After five years in off-campus leased facilities, a big part of the ISR Survey Research Center moved back home in March 2006, into a new wing of the Perry Building, just a few blocks from ISR’s long-time Thompson Street home.

“Our staff is delighted to be back on campus, in close proximity to all the ISR Centers and to the wider University community,” said Beth-Ellen Pennell, who directs the Survey Research Operations unit, the design and data collection arm of the Survey Research Center. “This new location enhances our ability to participate in the intellectual life of the Institute, and also enhances access to our expertise and facilities.”

Among these facilities is a new instrument development laboratory, where research projects with the potential to transform survey data collection are underway this summer. One such project, funded by the National Science Foundation, sounds more like science fiction than survey methodology. The project studies how avatars – animated agents that resemble humans – influence respondents in self-administered computerized interviews.

“We’re doing a series of lab experiments to explore which features of these agents improve respondent performance and satisfaction, and which hurt,” says ISR researcher Fred Conrad, principal investigator of the project. But instead of building a series of costly animated avatars with varying features and capacities, Conrad and colleagues at the U-M, the New School for Social Research, and the University of Memphis are using what they call a Wizard-of-Oz technique. They are simulating animated avatars, like Victoria at right, using videos of real people. The human interviewers actually interact with test respondents, but respondents only see an animated version of the interviewer. “Because respondents believe they are interacting with actual animated agents and not human interviewers, this research will help us understand the way new data collection methods blur the traditional distinction between self- and interviewer-administered surveys,” says Conrad. More generally, the research should help in designing user interfaces that promote high-quality data. And that may mean NOT using animated agents under certain circumstances, such as when questions are sensitive.

Another type of project being conducted at the new facility is the use of eye-tracking to study survey response processes. Roger Tourangeau and colleagues at the University of Maryland/University of Michigan/Westat Joint Program in Survey Methodology are planning to invite a Swedish friend they call Toby to Ann Arbor to continue work on visual context effects - how images affect survey responses in web surveys - and other issues concerning the visual character of collection.
web surveys. In a recent experiment with 117 respondents recruited through ads and flyers, Tourangeau and colleagues, including Fred Conrad and Mick Couper at ISR, employed TOBII, an unobtrusive eye-tracking device that uses near-infrared beams and video to capture participant eye movements without the need for cumbersome lenses or helmets. In one study, they investigated the issue of “banner blindness,” the assumption that visual images are not as influential and interesting when they appear in a website survey header as when they are located in the question area.

TOBII found that subjects were indeed less likely to look at pictures in a website header: 81% of the subjects looked at the pictures in the question area versus 64% who looked at the pictures in the header. Subjects also spent more time looking at pictures in the question area than in the header. Tourangeau and colleagues found that the content of the picture mattered, too. Subjects looked at photos of a happy woman more often than they looked at photos of a sad one, and for longer periods of time. But oddly enough, those who looked at the happy woman said they were less happy themselves than those who looked at the sad woman - a contrast effect, according to Tourangeau.

The new instrument development lab also has a conference room for focus groups, often used in the initial stage of questionnaire development. An observation room with one-way mirrors permits viewing of both the computer testing stations and the conference room, where researchers will also be able to conduct cognitive interviews to make sure respondents understand survey questions the way investigators intend.

Since the new ISR Perry Building also houses classrooms for the Program in Survey Methodology, the ISR Summer Institute, and the ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods, the lab is expected to advance ISR’s educational mission as well as enhance its research on survey methods. “The new facilities offer a great mix of services that knit together survey methods research, education, and survey operations,” says Patty Maher, SRO associate director.
At this time last year, I was getting ready for a trip to China as part of an official UM Presidential Delegation and specifically to inaugurate a new ISR collaboration with Peking University. This spring I visited Poland along with an 8-person ISR Delegation to help celebrate our 15-year partnership with the University of Warsaw's Institute of Social Studies. The week before I left for Poland, Arland Thornton and PSC hosted an ISR international workshop on developmental idealism, drawing culturally diverse and geographically distant scholars from as far away as Iran. These are just the bookends in a year filled with international research linkages. Many of ISR’s "legacy" studies - among them, the Surveys of Consumers, education at a time of increased diversity and immigration. During the last great wave of immigration, America's public schools taught students more than just the three R's. They also provided a common sense of what it means to be American, socializing students of all descriptions to core American values such as fair play, independence and egalitarianism. Today, more than 1 million children are being home-schooled. The popularity of private, charter, and religious schools is growing, and immigrant and ethnic enclaves are replacing the ideal of the American melting pot.

It's time to equip ourselves with a clear, fact-based, non-partisan picture of Americans' basic beliefs and values, using the best tools social science can offer. We need to know how our values have changed in the last few decades, what the trajectories of change are for the U.S. compared to other nations, and how basic values are linked with political, sexual, economic, and religious attitudes and behavior. As part of this project, an interdisciplinary ISR research team plans to create an American Index of Evolving Values that provides sound, empirical data on topics of vital interest to policy-makers, politicians, and concerned citizens. My hope is that this Index will become as important to the nation as the ISR Indices of Consumer Expectations and Sentiment. I believe that this project is central to our mission of conducting social science in the public interest, and that it has the potential of helping us navigate successfully through the many domestic and international challenges facing all of us in the coming years. As you can see, ISR has a number of notable ongoing projects and programs. As usual, we welcome your comments and ideas.
New Understanding of Bereavement

Six months after the death of their spouses, nearly half of older widows had few symptoms of grief, according to a landmark ISR study that upsets conventional wisdom about the normal course of grief.

The Changing Lives of Older Couples study, funded by the National Institute on Aging, followed 1,500 older married people for years, documenting the quality of their marriages, their attitudes toward each other, and their reactions up to four years after one of the couple died. The findings are reported in Spousal Bereavement in Late Life, edited by Rutgers University sociologist Deborah Carr, U-M psychologist and psychiatrist Randolph Nesse, and State University of New York at Stony Brook psychologist Camille Wortman.

"But 46 percent of the widows and widowers in this study reported that they had satisfying marriages. They believed that life is fair and they accepted that death is a part of life. After their partner’s death, many surviving spouses said they took great comfort in their memories."

Taken together, these findings provide strong evidence that men and women who show this resilient pattern of grief are not emotionally distant or in denial, but are in fact well-adjusted individuals responding to loss in a healthy way."

In the book, Nesse, who directs the Evolution and Human Adaptation Program at ISR, also analyzes grief from an evolutionary perspective. "The idea that grief may be a 'useful' biological trait may seem cold-blooded," he notes. "After all, most of us are more interested in how to relieve the pain of grief than in knowing why it exists."

Yet aspects of grief may be useful in some circumstances, at least for our genes, Nesse argues. "The depression associated with grief can foster a necessary reallocation of effort away from options that are no longer possible," he suggests. "Bereaved persons who experience anguish are also more likely to take action to prevent additional immediate losses, and to avoid similar situations to reduce the likelihood of subsequent losses."

Changing Patterns of Immigration

As the debate on immigration reform continues, immigrants continue to move to new areas of the country. "The remarkable dispersal of immigrants to all parts of the country has given increased visibility to the issue of immigration reform," ISR demographer William Frey said at a March 24 Capitol Hill briefing on the issue.

Drawing on recent U.S. Census and survey statistics, and a Brookings Institution report he authored, Frey detailed the movement of the foreign-born, Hispanic, and Asian populations across the country in the last decade. "In 1990, only 17 states had populations composed of at least 5 percent immigrants, compared to 29 states in 2005," said Frey.

In contrast to traditional immigrant magnet states - California, New York, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, and Illinois - the new immigrant destinations of North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Nevada, Arizona, Iowa, Nebraska, and Colorado have experienced immigrant population growth of 200 percent or more between 1990 and 2005.

According to Frey, the foreign-born attracted to these new destinations are more likely to be undocumented recent arrivals to the U.S., and less well-off financially than those who reside in traditional magnet states.

Given the fast immigrant growth and sharp contrasts between these new immigrants and existing state residents, attitudes toward immigration in the new
state destinations are different from those in traditional magnet states, Frey showed.

Analyzing data from a CBS News Poll conducted in 2005, he found that 57 percent of those in new destination states felt that levels of immigration should be reduced, compared to 47 percent of those in traditional magnet states. In the new destination states, 72 percent opposed three-year work permits for illegal immigrants, compared to 55 percent in traditional magnet states.

For more information, see www.frey-demographer.org

Myth of Monoculture on the Kansas Plains

Mile after endless mile of wheat is what you see today driving across Kansas and many other states in the Great Plains. But according to new research by historian Kenneth Sylvester, an assistant research scientist at the ISR Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, this kind of environmentally unsustainable monoculture is a more recent phenomenon than most people believe.

As part of the Great Plains Population and Environment project, a multidisciplinary effort to study the long-term history of the relationship between people and their physical environment, Sylvester has been examining crop diversity in a sample of Kansas farms between 1865 and 1940. He and colleague Geoff Cunfer of the University of Saskatchewan devised a crop diversity index, similar to the segregation indices used by sociologists to examine population diversity patterns in urban neighborhoods. "The data clearly show that at the farm level, crop diversity started relatively high and stayed relatively high throughout the period of study," said Sylvester. "That tells us that there were crop rotation systems in place back then - a finding that we're now studying using air photo mosaics to supplement the agricultural census data."

The implications of the findings are reassuring: We haven't been "wheat-mining" the country's breadbasket as long as people think, stripping the soil of nutrients and the capacity to produce healthy crops over the long term. "Instead of being at the edge of a cliff, we're a ways off, running toward it," said Sylvester.

Fresh Insight into the Entrepreneurs among Us

The number of entrepreneurs in the U.S. increased by 30 percent in 2005, with more than 23 million people starting new businesses or managing firms less than four years old. That's an increase of nine million people from the late 1990s, according to ISR economist Richard Curtin, co-principal investigator of the Panel Studies of Entrepreneurial Dynamics with Florida State University's Paul Reynolds.

Funded primarily by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, the researchers surveyed a nationally representative sample of 26,000 adults in fall 2005, identifying about 2,000 active new entrepreneurs. About two-thirds of these new entrepreneurs are men, with 18-to-34-year olds accounting for about 44 percent of new firm creations. Blacks and Hispanics are twice as likely as whites to be engaged in new business creation, and more than 80 percent of entrepreneurs have full- or part-time jobs in addition to their new business.

The project will follow these entrepreneurs for three years to gather data on a broad range of factors, including their motivations and characteristics, the help they receive from other members of the start-up team, details about the new business and its market potential, and the available financial and technical resources.

"The goal is to understand what facilitates the business start-up process and what are the barriers to eventual success," said Curtin, who directs the ISR Surveys of Consumers.
Sarah Burgard

As the Big 3 announced yet another round of layoffs and plant closings, Sarah Burgard, a research assistant professor at the ISR Population Studies Center, presented a paper on the impact job insecurity takes on worker health at the Population Association of America’s annual meeting in Los Angeles. Her findings were covered by the Washington Post, the Detroit Free Press, and many other news media, giving Burgard the chance to experience a bit more than fifteen minutes of fame.

The study used data from ISR’s Americans’ Changing Lives Study, which includes not only multiple measures of job insecurity but also data on actual job loss for more than 1,000 men and women under the age of 60 who were interviewed twice, about three years apart. Since only those who remained employed at both points in time were included in the analysis, the findings are not attributable to health problems related to actual job loss and extended unemployment.

“We found that the health effects of job insecurity are at least as great as the health effects of a serious illness,” said Burgard, who joined ISR and the U-M sociology department last fall. Burgard came to the U-M as a Robert Wood Johnson Health and Society Scholar in 2003 after receiving a PhD in sociology from UCLA.

About 25 percent of respondents reported feeling insecure about their jobs in at least one of the two interviews, according to Burgard and colleagues Jennie Brand and James House. Job insecurity took a particularly high toll on Black workers, the researchers found. Blacks who were chronically insecure about their jobs were nearly three times as likely as insecure whites and more than four times as likely to report very high depressive symptoms.

The study suggests that as the U.S. labor market adds more nonstandard jobs with reduced hours and benefits, offering the employers the flexibility to hire and fire to meet demand, the consequences for workers - even those who keep their jobs - could be substantial.

Philippa Clarke

Philippa Clarke, who joined the ISR Survey Research Center as a research assistant professor last fall, believes that the energy driving good research is often autobiographical in nature. In Clarke’s case, the connection is straightforward. “My mother has multiple sclerosis, and as she’s had more trouble over the years, I’ve seen how basic factors in the built environment make a big difference in whether or not she’s able to function independently.”

In the November 2005 issue of the American Journal of Public Health, Clarke examines how the disablement process is influenced by the physical environment.

Clarke uses U.S. census data to show how housing density and mixed-use neighborhoods affect individual experience of disability. “Older people who use walkers or wheelchairs do better in census mixed-use neighborhoods” she says.

Clarke, who received a PhD from the University of Toronto and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Duke University, is now exploring how to use detailed GIS information to refine this work. She will be working with data from several ISR studies to examine late-life mental health and physical well-being.
Recent Appointments

Huesmann to direct Research Center for Group Dynamics

L. Rowell Huesmann has been appointed Director of the ISR Research Center for Group Dynamics, effective September 1, 2006. A psychologist with deep roots at Michigan, Huesmann is internationally known for his work on the causes of aggressive behavior, including the long-term effects of viewing media violence.

Named the Amos N. Tversky Collegiate professor of communication studies and psychology at U-M last spring, Huesmann joined ISR in 1992 as a senior research scientist and director of the Aggression Research Program at the Research Center for Group Dynamics. He received a BS degree in psychology and mathematics from U-M in 1964, an MS degree in psychology from Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1967, and a PhD in systems and communications science and psychology from Carnegie-Mellon University in 1969.

At Michigan he has focused on longitudinal studies that follow children into adulthood, investigating what causes some of them to become violent. The results from Huesmann’s Oak Park Longitudinal Study spanning 15 years and his Columbia County Longitudinal Study spanning 40 years clearly show that the amount of violence children watch on television when they are young predicts how violently they will behave in adulthood. These effects are significant even when the researchers statistically control for childhood aggressiveness, social class, intelligence, and parenting practices.

The co-author of many articles and three books on violence and aggression, Huesmann received the 2005 Award for Distinguished Lifetime Contributions to Media Psychology from the American Psychological Association. Well known for his international collaborations, he is the current editor of the international journal Aggressive Behavior, a member of the LIFE program of the Max Planck Institute and the University of Michigan, and a past-president of the International Society for Research on Aggression. He has been a Fulbright Fellow, a Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst Fellow, a James McKeen Cattell Fellow, and is a life member of Clare Hall College at Cambridge University. He is also a fellow of the Association for Psychological Science and the American Psychological Association.

Gutmann reappointed ICPSR director

Myron Gutmann has been reappointed director of the ISR Inter-university Consortium for Social and Political Research for a second five-year term. Gutmann joined Michigan in 2001 as a professor of history, senior research scientist at the ISR Population Studies Center and Director of ICPSR. He received his PhD from Princeton University in 1976, and served as professor of history and geography and director of the Population Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin before coming to Ann Arbor.

The author of War and Rural Life in the Early Modern Low Countries (1980), Toward the Modern Economy, Early Industry in Europe 1500-1800 (1988), and more than 50 articles and chapters, he is currently President of the Consortium of Social Science Associations, an advocacy organization supported by more than 100 professional associations, scientific societies, universities and research institutions.

Neighbors to direct ISR Program for Research on Black Americans

Harold W. Neighbors has been appointed to direct the Program for Research on Black Americans at the ISR Research Center for Group Dynamics. A co-principal investigator on the ISR National Survey of American Life, Neighbors's research interests include racial and ethnic influences on psychiatric diagnosis and the use of informal and professional mental health services by African Americans. A research professor at ISR and a professor at the U-M School of Public Health, Neighbors received a BA in psychology from Haverford College in 1975 and a PhD in social psychology from U-M in 1982.
Honors

University of Uppsala honors Inglehart

On January 27, 2006 ISR political scientist Ron Inglehart, who directs the World Values Survey, received an honorary doctorate in theology from Sweden’s oldest university, the University of Uppsala. Following is an account of the occasion provided by an anonymous eye-witness:

“Inglehart received a university ring, a diploma, and a funny hat; some soldiers fired a cannon when they put the hat on his head. The Swedish army’s equipment seems shockingly out of date, but fortunately they haven’t fought a war in 200 years.

At the ceremony, Carl-Henric Grenholm, dean of the faculty, had many flattering comments, including:

‘Under mer an tre decennier har Ronald Inglehart varit an av de internationellt mest kanda forskarna inom jämförande kultur- och värderingsforskning. I sin monografi The Silent Revolution (1977) ger han en beskrivning av hur man i hela världen ser en genomgripande och gradvis förändring av människors grundläggande värderingar, sarskilt bland de yngre och valutbildade generationerna.’”

Other faculty honors

Ron Lesthaeghe became a permanent member of the Royal Belgium Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2006.

James Jackson received the Association for Psychological Sciences James McKeen Cattell Award for 2006-2007, which honors a lifetime of outstanding contributions to applied psychological research.

Jianguo (Jack) Liu, a research affiliate at the ISR Population Studies Center, received a Guggenheim Fellowship for 2006. Liu's research interests include human-environment interactions and conservation ecology.

James House returns to ISR in fall 2006 after being a fellow in residence for 2005-2006 at Stanford University’s Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences.

Grants

NIA renews Health and Retirement Study

The National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health, has awarded $70 million to the ISR Health and Retirement Study, the nation’s leading resource for data on the health and economic circumstances of Americans over age 50. Now in its 14th year, the study surveys more than 20,000 people every two years, providing data from pre-retirement to advanced age.

Michigan Congressman John Dingell announced the grant June 19 at a Washington, DC, press briefing that included comments from NIA Director Richard Hodes and ISR Director James Jackson.

The study, co-directed by ISR researchers Robert Willis and David Weir, paints a detailed portrait over time of older Americans’ physical and mental health, insurance coverage, financial well-being, labor market status, social support systems, retirement planning, intergenerational transfers of time and money, and living arrangements. The HRS also receives funding from the Social Security Administration.

More information at: http://hrsonline.isr.umich.edu

NSF funds American National Election Studies

The National Science Foundation awarded $7.6 million to fund the American National Election Studies through 2009. Conducted by ISR since 1952, before and after each presidential election, the study is considered the gold standard in understanding political attitudes and electoral behavior. "This award allows us to continue the project in new and better ways than ever before," said ISR political scientist Arthur Lupia, principal investigator of the new grant with Stanford political scientist Jon Krosnick.

More information at: http://www.electionstudies.org/
The Next Generation: Student Award Winners

Claudia R. Sahm
PhD Candidate, Economics
Dissertation: "Changes in Risk Preferences"
Award: 2006-2007 Innovation in Social Research Award, funded by Dorwin and Barbara Cartwright

Using data from the ISR Health and Retirement Study, Claudia Sahm is investigating how risk tolerance changes over time, with age and in response to events such as unemployment, health shocks, and stock market returns. Before coming to U-M, Sahm worked at the Brookings Institute studying social security reform, including the implications of the Bush Administration’s plan to move to personal retirement accounts. "Economists usually think the more choice, the better," said Sahm. "But with freedom of choice comes a lot of responsibilities. It's not that most people are not capable of managing their retirement accounts, but do they really want to? And even if they do, their individual attitudes toward risk may affect their results in a significant way."

The connection between psychology and economics has a long history at ISR, and Sahm’s work has the potential to add to that body of work by determining the extent to which preferences about risk are stable through time and across various events. She will also examine if people with secure incomes from stable jobs make riskier investments than other people.

Emily Messersmith
PhD Candidate, Combined Program in Education and Psychology
Dissertation: "Longitudinal Correlates of Changing Educational Expectations during the Transition to Adulthood"
Award: 2006-2007 ISR Founders Fellowship

Emily Messersmith is researching why so many young people fail to meet their educational expectations, using data from the ISR Monitoring the Future Panel Study. The majority of adolescents say they expect to attend college, she notes, and expectations often predict behavior. But over 20 percent of students who enroll in college leave without getting a degree. Messersmith will examine the barriers and supports that affect educational attainment during the transition to adulthood by analyzing quantitative MTF data and by interpreting retrospective and prospective qualitative data from a small sample of young people.

Additional ISR Student Award Winners

Roy Pierce Scholar for 2006: Shijian Li, Supplementary Field Study to the Project "The Rule of Law in China: If They Build It, Who Will Come?"


Frank Andrews Fellows for 2006: Denise Falck Baladron, Chile; and Sandra Quijada Javer, Chile.
PSM Alum Michelle Park wins 2006 AAPOR-DC Student Paper Award

Hyunjhoo "Michelle" Park, who received her M.S. from the ISR Program in Survey Methodology in 2005, won the 2006 award for Best Student Paper from the American Association for Public Opinion Research-D.C. Chapter. In her paper, Park, who is employed as a survey methodologist at RTI International, analyzed the influence of question wording on the reporting of contraceptive method use, using data from the National Survey of Family Growth.

"I found that reporting of contraceptive method use overall and birth control pill use in particular did not differ by the question format," Park concluded. "Whether a single question or separate questions were used, respondents reported the same level of contraceptive use and the same level of pill use by their partners." Still, Park noted that because it is difficult to get outside validation measures to assess the truthfulness of answers, a study design that included both sexual partners would be useful, allowing consistency between answers to function as a standard to measure the accuracy of reports.

Contraceptive use by question format

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<th>Birth control pill use</th>
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<td>Separate question</td>
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ISR Alumnus David Sirota

PhD in social psychology, 1959
Chairman Emeritus, Sirota Consulting
Member, ISR National Advisory Council

I got a BA in psychology at City College of New York and one of my professors there was Kenneth Clarke. He and his wife had done work on the psychological problems experienced by Black children, that helped form the basis of the 1954 Supreme Court decision on school desegregation. I admired him a great deal. I had no idea what to do after college except that I was interested in psychology, and he told me, “Go to Michigan.” I hadn’t been west of the Hudson River too often, but OK, I got on a train and headed to Ann Arbor.

One of the first courses I took was the Detroit Area Study, and right away I got hooked. Whatever it was about walking the blocks, interviewing people in their homes, studying the statistics, I decided this was it. Then I became a fellow, or whatever they called it, at ISR and worked with Rensis Likert, Dan Katz, Floyd Mann, and Bob Kahn in the organizational behavior program, which is no longer there. We surveyed employees. So it was the combination of two elements: doing surveys and studying workers.

My father was a factory worker and he used to talk a lot about unions and the bosses. That had a strong influence on me and was the content area I latched onto. My father was an immigrant, a socialist, a very strong union person. He worked in a garment factory. I’m liberal politically but I have no problem working for companies. Of course I’ve done work for government agencies as well as private firms, and also do quite a bit of pro bono work. Obviously management pays me. But Katz, Kahn and others had a strong belief in treating workers well. Not just for humanitarian reasons, either.

It’s a way of treating people with respect. So because of my background, that really resonated with me. Their findings, conclusions. It’s the basis of my book, The Enthusiastic Employee: How Companies Profit By Giving Workers What They Want.

Great leadership involves two things. Leaders who are very bright and people who willingly and enthusiastically follow the leaders. You don't follow a leader willingly who has no interest in you. There are many examples of companies in my book that are extraordinarily successful business because they understand that principle. Any manager can make quarterly statements, by cutting people, cutting costs short-term. But for long-term success, you truly need to invest in your employees.

So I received my PhD from Michigan in 1959 and was offered a teaching position there, but a fellow came along from IBM. I was like the man who came to dinner. I went to IBM for one year and stayed for twelve. It was a great group of people, set up to do surveys of employees and provide other psychological services such as testing. I had a very interesting time there. And while I was there, I taught one day a week at Cornell’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations, and at Yale. Then I spent a year teaching at MIT’s Sloan School. At IBM, they made up the difference between my IBM and MIT salary for that year, which shows their long-term perspective in how they treated employees. Bob Kahn was at MIT at the time for a year, and so I had a chance to get reacquainted with him there.

He was an ideal chair to launch the External Advisory Committee. Because David spent decades in industry, he understands how important survey methodology is to research in private industry. His insights helped the program see that academic-industry partnerships were not only possible, but extremely important for the development of the program and the field.

– James Lepkowski, Director, UM Program in Survey Methodology

Continued on back page
David Sirota  - continued from page 11

I wanted to see what the rest of the world was like so in 1972 I set up Sirota Consulting and in parallel I took a full-time teaching position at the Wharton School. The firm specializes in surveys, mostly of employees but also of customers and, very important, helping organizations make use of the data.

So throughout my professional life, the focus has been on the survey method. I often say that 75 percent of what I know about the field I learned in my student days at ISR. Michigan surveys really are the gold standard. It's not only that there's a genuine love of the field, there's also enthusiasm for the importance of doing it right. There's a lot of stuff that goes on in the field that is not so admirable, and not just because of costs but because people just don't care that much. They come up with numbers, with data, and the quality of those numbers doesn't always get questioned. It's just not that way at Michigan.

I have tried to keep one foot in the academic world but didn't have much contact with Michigan people until about four years ago when David (Featherman) asked me to join the National Advisory Council. Then as I saw the ISR Program in Survey Methodology developing, it seemed the first students were very interested in academic and government careers, but not in business.

The program's Executive Advisory Committee has had some influence on that, I think. For example, every summer, a student comes to my firm to work, as well as to other firms. So the original orientation has changed somewhat. Once students saw there were interesting things they could do in the business world, and once ISR faculty saw that, they began looking to the business sector for job opportunities as well.

I sold my firm about seven years ago. But I'm a worker and I'm still very active with them. So I guess you could say I'm semi-retired. They've renamed it Sirota Survey Intelligence.

What do I do when I'm not working? I'm a quintessential New Yorker and I enjoy the City a lot, the theater and so on. And we travel quite a lot, too, around the world. And I'm loving my grandchildren.