-academic users) as well as related communities (academic library).

### Finnish Social Science Data Archive (FSD)

Among other CESSDA service providers, user satisfaction is regularly measured in the Finnish social sciences archive, FSD. In 2003 and 2008 internet surveys on user satisfaction were carried out. Respondents expressed their opinion on the quality of archive services: data delivery time, ease of finding relevant information, comprehensiveness of data description and others (Keckman-Koivuniemi and Sivonen 2003). In 2008 they also reported on the frequency of use of FSD services and products and were asked to estimate the effect use of the services have on their job and research expenses. Depositors evaluated services that were specifically targeted for them, and reported that "they benefit from archiving: their data are safe, stay in readable format and receive exposure" (Keckman-Koivuniemi 2008). In the above mentioned cases registered users and depositors were interviewed. In 2011 FSD evaluated their Research Methods Web resources (MOTV), where respondents (members of MOTV's mailing list, teachers and other users that ordered or downloaded datasets for teaching purposes) were asked to evaluate their own teaching given the availability of research methods resources. Their reply highlighted the importance of materials being free of charge, reliable and usable; having clear examples and service being available on permanent basis (Keckman-Koivuniemi 2012).

### Libraries

User satisfaction in Slovenian libraries has been measured since the 1970s, in recent years mostly by web surveys that are disseminated via the website of the National library and its social media channels. Academic service librarians analysed how well users were satisfied with traditional and electronic resources and services, how well they knew and how often they used them, how satisfied they were with the staff, premises and equipment. Suggestions on improvement of library services were also collected. Researchers were also interested in how access to information and the library environment (e.g. reading room), affected study performance and whether it contributed to the creation of new ideas and knowledge (Ambrožič 2015). In a 2013 study, questions about the economic value of the libraries were added based on the research of the German National Library of Science and Technology (Ibid.).

## Statistical Offices

One of the first user surveys conducted by the Statistical Office of Republic of Slovenia (SORS) was a user satisfaction survey. It included the opinion of the employees in the organization in order to determine the possible gap between the two groups on perceived importance of quality criteria. The survey concluded that "despite the fact that there are legal provisions on collecting and delivering data, Slovenian national statistics still needs tuning with users" (Križman 2002). Subsequent user satisfaction surveys studied the usage and needs of the following four different users group: a) older - intensive users, who used data frequently and had even established personal contact with SORS; b) intensive business users, most of whom were more educated; c) average business users; and d) younger users who accessed data less often and came from the fields of science, research and education. The conclusion was that these groups differed significantly and as a consequence SORS changed statistics, documentation and reports in order to reflect these groups (Šnuderl 2014).

## The ADP user satisfaction survey

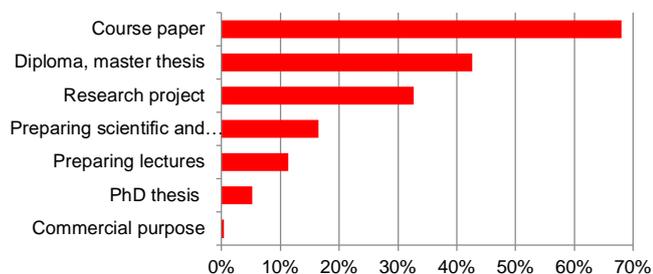
ADP distributes most of its archived materials via the internet. It is therefore crucial to offer good on-line services. Our objective was to survey user satisfaction with ADP services and to put forward recommendations for improvements. However, we are aware that user satisfaction is only one possible performance indicator for assessing the quality of the organization and more evaluations and measurements should be performed in the future.

We modelled the measurement instrument on previous surveys by similar organizations abroad, as well as user satisfaction surveys conducted in libraries and statistical organizations mentioned in the previous section. An English translation of our 2016 ADP user satisfaction survey questionnaire has been made available for you to download and adapt/re-use if you wish (Vipavc Brvar 2016b).

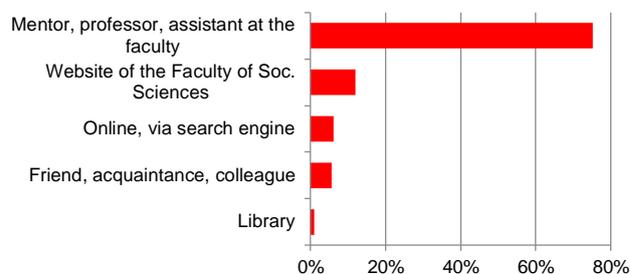
An invitation to participate in the user satisfaction survey was sent to the email addresses of registered users. Some of these users might not have had an active account at the time, but had been users in the past. 293 users responded to the survey (with a 10 % final response rate). The open source Computer Assisted Web Interviewing tool 1KA (2017) was used to carry out the online survey.

The questionnaire had four sections. The first one covered questions about the frequency of use of materials and services from ADP, and the purpose of their use. The second section of the questionnaire covered overall satisfaction with services, research data and materials provided by ADP. The third section referred to the respondent's own research practices, and the fourth contained demographic questions.

Most of ADP's users used survey materials and data files for writing term papers and carrying out practical work in classes at university as well as for diploma and master theses. Still, there were many that had used or were planning to use it for research projects and for writing scientific papers. Mentors and professors at the faculty were identified as the most important promoters of the ADP. Results on the purpose of use, structure of the users and promoters emphasized the need for future focus on undergraduate and postgraduate students via professors, or specially tailored courses.



**Purpose of use (multiple responses)**  
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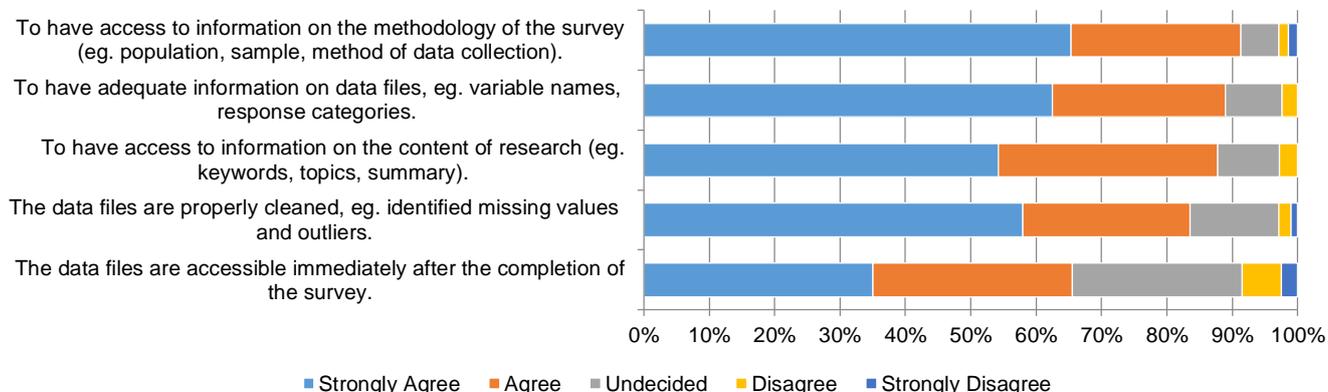


**Where did you hear about us?**  
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Users also stated that they used materials mostly for simple data analysis (50 %) and rarely for complex analysis or preparation of their own research instruments. SPSS and Excel were commonly used for analysis of research data. 60 % of users said that they were beginners or had limited statistical skills and experience.

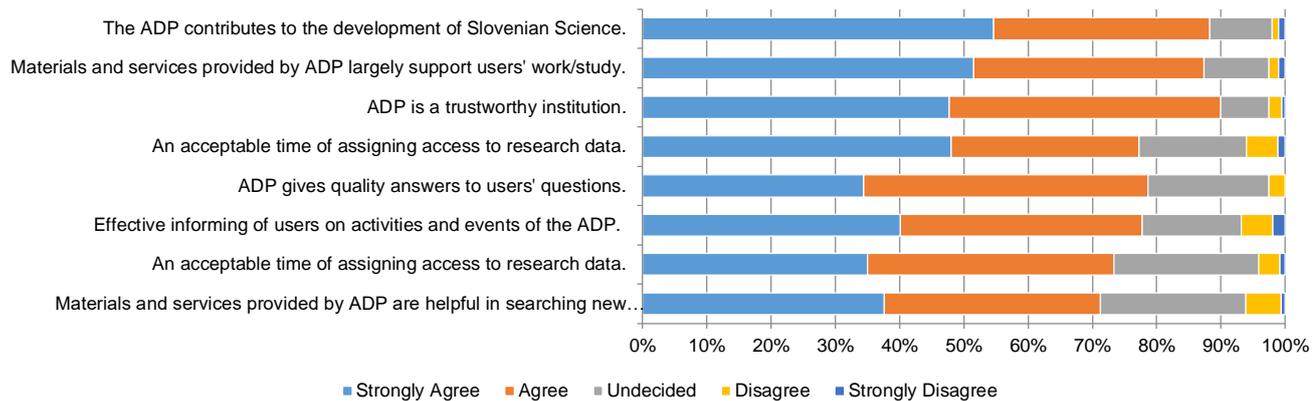
The website and ADP newsletter were commonly used channels for accessing information about ADP and availability of resources. This confirms how important it is to put effort into good design of the website and its content. The need for a redesign of the web page in order to make it more user-friendly was among the most often mentioned suggestions for improvement. Website redesign was thus recognized as a goal for 2016 and is expected to be accomplished in 2017. ADP archives many large national surveys that are based on international questionnaires. However, users expressed a clear need for more data on Slovenian specific issues. ADP liaised with several research deans at University of Ljubljana and agreement was reached to more regularly archive studies with the data addressing country specific themes.

70 % of respondents said they were satisfied with the work of the archive and data provided. They were most satisfied with study descriptions and especially satisfied with detailed description of the methodology, while they were least satisfied with the amount of time they needed to find most suitable data. These findings were in line with the needs they expressed, confirming our path in enhancing quality of data and metadata materials. We provide regular training and workshops and also plan to use tools provided by CESSDA to prepare short webinars on data access. This would give our users the opportunity to access videos at the time that would best fit their needs.



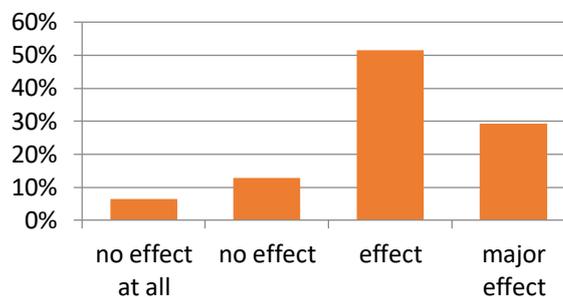
**Evaluation of personal importance of research data and material**  
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Respondents were asked to evaluate ADP in terms of the usefulness of its services. Almost all agreed that ADP contributed to the development of Slovenian Science and that ADP was a trustworthy institution.



**Evaluation of ADP services**  
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We were also interested in how a ‘hypothetical’ situation of not having access to ADP data and services would affect respondents’ work and study. Results suggest that this would pose serious constraints.



**Impact of not accessing ADP data and services on their work or study**  
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## Key lessons for other data archives

During the past decade, we have seen merging of data archives either with organizations working in similar research areas, or with other major research centres and infrastructures, with the purpose of combining different in-house knowledge and technologies. Reviewing the state of the art of user satisfaction assessments for data archives, leads to the conclusion that it is important to consider the development stage, number of different services, and integration among research areas in relation to the size of the organization itself.

When designing a user survey, goals should be clearly defined. You need to decide whether you will study the organization as a whole or just part of the products and services you offer. Are the results going to be used for future decisions and new workflow in the organization as a whole or are they going to help you prepare better workshop content?

In order to continuously adapt the data archive’s strategy to the clients’ requests, we should aim to gain a precise understanding of users and their expectations. Key questions, proposed by the German National

Library of Science and Technology (Petri and Graumann 2014), might be helpful here as a checklist:

- How satisfied are the users with the products and services?
- What are the expectations and requirements of the users?
- Which different user groups exist – and should they be addressed differently?
- Which products or services are among the most important?
- What are the current strengths and weaknesses?
- Are there products or services which can be skipped?
- Which measures should be taken in order to improve customer satisfaction and retention?
- Which measures will have most impact on the users' retention?

Results of the survey will show needs of users and should help tailor your future activities and improvements. You might need to prioritize needed changes, taking in account your resources and the policy of the organization. You might need to disregard suggestions that are not in line with your mission. Survey results could also be used in advocacy and supply evidence of your work and user satisfaction that you can provide to your funders.

Research infrastructures, which also include data archives, are the backbone of science. They are important for the development of social research at national and international level. They offer open access to a growing quantity of research data and encourage data use by introducing common documentation standards and technical platforms for exchanging data. Services offered by research infrastructures should be directed towards users and should include access to research data, as well as access to tools, education and training, and methodological knowledge. All with the goal of contributing to the progress of science, education and general wellbeing through maximising the reuse of data as a public good. User satisfaction surveys can have an important part to play in helping services maximise their usefulness and impact.

## Linked toolkit resources

Effort

CESSDA SaW, 2017, *User Guide*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18448/16.0001>



## Linked external resources

Effort

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Vipavc Brvar, Irena, 2016c, *Vloga uporabnikov pri oblikovanju kakovosti storitev arhivov podatkov* [The role of users in shaping service quality of data archives]. Ljubljana, Slovenia [Master's thesis], [http://dk.fdv.uni-lj.si/magistrska/pdfs/mag\\_vipavc-brvar-irena.pdf](http://dk.fdv.uni-lj.si/magistrska/pdfs/mag_vipavc-brvar-irena.pdf)