Research Services in ICBS

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בכל דרך נתון!

ICBS as a source of knowledge

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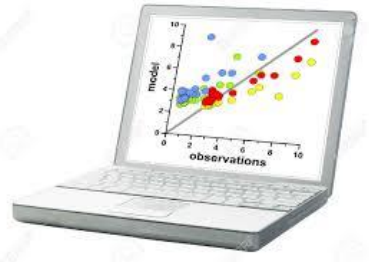
- The data available in ICBS provides a central infrastructure and basis for conducting research about the Israeli population, society and economy.
- The ICBS has many varied microdata that will fit this purpose.
- There is an increased interest of researchers to work with the data.



Background

- Work in the ICBS research rooms started about 20 years ago.
- Providing data to researchers has never been defined as a main activity of the ICBS.
- Dealing with requests from researchers is considered extra work for ICBS subject unit employees and isn't part of their yearly work plan.

Types of files:

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ICBS provides three levels of confidentiality classification files:

- PUF - Public Use Files
- MUC - Microdata under contract
- RR - Research Room files

Working with unidentifiable microdata

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- Until lately, MUC files were provided to researchers on CDs.
- This was followed by a remote access system that worked for two years but crashed in 2014.
- Today, due to data security and confidentiality reasons, the researchers work on MUC and RR (research room) files only in research rooms.

Current Situation

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- ICBS has 3 research rooms that are located in ICBS offices in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa. In addition, there is a research room in the Bank of Israel with a remote access system that is provided exclusively for the employees of the Bank of Israel.
- Currently, there are over 100 researchers working in the research rooms. There are 70 active research projects and an additional 20 pending research projects.

Current Situation - workflow

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- The process for obtaining access to the research room:
- The researcher defines the research files needed- together with the relevant subject units.
- The researcher goes through lengthy and complex bureaucratic procedures.
- Every request for research undergoes an authorization process and preparation, depending on the type of the file.
- The prepared files are transferred to a specific research room.

Work in the research room

- Work in the ICBS research room is subject to a fee that varies by project and requires compliance with qualification requirements and internal and external authorization processes.
- The ICBS and the researchers are obligated to keep strict data security and confidentiality requirements.

Work in the research room

- In the research room researchers work on stand alone computers.
- Each research has a dedicated work space and the researchers can only see that work space.
- Software available for researchers: SPSS, STATA, R, Office.
- Researchers aren't allowed to extract data and outputs from the research room without authorization.
- When a researcher requests to extract an output from the research room, the subject unit has to approve each output according to confidentiality rules.

Research Room as a Strategic Goal

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- Today, one of the strategic goals of ICBS is to improve and expand the services for providing data for researchers.
- As a result there is a lot of work being done in order to improve the technology, accessibility and work processes for providing data to researchers.

Actions made

- A steering committee for improving data access for researchers has been established with representatives from the research community, Academia and Government offices.
- In the last two months, meetings were held with approximately 80 researchers from around the country in order to better understand their needs.

Actions made

- Sufficient budget and funds are being raised in order to establish a remote access system and a designated centralized research unit.
- In the last year significant improvements were made to research services: new research rooms were established in Haifa and Tel Aviv, working environments were improved in existing research rooms, hardware and software were updated and the working hours were increased.

Planned Actions

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- We are currently in the process of developing a management system that will enable us to follow the status of each request and improve the process flow.
- We are looking into different options for changes and improvements in the current process.
- We are updating and improving the guide to be given to researchers and ICBS employees that will include all necessary information about the work process.
- We are preparing a guide with instructions and guidelines for extracting outputs from the research rooms.

Vision of Future Research Services

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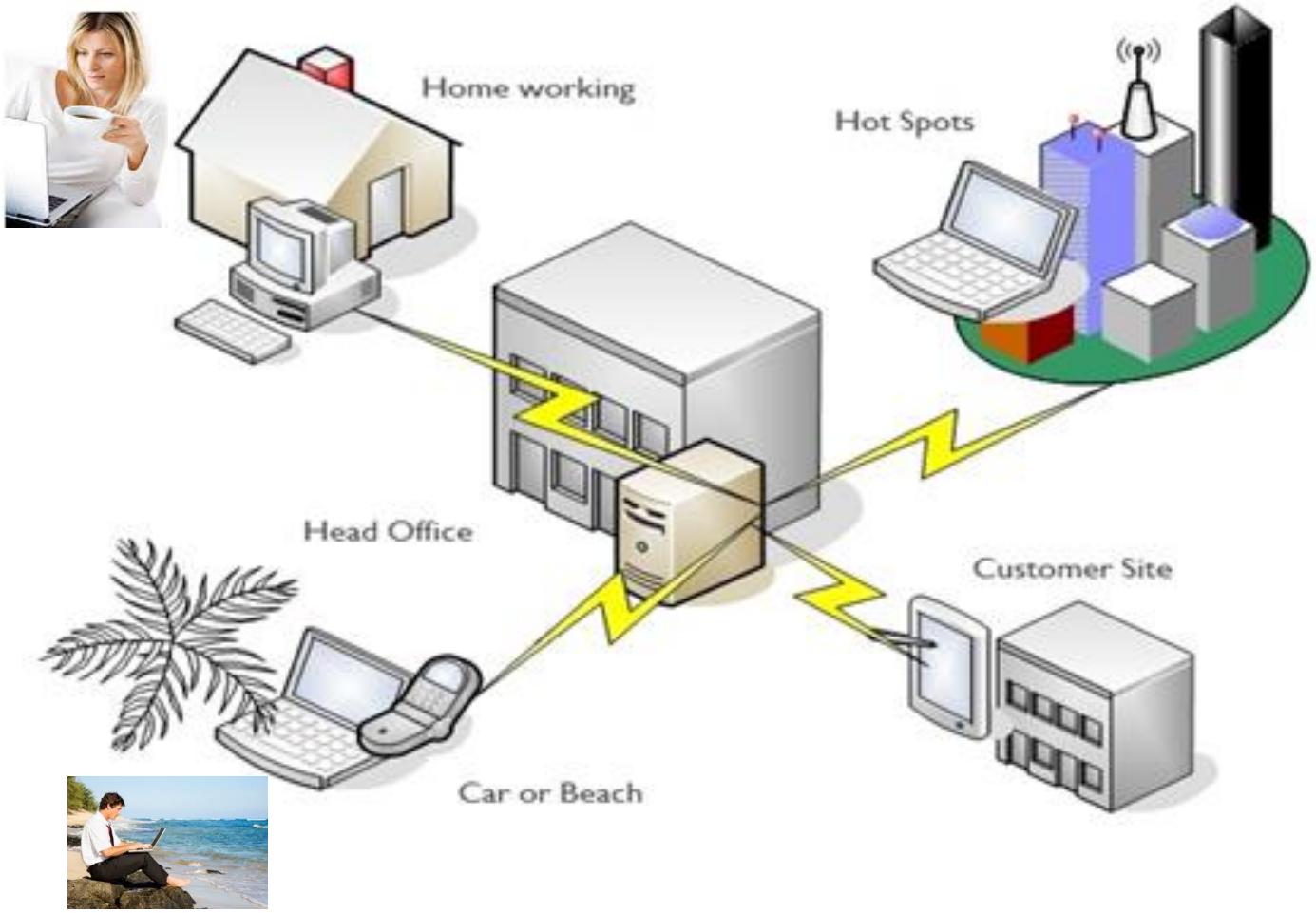
Vision

Accessing unidentifiable micro data through remote access system



Remote Access System

- Remote access to MUC files will from anywhere.
- Remote access to Research Room files will be accessible only from ICBS research rooms.
- Information about the files, variables, work processes etc. will be available for researchers via the remote access system (MUC and RR)

Management System

In order to manage the work processes and monitor the remote access system, additional functions will be defined:

- The system will enable the researcher to submit a request, to check their application status and find out the required additional steps.
- In order to do so, the researcher will be able to use a file and variable catalogue in order to better define their research requirements.
- The system will enable ICBS to monitor the work process, identify system failures, output checks, track outputs extracted from the system by the researcher, monitor the work and usage of the system (hours, software etc.).

Vision

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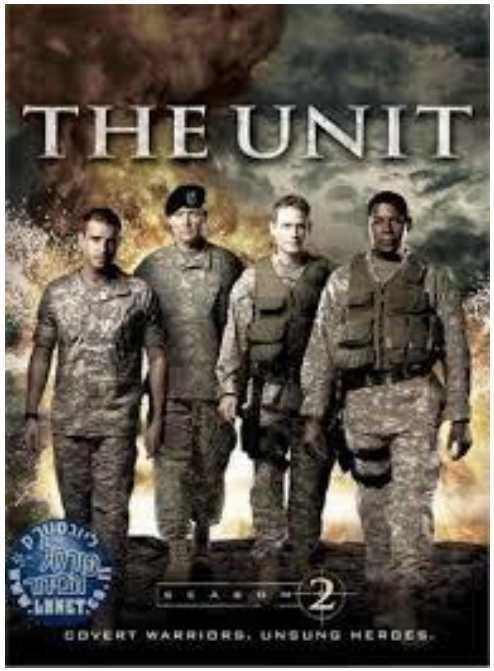
To establish one central unit that will handle microdata access to researcher from beginning to end



Research Service Unit

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- The unit will be one central address for researchers, in order to submit research requests and more.
- The research unit, together with the researcher, will define the research request, will assist them through the work process, prepare necessary files and will assist them along the way.
- The unit employees are designated workers who know to handle researchers and research requests and will be able to better fulfill their needs.

Thank you for your attention

בכל כבוד ענין!