

We have noted the likelihood that, as the years go on, the pressures will increase substantially to collect and use available data about the private individual, to enlarge the scope of that data, and to attempt to correlate and expand its implications and meaning. To some extent, each user of information will gather his own, but, in keeping with standards of efficiency, there will be efforts to gain access to data accumulated by others. For example, we can expect pressures to combine credit rating information with Government job application information, with school psychological testing information, and so on. In an enormously complex society, everyone may have something to gain by this process as well as something to lose.

One thing is clear: for a long time indeed no correlation of data will account fully for the personality being evaluated and interpreted. Whatever the person providing the information believes, and whatever those using the information believe, there still will be a truly private person left, undetected by the computer. This is not meant in any mystical sense. It will take much longer than the 20-year period we are dealing with to gain enough understanding of human beings truly to strip them of all the private self which they think they volunteer to expose. Nevertheless, in many situations, that information which can be processed through punchcards or memory tapes will be accepted as the important private profile of the individual. This will be so because, limited as the data may be in some abstract sense, this will be the information most conveniently available to the users for the assessment of the individual. And it will not be trivial or simple information. It will be impressive in its scope, and the computer will be impressive in the processing of it. Thus the users will choose to believe that this is the important part of the private life of the individual, and from the economic standpoint it may well be. Similarly, many of those supplying the information will come to believe they are revealing their private selves. In other words, that which will be valued and acted on as if it were the private individual will be that which can be tested and assessed in ways which can be recorded and manipulated by computers. Of course, not everyone will succumb to this bifurcation of self, but enough may do so to make it an important factor in our society. The result may be that many will feel they or others have no private lives. Others will feel that their "real" private lives are even more private because they are relatively more ignored—the computer won't be able to do anything with them. Thereby we shall have a new measure of privacy: that part of one's life which is defined as unimportant (or especially important) simply because the computers cannot deal with it.

No one using the output from a computer needs to know as much about the data fed into it as does the programmer. Without intimate and extensive understanding of the data and the uses to be made of it, the programs which determine how the computer operates, and hence the quality of its output, will be crude. On the other hand, executive decisions often depend less on knowledge of details than on overall grasp of the situation. As a result, the programmer often will be the person with potentially the most intimate knowledge of the private lives of those whose data is processed. This potentiality need not result in his having specific knowledge about specific people, since a programmer is unlikely ever to see the materials which are input to the computer whose processes he has arranged. But given his deeper understanding of how the data are being processed, what assumptions are made about the relationships among the data, what constraints must be put on the data in order for the computer to use it, it is entirely possible that the programmer may be called upon in difficult cases to enrich the executive's basis for decision making. In this way, the programmer may become privy to very private information about specific individuals. There may then arise a demand for programmers with ethical standards which now are not considered prerequisites to their trade. Inevitably, of course, there will be corruptibles among this group who will leak private information.

In another sense the programmer will become important for the preservation of privacy and freedom. The way he arranges the relationships in the information to be processed and the relative emphasis he gives to different items could result in distortions in the "history" of the person and, hence, in the implications of the data. In other words, the programmer could invent a private life. The question then arises of how the individual protects and asserts his own version of his private life over and against that defined by the computer. In the past, it has been possible to refer differences in present interpretations of past events to witnesses or paper records or photographs. Such records were public in that they were visually comprehensible. But records storage will