

# ***LAB NOTES***

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*Above: Student using the new Media Room computers*

## **Director's Corner**

by Marcus Kurtz

As we approach the end of the academic year, it seems fitting to take stock of the many successful upgrades and transitions we've been able to realize in 2005/06. These include the new Media Room (2049C), a new email system, a new file server, a new classroom (0150) and other important changes.

### ***Media Room***

The Media Room continues to please its users with the many benefits it offers in terms of classroom preparation. All faculty and graduate students will have access to a series of highly advanced, dedicated computers, printers and other peripherals specifically designed to accommodate audio-visual needs. Many can be checked out for out-of-office use on a short term basis.

For those of you who haven't yet visited the Media Room, you might do yourself a favor

and stop by; our professional and graduate student staff will help you with any of the features you'd like to utilize. Ask your colleagues! Many of them have already taken advantage of these wonderful assets, which include:

- Color laser printer
- DVD player/recorder (for loan)
- Digital video recorder (for loan)
- Digital audio recorder (for loan)
- Advanced multimedia software
- High-speed document scanner
- Book scanner
- New laptop computers (for loan)
- Tablet PC computer (for loan)
- Certain other laptops (for long-term loan)
- Keys for faculty after-hours access
- Color and B/W copying

[For more on the Media Room, see the feature article below – Ed.]

## ***New Email Server***

It's hard to believe it was only last Quarter that we transitioned to the new email server and – for many of you – new email software. Despite this brief interval, however, users have rapidly grown to appreciate the system's new features and improved robustness.

Two reminders bear mentioning, however. First, make sure that from now on you use your new email address [name.##@polisci.osu.edu] on business cards, CVs, etc. and notify regular correspondents of the change. Second, users of email clients no longer supported by their manufacturers (especially Netscape Mail 7.1 or earlier, but others as well), should transition to newer and much more stable systems (e.g., Thunderbird, Outlook, etc.). As the former programs are no longer supported we cannot guarantee their functionality in the future.

## ***Personnel Transitions***

Finally, with all the changes occurring we will also be entering a phase of personnel transition. Our three hard-working graduate staff members – Dino Christenson, Jim Delaet and Jeff Martinson – will be move on to other endeavors come Summer. With the solid foundations they've provided for the roles of Webmaster, Human Subject Pool Coordinator and Assistant Director, as well as the continued efforts of our professional staff (Bill Miller and David Sweasey) I trust this transition will be a smooth and successful one.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us here in the PRL.

## ***Media Room is The Answer***

Have you ever wanted to spice up your classes with the latest teaching advances but didn't know how? Do you find the process of creating color slides, audiovisual clips or

PowerPoint presentations a mystery? Do you know how to perform these tasks but don't know where to find the equipment to complete them?

If your response to any of these questions is "Yes" then the Media Room might be the answer to your needs.

The media room has several advanced computers and peripherals available for immediate use. Many in the department have already taken advantage of these resources to create color transparencies, video clips for classes and to scan books and readings for distribution to students.

Moreover, the PRL's professional and graduate staff are available to answer specific and general questions about the processes involved with using the various items. Just come to us with your ideas and we'll introduce and instruct you on the means to make them a reality.

As an example, one faculty member recently came to us with the question: Could he post some readings on the department share drive for his graduate students? All he had was a dog-eared two-sided photocopy of the piece. Back in the "old days" it would have involved several steps to transfer this into an electronic document. However, with our new high-speed duplexing scanner, he was able to scan the document (both page sides at once!), convert it into pdf and post it on the share drive in about 2 minutes

In another instance, a faculty member asked if he could print color graphs for his overheads. (We all know how indistinct B&W graphs can be.) Again, just seconds after reading the pages from his Memory Stick, the pages were printed and ready to go.

These are just a few examples, and we'd like to have many more. Let us try to answer your questions by visiting the Media Room soon!

## Spring Quarter PRISM

All of us at PRISM hope Spring term is a enjoyable and productive time for everybody and also gives you a chance to visit some of the upcoming PRISM events.



Methods  
Corner

## The CQRM & The Rise of Qualitative Methods

By Srdjan Vucetic

[Starting with this edition of *LabNotes* a PRISM “Methods Corner” replaces “Stats Corner.” – Ed.]

Welcome to the Stats Corner replacement, “Methods Corner.” In this rubric, it will continue to talk stats, just no longer “only” stats. In what follows, I describe the experience and benefits of attending the Training Institute on Qualitative Methods, held at the Consortium on Qualitative Research Methods (CQRM) at Arizona State University. It builds on my presentation at the PRISM Qualitative Brownbag session of March 6, 2006, at which I shared my insights with fellow panelists and CQRM attendees Bridget Coggins, Tom Dolan, and Ted Hopf.

The CQRM was established in 2001 to promote qualitative methods in the social sciences. Its flagship program is the annual Training Institute on Qualitative Methods, held at Arizona State University every January. To some extent, the Institute is modeled on the Summer Program in Quantitative Methods, run by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan, a long-running program which probably needs no introduction to the readers of this corner.

A paired comparison might be illustrative of some of the key differences, however. Unlike in the ICPSR summer program, participants’ own research projects are a major focus of the CQRM institute. While most of the institute’s

### Mark your calendars!

#### ✓ Introduction to STATA Brown Bag

2:00 PM on Friday, May 19, 2006

Derby 0125

Stay tuned as we announce other events (such as speakers) in the coming months. As always, our doors are open to address your methods related concerns and questions to our attention, so please don’t hesitate to contact us.

PRISM Fellows Roman Ivanchenko and Lyndsey Young are available during the following regularly scheduled office hours:

### PRISM Fellow Office Hours

Roman:

Monday 9:15-11:15  
& 3:30-5:30

Wednesday 9:15-  
11:15 & 3:30-5:30

Friday 9:15-11:15

Lyndsey:

Monday 7:00a-noon

Wednesday 7:00a-  
noon & by appt.

schedule is devoted to instruction and lectures, about a third of the time is set aside for discussion of student research designs.<sup>1</sup>

A representative day in life at the Institute (i.e., Wednesday, January 11, 2006) included:

- 8:45--10:15 Lecture by Michael Coppedge, *Alternative Methods and the Study of Democracy* (theory building in large vs. small- $N$  research, inductive approaches, and comparative history).
- 10:45-12:15 Lecture by Colin Elman, *Typological Theory* (explanatory typologies and property space; how to integrate comparative and within-case analysis).
- 2:00-3:30 Breakout sessions, with students choosing among discussions led by 1) Rose McDermott, *Experimental Methods*; 2) Gerardo Munck, *Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy* and 3) Hein Goemans, *Diversionsary War 3.0*.
- 4:00-5:45 Student Research Design Sessions.

For me, the opportunity to present my research design was reason enough to go. At the time, I was in the process of drafting a dissertation prospectus. What better way to prepare oneself for the prospectus “defense” than going for a practice run in front of two dozen graduate students and faculty from your own discipline? And judging by the general feeling, other participants – regardless of their dissertation stage – found the research design sessions similarly worthwhile (a few panels included those in the post-dissertation stage as well).

The lectures – called “Master Class Discussions” – were likewise immensely valuable. Examples were drawn from cutting-edge research in International Relations, Comparative Politics, and American Politics. This year, attendees heard, (to name just a few names in no particular order) Henry Brady and David Collier on *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, John Gerring on techniques of case selection, Gary Goertz on tests of necessity or sufficiency

in social science concepts, Melani Cammett on overseas field research, Andrew Bennett on process tracing, Charles Ragin on fuzzy set methods, Peter Katzenstein on multi-stage theories, Jim Goldgeier and Fred Greenstein on archival research, Andrew Moravcsik on historiography, Paul Pierson on temporality, Jim Mahoney on comparative-historical methodology etc. The last word was given to Lee Sigelman, in the capacity of the *American Political Science Review* editor, on how to publish and not perish.

To me, the joy of the lectures was in the Q&A. At the CQRM, the Q&A could last the whole day: the classroom discussion would first evolve into various general and particular sub-discussions, then migrate over to the coffee break, then move to (breakout) lunch, ending at a local watering hole (or in a bowling alley) in the evening. In this way, and much like the ICPSR program, the CQRM institute offers multiple opportunities to heighten one’s intellectual acumen, “tool up” professionally, and build networks and a sense of camaraderie.

Let me now turn to the two other most frequently asked (and most surely interrelated) questions I have encountered since returning from Arizona. First, what is the status of stats? Second, what is the dominant philosophy of science at the CQRM?

The answer to the first question can be expressed as an acronym-rich bumper sticker: “CQRM is anti-KKV”. *Designing Social Inquiry* by King, Keohane and Verba has arguably been an agenda-setting, opinion-forming methodology text for much of political science over the past decade. In this book, qualitative research plays a role, but one of sidekick to the main protagonist, large- $N$  regression analysis – sort of like Sancho Panza to Don Quixote.



*Above: Don Quixote and Sancho Panza deal with windmills. Painting by Gustave Doré (1863)*

The CQRM takes issue with this (constitutive) relationship on several grounds, most of which will be familiar to the readers of the Stats Corner: we do not always have datasets to test; if constructing complex, multilevel, and multidimensional concepts is extremely hard, then operationalizing and coding such concepts is almost impossible; and large- $N$  studies, at least in principle, are not superior in dealing with unit heterogeneity, left-out variables, sequencing, complex and chaotic causal assertions, causal mechanisms, and so on. According to the CQRM view, KKV not only oversell the promise of regression-based approaches to scientific inference, they also underestimate and misrepresent the role of qualitative research.

The take-home point is twofold. First, the quality and contribution of qualitative research should be evaluated according to a set of methodological standards articulated in qualitative research tradition, and not by a quantitative template, as per KKV. Second, the choice of methods should depend on factors other than the degrees of freedom. These factors are the type of the research question and the state of the research program in which the research question is situated.

But this anti-KKV identity should not imply anti-stats attitudes and behaviors. As the CQRM's website explains, "the social sciences should employ the full range of available complementary qualitative, statistical and formal methods." Save for one outspoken outlier, no lecturer posited that non-qualitative methods be shunned. This atmosphere readily endorses multimethod research. Thus, Andrew Bennett spent two sessions reflecting on the relative benefits of combining statistical, formal and case study tools. And some attendees candidly observed that the future of social science lies in the grafting of non-qualitative tools, such as Bayesian inference and probability theory, onto traditional qualitative methods, such as case selection.

In my summer there, the ICPSR Program was attended by many qualitatively-oriented students looking to expand their methodological vistas. The same applies to my year at the CQRM institute – more than a few participants were people with an extensive statistical and/or formal modeling background who came to Arizona to sharpen their research toolboxes (e.g., our own Bridget Coggins). Methodological heterogeneity and pluralism are no doubt the desired effects: both the ICPSR and CQRM aim to produce fuzzy, not crisps sets of social scientists.

As for the second question, the answer should be obvious: "positivism rules supreme". The entrée was served by Fred Chernoff, who made a case that scientific progress is not only desirable, but also very possible. In their lectures on interpretivism and related approaches, Ted Hopf and Lisa Wedeen probed the limits of positivism in social science, but generally endorsed the dominant take on the issues of evidence, verification, reliability, variability, competing explanations, and causality. In this view, to answer social science questions, we must unite epistemology and ontology; what we know is inseparable from the way we came to know it. But while there may be no perfectly objective phenomena

which can be studied perfectly objectively, our task is still to try and explain them, even if it means [a] using middle-range theories with slender scope and domain conditions and [b] conceding that all knowledge is socially constructed, within which asymmetric power relations exist. Attendees interested in lectures in postmodern approaches to social inquiry – and there were a few, especially among those outside political science and/or inside some form of interdisciplinarity – were left wanting. So lest you be alarmed: just like the ICPSR, the CQRM embraces the scientific method as a means about explaining how the world hangs together. But perhaps more clearly than the ICPSR, the CQRM hypothesizes that social scientific progress will be more likely the more we try to combine methods and methodological traditions and/or unite them under the banner of positivism.

Since its inauguration five years ago, the CQRM Institute has significantly grown, following the growing demand for training in qualitative research.<sup>ii</sup> This year, over one hundred students attended. According to Colin Elman, the CQRM's *spiritus movens*, the institute operated at a maximum capacity. I will not be surprised if the two-week course one day evolves into a full-fledged, multi-week summer school. But, I will be surprised if a summer in Arizona turns out to be more agreeable than a summer in Ann Arbor. ;-)

## REFERENCES

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<http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/institute.html> [Retrieved on March 30, 2006].

Goertz, Gary. *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide* (Princeton 2006).

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## NOTES

<sup>i</sup> In terms of the division of labor, the CQRM is similar to the recently established four-week Summer Institute in Empirical Implications of Theoretical Models (EITM).

<sup>ii</sup> At the 2005 APSA annual meeting, the Qualitative Methods section had the second highest mean adjusted attendance and is probably the fastest growing organized section at APSA, out of 45 divisions (APSA-QM 2005).

# Political Science Classroom Study Hours (Current as of 5/1/06)

	DERBY 0125 STUDY HOURS					DERBY 0150 STUDY HOURS				
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
7:00 AM										
7:30 AM										
8:00 AM										
8:30 AM										
9:00 AM										
9:30 AM										
10:00 AM										
10:30 AM										
11:00 AM										
11:30 AM										
12:00 PM										
12:30 PM	12.30 pm		12.30 pm							
1:00 PM	to		to							
1:30 PM		1.30 pm to		1.30 pm to						
2:00 PM	2.30 pm	2.30 pm	2.30 pm	2.30 pm	2.00 pm -					
2:30 PM					to					
3:00 PM										
3:30 PM										
4:00 PM										
4:30 PM										
5:00 PM										
5:30 PM					6.00 pm					
6:00 PM										
6:30 PM										

OPEN HOURS ONLY BY REQUEST

**If you have questions about study hall hours, please call 292-0511 or 292-1061**

## PRL Staff Information

*At least one staff member is on-call between 8:30 AM and 6:00 PM, Monday through Thursday (until 5:00 PM Fridays)*

Email us at [prl@polisci.osu.edu](mailto:prl@polisci.osu.edu)

To contact the HELP DESK, go to:  
<http://inet.sbs.ohio-state.edu/>  
 and click on "HELP DESK."

Previous issues of Lab Notes and other valuable information can be found at the Lab's website:  
<http://psweb.sbs.ohio-state.edu/prl/index.htm>

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### PRL Contact Information

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