



**Godelieve Masuy-Stroobant,**

IACCHOS - UCL

**"Social scientists and computer scientists: an evolving relationship"**

The creation of the Belgian Archives for the Social Sciences– the Bass-unit- an extension of the Department of Demography of our University in 1970, is one of the many signs that there was a need for social science researchers to collaborate with computer scientist: their main objective was to document survey data files and administrative databases in order to enhance their accessibility to further research and data analysis. Statistical software was then only in its infancy and hard to use for social scientist who were and still are more familiar with concepts and theories than with programming languages. At that time we couldn't even dream of PC's and running one of the few available multivariate analyses handling categorical variables took a lot of time. Computer scientists act then as a kind of "Deus ex machina", translating our queries into obscure programming languages, and helping us to save time.

The picture today is completely different: statistical software packages are even more "userfriendly", while the variety of sophisticated data analysis methods is still expanding. Do we, in this context, still need the collaboration of computer scientists? The answer is straightforward, but their job profile has changed.

SMCS Launch Day, April 30, 2010