## EDITOR'S SUMMARY

The University of Michigan has added an option for researchers who want to self-publish research data. As a variation on the 50-year old Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research data archive, the University has launched openICPSR allowing rapid data deposit and public access at no cost or minimal charge. Like the long-standing archive, the openICPSR focuses on social and behavioral science and enjoys the sponsorship of an established university. It offers immediate distribution to 750 other institutions, an easy-to-use interface, topic-specific metadata applied automatically and reviewed by professionals in the field and the capacity to handle restricted use data. Data may also be published in the standard archive. Social and behavioral scientists should consider archive features, preservation needs, audience and any disclosure risks when selecting a channel to self-publish their research data.

## KEYWORDS

archives

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information sharing

information access

social sciences

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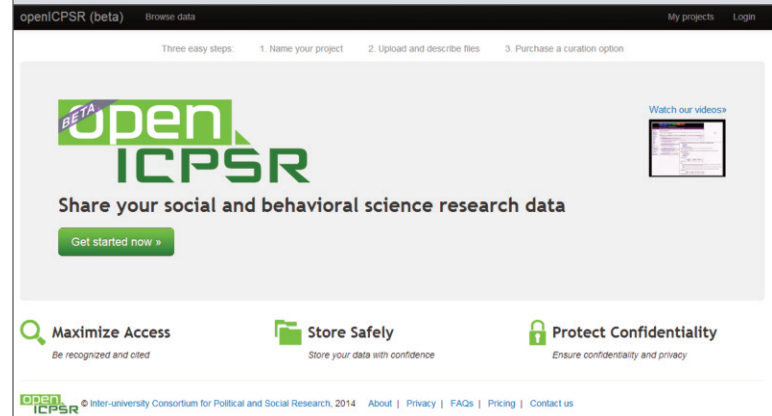
# OpenICPSR

by Jared Lyle

Researchers now have numerous options for self-publishing research data. These services range from Silicon Valley startups offering temporary sharing platforms to traditional libraries and archives offering longer-term preservation and curation. This growing array of diverse options available to the research community is a wonderful development, signaling a desire – even if nascent – to increase data sharing and research transparency.

Adding to this mix, the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), a large social and behavioral science data archive based at the University of Michigan, recently launched openICPSR (http://openicpsr.org/). Currently in beta version, openICPSR is a research data-sharing service that allows depositors to rapidly self-publish research data, enabling the public to access the data without charge – or in the case of restricted-use data, for nominal charge. The service was developed to assist researchers meet the requirements for public access to federally funded research data.

ICPSR has a rich 50-year history of archiving and preserving data collections. For standard deposits, professional staff review, curate and distribute data

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**FIGURE 1.** Screenshot of the openICPSR home page

collections in multiple formats. Preservation copies are made to better ensure long-term access. The openICPSR service is an alternative to the standard ICPSR deposit process, providing immediate, self-controlled distribution of data and metadata, albeit without the rich curation and preservation features; data in openICPSR are distributed and preserved as-is. During beta testing, self-publishing with openICPSR is free. After the beta period ends, a fee will be assessed to help recover costs and ensure sustainable preservation and public access.

## What Is Unique about openICPSR?

Several features set openICPSR apart from other self-publishing services. The following are among them:

- immediate distribution in ICPSR's data catalog, with exposure to an established network of over 750 research institutions and over 500,000 unique visitors each year
- the reliability of a trusted, sustainable organization that is building on over 50 years of experience archiving research data
- an intuitive and clean interface for viewing and organizing files
- social and behavioral science-specific metadata, especially covering methodology, indexed by powerful search tools and major search engines
- metadata review by professional social and behavioral science librarians
- the ability to accept and disseminate sensitive and/or restricted-use data in the public-access environment. Disclosive data can be disseminated via ICPSR's Virtual Data Enclave, which allows secure access to restricted data through a virtual private network connection to a portal on a desktop computer.

Data self-published on openICPSR may still be selected for standard curation by ICPSR professional staff, either at the depositor's request or by ICPSR review.

## Finding the Right Self-Publishing Provider for Your Data

Each data self-publishing provider has something to offer the research community, but no one provider will be able to meet the needs of all researchers. When faced with choosing a self-publishing data service, there are a few questions to consider: How much descriptive metadata would you like to add? Are you interested in long-term preservation? To which audience do you want your data exposed and distributed? Do your data have disclosure or confidentiality risks? The answers to these questions should help you narrow down the options and choose the service that is the best fit.

The University of Michigan's openICPSR provides a new self-publishing option, anchored by ICPSR's 50-years of trusted experience archiving social and behavioral science research data. Interested? Give it a try, and let us know what you think. ■



**FIGURE 2.** A screenshot showing an example of a data collection from openICPSR.

CONTENTS          TOP OF ARTICLE          < PREVIOUS PAGE