

***Geography Data Unit
(UKBORDERS)
Annual Report to the ESRC
Census Advisory Committee
August 2008 – October 2008***

EDINA



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Executive Summary

Bulleted highlights for the years activity are:

- **Continued successful operation of service and support for users;**
- **Shibboleth (UK Access Management Federation) infrastructure released;**
- **New integrated News and RSS feed implemented;**
- **Development, testing and release of the new metadata service;**
- **Related developments (DIaD project).**

1 Introduction

This report contains a high level review of the activities of the Geography Data Unit (UKBORDERS) during the first period of the new Programme period 2006-2011 for the period August 2008 to October 2008.

Aims

The core aims of the UKBORDERS project are:

- to provide those in UK higher education involved in teaching & research with cost-effective access to a resource of digitised boundaries for thematic mapping and GIS operations; and
- to provide those in UK higher education involved in teaching & research with cost-effective access to geographical lookup directories; and
- to provide training, support and assistance to that community in the exploitation of those resources.

Objectives

The key objectives for the service for the period 2006-2011 are:

- to maintain the data facility as a robust on-line system serving up data in a variety of formats
- to explore and develop new methods and channels to assist users in exploiting the census outputs
- to support users via on-line help, individual assistance and via workshops
- to promote the ease of use of Census materials in research and teaching
- to interoperate with other Census Units to assist in the delivery of census products to the community via the new Census Portal

Start and end dates of the project

The UKBORDERS project commenced on 1 August 2006 and will run until 31 July 2011.

Staffing

The GDU team comprises Dr David Medyckyj-Scott as Unit Director (0.02 FTE). Day-to-day responsibility for the service and ongoing development is the responsibility of James Reid (0.35 FTE). Technical development, GIS analytical support and helpdesk support are performed by a team comprised (in part) of James Crone, Stuart

MacDonald and Tony Mathys (1.0 FTE in total). Software development is the responsibility of Lukas Kryger (0.3 FTE) with Senior software support and mentoring provided by Ben Butchart (0.2 FTE). The generic EDINA helpdesk and promotion infrastructure is also utilised for support and promotion (0.25 FTE).

2 Overview of Activities

The core focus of activity for of this period has been on:

- Continued successful operation of service;
- Shibboleth planning, integration and testing;
- Release of Metadata search service
- Development of automated news and RSS feed;
- Related developments (DIaD).

3 Progress

3.1 Continued Operation

Routine data updates (e.g. new versions of the National Statistics Postcode Directory) have been ongoing as have low level maintenance tasks (e.g. security patches to OS or database). These have availed of the 'at-risk' period and not inconvenienced users. Outstanding application and data/interface bugs are formally maintained in a separate Bug Tracking software repository. These are routinely cleared and any new issues, added, prioritised and serviced as a matter of course.

3.2 Shibboleth infrastructure

The new Shibboleth infrastructure was successfully released to users on August 1st without any major incident or disruption to users. The GDU now operates a dual access and logging system which supports both traditional Athens access and the new UKAMF.

3.3 News and RSS automation

News items posted to the main GDU 'news' page is now fully integrated with an automated RSS feed allowing subscribers to receive timely news about service downtimes, training and data releases.

The RSS feed can also be used by the Census Portal acting as an aggregator in order to maintain an up to date news presence at census.ac.uk.

3.4 Metadata search facility

A new metadata search facility has been developed and released which enables prospective users to ascertain more information about each dataset held in UKBORDERS. The service utilises the JISC funded service Go-Geo! And cross searches this to provide current metadata records catalogued to the appropriate ISO standards. The release of the basic metadata service will be followed by facilities which will dynamically include the relevant metadata with data downloads.

3.5 Related developments

The related DIaD project funded under the Census innovation Awards has made progress in demonstrating geolinkage between the GDU and CDU holdings. A basic

client and working architecture has been developed and is in the process of being revised to account for changes in the underlying standards and to remove pre existing dependencies upon Grid e-Infrastructure components. The data serving capacity as CDU has been relocated to a new server and progress made in further populating the test datasets.

Progress has been temporarily affected by the departure (mid October) of the full time developer at GDU (Vivin Suchitra) and ESRC have been informed of the possibility of a short hiatus whilst a replacement is recruited. Interviews have been conducted and a new member of staff will be joining the EDINA team beginning of December which will allow staff redeployment to offset any project slippage .

4 Internal Communication

As part of the normal operation of the unit various internal (to the census programme) meetings and discussions were held:

- Email exchanges with ONS geography on redistribution of OS derived data sets
- Email exchanges with GROS about inclusion of new datasets (2006 Settlements and Localities)
- Meetings and email exchanges with OS to clarify data redistribution issues pertaining to derived data
- Email exchanges with CRS on CP issues – e.g. metadata ,licensing and workshop issues;
- Meetings and email exchanges with OS to clarify data redistribution issues pertaining to derived data and copyright
- Attendance at the Data Feeds Network at Manchester, October 9th 2009
- Liaison with MIMAS and UCL for DIaD project

5 External Communication

UKBORDERS, and the Census Access Programme (CAP) more generally, benefit from the promotional activities that EDINA as a JISC National Datacentre engage in. The following summarises the key conferences, workshops and other promotional activities over the reporting period at which UKBORDERS and the census programme has been promoted.

- eScience All hands meeting, Edinburgh September 8-11
- JISC eRoadshow, Bristol September 18th

6 Future Developments

- Extensions to the PostcodeDirectoryDownload Service to disseminate the historic postcode resources (pre 2000).
- Further user commissioned case studies
- Additional training activities (preliminarily scheduled for February 2009).
- Development of formal learning and teaching materials.

- Ongoing contributions to the development of the Census Portal.
- General update enhancements to existing services:
 - Release of support for KML format in BoundaryDataSelector
 - Additional Projection support in BoundaryDataSelector
 - A redesign and reorganisation of EasyDownload collection.

Annex A – (Summary) STATISTICS

Usage - downloads

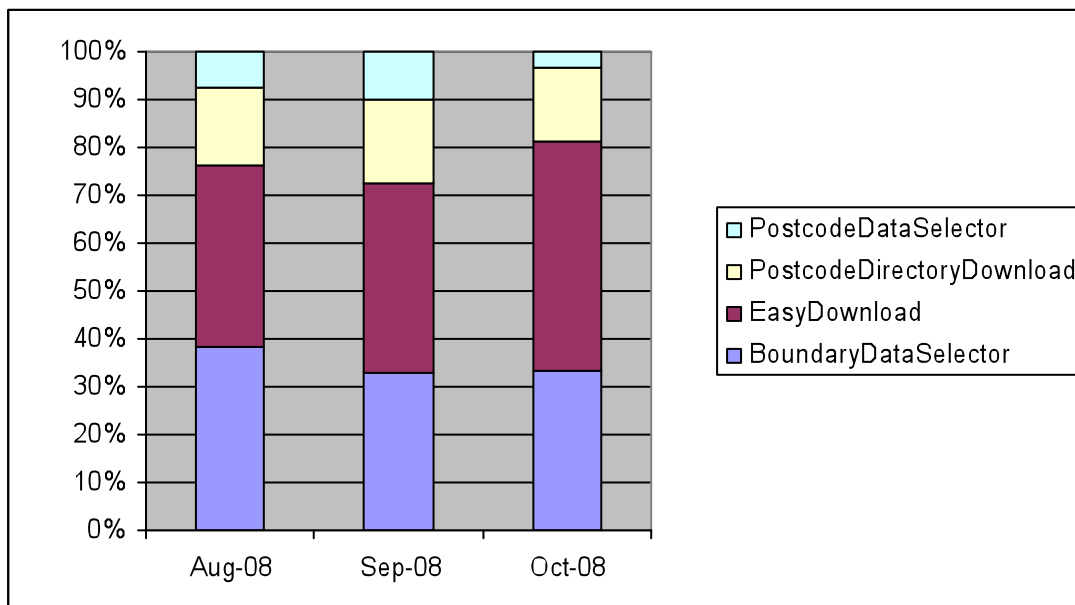


Fig. 1 Download Statistics August 2008 – October 2008 (at 13/10/2008)

Number of Accesses - For details on number of accesses to the Census Programme and other DSUs, please see

<http://www.mu.jisc.ac.uk/servicedata/census/trend/index.html>.

The relevant UKBORDERS data is shown below.

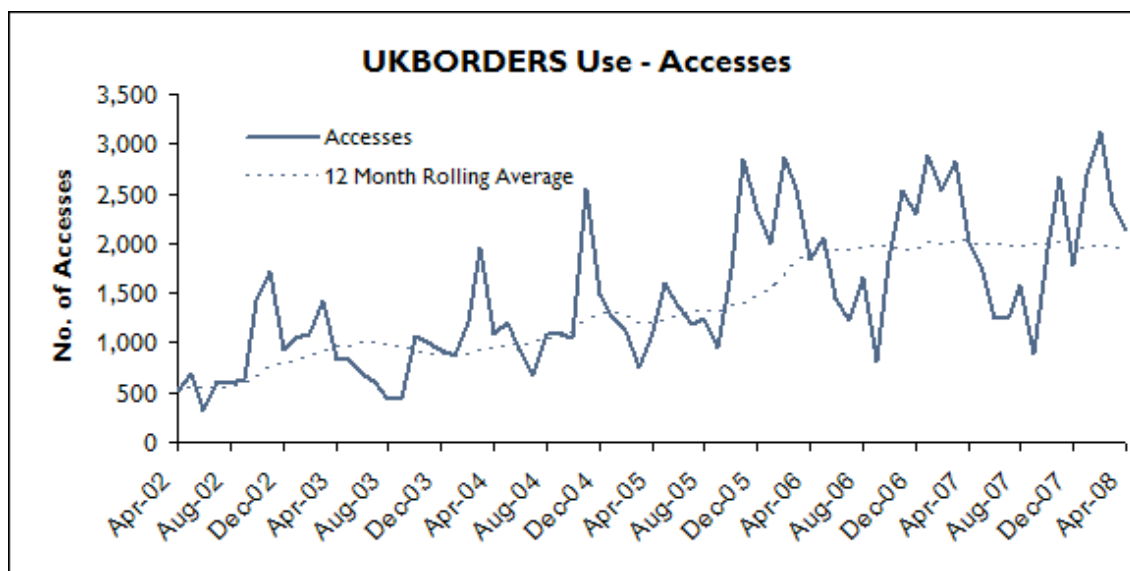


Table 1. BoundaryDataSelector, EasyDownload, PostcodeDataSelector and PostcodeDirectoryDownload numbers of downloads by month, August 2008 – October 2008 (as at 13/10/2008)

	Aug-08	Sep-08	Oct-08
BoundaryDataSelector	496	334	256
EasyDownload	489	404	364
PostcodeDirectoryDownload	206	180	118
PostcodeDataSelector	99	101	27
Totals	1290	1019	765

Table 2. Top 20 dataset downloads August 2008– October 2008. (as at 13/10/2008)

Dataset	No.s of downloads
English Districts 2001	196
NSPD August 2008	196
NSPD May 2008	187
English Census Area Statistic Wards 2001	160
English Counties 2001	147
English Census Output Areas 2001	146
English Government Offices for the Regions 2001	67
English Lower Layer Super Output Areas 2001	66
English CAS Postcode Sectors 2001	60
English Standard Table Wards 2001	59
NSPD February 2008	50
Scotland National Outline 2001	42
English Electoral Wards 2001	41
Scotland Council Areas 2001	40
English Urban Areas 2001	39
England National Outline 2001	34
English Middle Layer Super Output Areas 2001	33
English CAS Parishes 2001	30
Wales National Outline 2001	29
English Primary Care Trusts 2001	26
Total	1648

Helpdesk Calls

UKBORDERS utilises the EDINA helpdesk infrastructure. The majority of calls come through as emails, a few enquiries are by letter, and the remainder are by telephone. Table 3 summarises the type of queries received by the EDINA helpdesk regarding UKBORDERS. The majority of queries are logged and have, as minimum, an initial response within 2hrs. All queries are ultimately resolved and logged as closed by the HelpDesk tracking system.

Short Description	Number of Enquiries
Login or Access Problem	7
Registration	4
Database Contents	18
Interface Use	6
Error Reports	1
Terms	3
Request to View	0
Forward Use	2
Other	5
Total	46

Table 3 Summary of calls received by helpdesk August 2008 – October 2008.