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Recommendations on Availability of Federal Statistical Materials to Nongovernmental Research Workers

The ASA Advisory Committee to the Bureau of the Budget on Statistical Policy has transmitted to the Office of Statistical Standards of the Bureau of the Budget a statement of principles with respect to the availability of Federal statistical materials to nongovernmental research workers. Members of the Committee are: Ralph J. Watkins, Chairman, William G. Cochran, Gertrude Cox, E. Dana Durand, Walter Hoadley, Jr., Howard L. Jones, William R. Leonard, Rensis Likert, Isador Lubin, William F. Ogburn, Frederick F. Stephan, Willard L. Thorp and Samuel S. Wilks. The preparation of the statement reflects both the recurrent expression of interest by nongovernmental research workers in access to Federal statistical materials and the interest of Federal statistical officials in the formulation of general policies in this area. It was circulated to the statistical agencies for comments and revisions were made in accordance with the suggestions received. In transmitting the statement the Advisory Committee recommended that the Office of Statistical Standards continue its study of the problems involved and the practices of the agencies in making Federal statistical materials available to nongovernment research workers, so that the statement of principles might be reviewed from time to time and revised if necessary.

The OSS is circulating this set of principles to Federal statistical agencies for their guidance. In keeping with the request of the Committee OSS will maintain a continuing interest in and concern for the adequacy of agency practices to meet the legitimate needs of scholars for access to unpublished statistical materials and the maintenance of adequate rules protecting the confidentiality of respondents to Federal statistical requests.

The statement of principles is as follows:

I. Federal statistical and administrative data-collection programs often produce records capable of valuable statistical analysis beyond that which can or should be carried out by the collecting agency or any other agency of the Federal Government. In order that the optimum benefit may be obtained from Federal data-collection activities it should be the policy of the Federal Government to allow and to encourage the further analysis of these materials, under appropriate arrangements, by or on behalf of nongovernmental research workers.

II. Although some general principles may be offered for the guidance of agencies with such statistical materials in making them available for further processing, each such agency must determine and assume responsibility for its policies and procedures in the light of the nature of its program and data and the demands for its data.

III. No agency should enter into any arrangement for the supplementary processing of statistical materials, regardless of whether reimbursement is provided, which will interfere with the regular statistical program of the agency.

IV. In general, requests for further analysis of Government data should be met as fully as possible by making special tabulations to the specifications of outside users.

1. While a priority should be given to bona fide research uses in the general public interest, special tabulations should be permissible for all legitimate uses, both public and private, including, for example, marketing studies.
2. The same rules for protecting confidentiality of

individual responses must apply to special tabulations as are applied to the regular tabulation program.

3. The agency should make only such special tabulations as appear to it to be justified in the light of the limitations of the data when the tabulations are to be available for general use or possible publication. Less exacting standards are permissible only when the data are not to be published but used for special analysis by competent analysts fully aware of the limitations.
4. To the extent that special tabulations are deemed to serve a special, as distinguished from the general public, interest, the full costs shall be charged to the sponsors of the tabulation.
5. Special tabulations should be in the public domain, available for publication by both the Federal agency and the outside sponsor, except as provided in IV, 3, above.

V. Research needs which cannot be adequately served by special tabulations can under proper circumstances be met by allowing nongovernmental workers to work with the raw materials, work sheets and other intermediate materials within the agency.

1. Such an arrangement is appropriate for research projects in the general public interest which would not be carried out without private sponsorship.
2. The agency should take appropriate steps to insure that candidates for this privilege meet appropriate standards of competence and integrity.
3. The agency should expect to instruct such workers as to the source, characteristics and limitations of the data and to cooperate with them, but it may properly set reasonable limits on the extent to which its own staff and facilities are committed to the project.
4. While the agency should give to the results of the research such technical review, from the point of view of presentation and use of agency data, as it deems feasible and appropriate, the agency assumes no responsibility for these results. Any publication based on them should include a clear disclaimer to that effect.
5. The agency should take whatever steps are necessary to protect the confidentiality of the data supplied by individual respondents, subject to the usual penalties for disclosure and other requirements of the agency law.

VI. Under extraordinary circumstances an agency may make available to outside research workers copies of original data or intermediate materials which involve no disclosure of confidential data for further processing outside the agency. This arrangement is appropriate only

(Continued on page 37)

Distribution of Members by Membership in Selected Associations and by Number of Memberships in such Associations

Comparison of Number of ASA Sectional Interests and Number of Memberships in Other Associations

Distribution of Members by Methodological Techniques and by Highest Level of Education

Distribution of Members by Methodological Techniques and by Major Type of Statistical Activity

Distribution of Members by Field of Application and by Highest Level of Education

Distribution of Members by Major Types of Statistical Activity and by Highest Level of Education

One final comment about the summaries should be made known since it affects the membership in general. To develop the various tables, the information contained in the membership returns were incorporated in punched cards containing names as well as the many characteristics reported. These cards are available for special processing to select those members having a specified set of attributes and characteristics from the entire file. Listings of this type have proved to be of value to agencies and organizations searching for certain types of personnel. Several such listings have already been made.

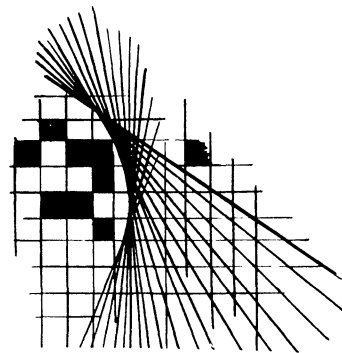
In order to expedite replies to such requests, complete listings of members have been made for each category shown in Field of Application, Methodological Techniques, and Major Type of Statistical Activity (see *Directory* for complete listing under each heading) and copies* of particular sections may be requested from the Secretary of the Association. Copies of the complete listings have been made available to selected agencies, the National Science Foundation, the Office of Statistical Standards (Bureau of the Budget) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics for general reference purposes.

* If list is lengthy, there may be a small charge for this service.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON AVAILABILITY OF FEDERAL STATISTICAL MATERIALS—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

for studies clearly in the public interest, too complex to be carried on under other arrangements, to be carried out by workers of known competence to make valid use of the materials, working in close cooperation with the agency staff.

VII. Appropriate advance planning by agencies will promote maximum exploitation of data collected by the Federal Government by one or another of the above methods. Anticipation of demands for further tabulations beyond those planned for publication may be reflected in questionnaire design, card design and tabulation procedures. The relatively few surveys which lend themselves to duplication of original materials for use outside the agency can probably be identified in advance, so that planning may take this use into account. In general, any steps to make the survey procedure a matter of systematic record, intelligible to other competent research workers, will aid users to make valid use of the data."



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