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# From snail mail to email

## Delivering the Labour Force Survey

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The Labour Force Survey: past,  
present and future

28 November 2013

BIS Conference Centre, London

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UK Data Service

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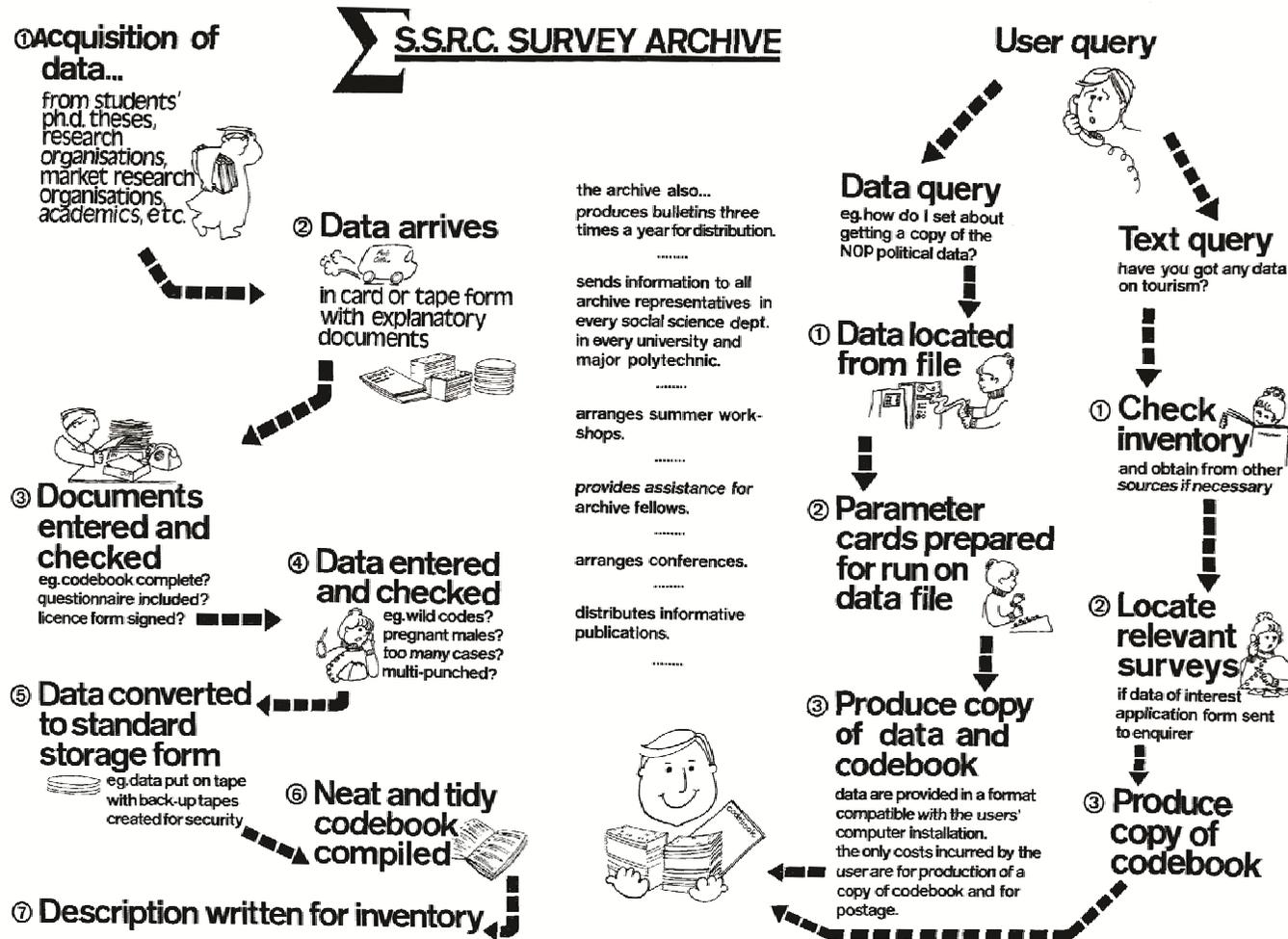
# Preparing LFS data for preservation and re-use.

"The greatest misconception about survey archives is the belief ... that when data ... arrive at the archive their transfer is complete".

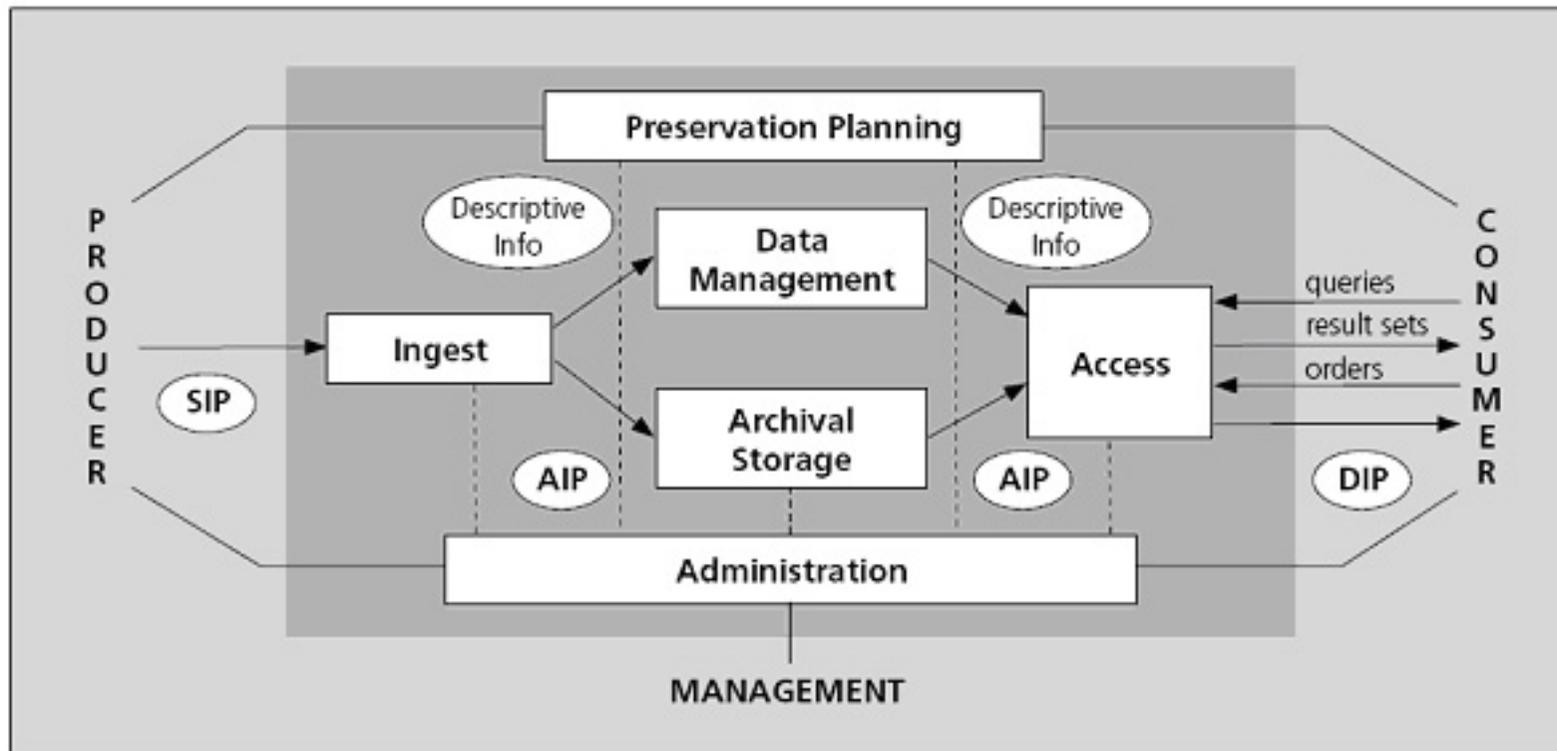
This quote from Allen Potter, the Archive's first director, is taken from an article in *New Society* published in 1969



# Then: workflow in the 1980s



# Now: the workflow today



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# What Essex does: receipt to delivery...

## Labour Force Survey

The original 1984 Labour Force Survey file presented the user with a somewhat irregular structure. It contained three record types: '1' for non-respondents, '2' for respondents, and one record type '9', a file integrity record. Further, the fields which make up record type '2' varied according to whether or not the respondent was from Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland or England.

To ease the burden on the end user, the original data has been restructured by the Data Archive and is now available in one or more SPSS\* Export or fixed format raw data files, as is the limited amount of information collected about non-respondents. The SPSS\* dictionary is a minimalist one: variable labelling is included, but there are no value labels or user-defined missing values.

*ESRC Data Archive Bulletin June 1989*

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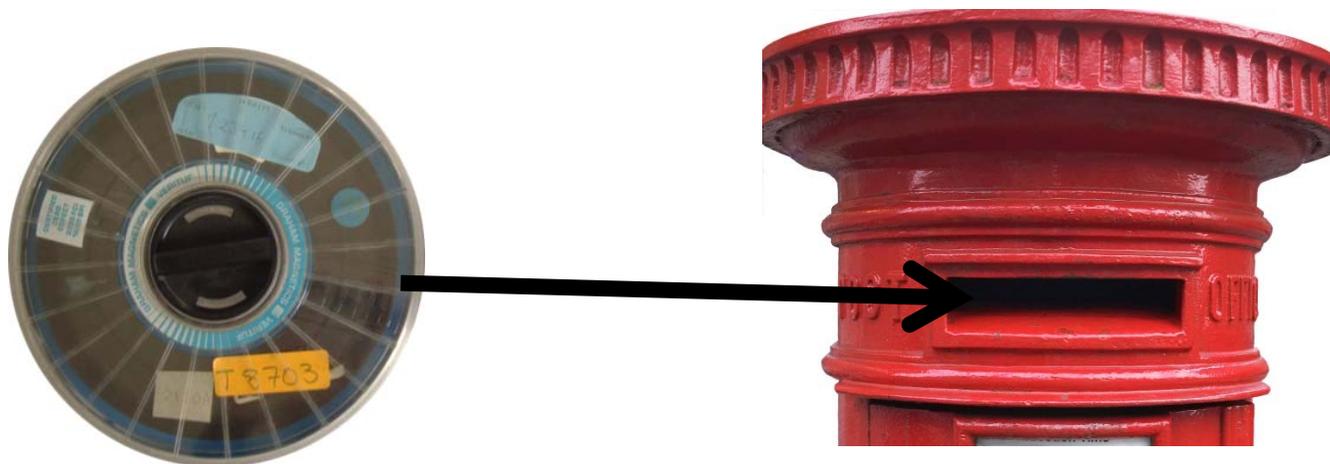
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# Then: Magnetic Tape

- Graham Magnetics (Twelve inch) (c.1979).
- the tape held 1600 bits per inch, meaning that the whole tape would contain some 40 Megabytes (MB) of data
- these tapes were used predominantly for data storage, but early LFS data were deposited at the UK Data Archive on this medium



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# Then...we worked on a mainframe.



University of Essex DEC-System 10 computer



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# Then...

Staff worked 'remotely'  
on terminals

... so did researchers



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# Now...

the data centre has around 90 terabytes of storage in a room of approx. 10 x 6 sq. metres

for the DEC 10 we worked in megabytes in a room of approx. 36 x 22 sq. yds.



New data centre



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# Now...

Staff work on desktops



Researchers can  
download to laptop



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# Then: Delivery media...



The first floppy disk was sent out from the UK Data Archive in October 1981.



Optical disk - usually known as a CD, introduced on the market in late 1982. Not used by the UK Data Archive as dissemination medium until 1991. Most data were disseminated on this until around 2000 when the download service was launched.

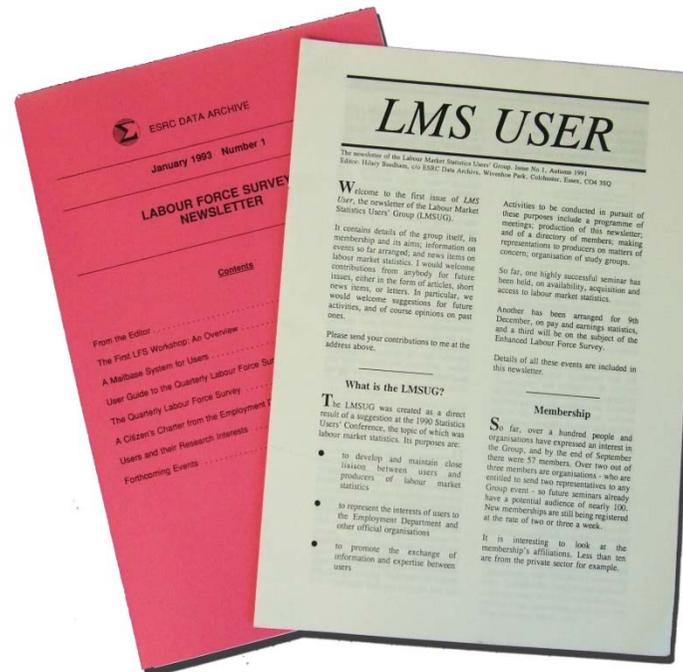
<http://ukda40.data-archive.ac.uk/about/media.asp>

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# Then...

Users were kept in touch by newsletter



# Then: ESDS Government news - help for users...

ESDS Government have produced two online user guides:

- 'Employment and Labour market Introductory User Guide' - an overview of data sources with hyperlinks to various documents available on the web;
- 'STATA for LFS' - a comprehensive introduction to STATA using examples from the Labour Force Survey (LFS)

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*UK Databytes September - November 2003*



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# What data are available?

Then:

A title search for the LFS in BIRON brings up 92 studies with various timeframes and versions.

*The Data Archive Bulletin, May 2000*

Now:

A search today brings up several hundred studies including Local Area code data, Eurostat datasets, Special Licence datasets; Northern Irish datasets.

*From the catalogue (Discover), November 2013*



# Then: a snapshot - research use in the mid 1990's

- April 1995 – March 1996
  - 71 researchers accessed LFS files
  - 91 researchers accessed QLFS files
- Research projects included
  - Changing household patterns and their implications for social policy
  - Part-timer's labour supply
  - Earnings and employment opportunities for people with disabilities
  - Changes in employment rights thresh-holds



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# Now: recent LFS research output (1)

## ESDS continues to fuel vital research

...They used the Labour Force Survey to study the impact the recession had on the employment levels of migrants to the UK as part of a wider research project on communities in the West. Their research was developed into a report and a book about the transatlantic experience of migrants in the recession...

*ESDS News March - May 2012*



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## Now: recent LFS research output (2)

Labour market responses to the rise in the state pension age for women. 2013.

This research from the Institute for Fiscal Studies relied on data from the QLFS. Results were introduced at the Nuffield Foundation in March 2013 to an audience including policymakers at the DWP. The researchers subsequently presented results to policymakers at HM Treasury and their work was cited by the Office of Budget Responsibility in their Economic and Fiscal Outlook accompanying the 2013 Budget. This work has also been cited in the press (Telegraph, Guardian, The Economist), and discussed on BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

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# Contacting the Data Archive 'On-Line'



Then:

The SSRC Data Archive has established a 'postbox' on the University of Essex DEC-System 10 computer to enable people with access to the Essex computer either via PSS or the telephone to send 'electronic mail' directly to the Archive."

**Bulletin 21 February 1982**

Now:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- JISCmail list
- RSSfeed
- Email

**November 2013**



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# Questions

<http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/help/get-in-touch.aspx>

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