

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1.—REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PRESERVATION AND USE OF ECONOMIC DATA TO THE SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL, APRIL 1965

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PRESERVATION AND USE OF ECONOMIC DATA

Richard Ruggles, chairman.
Richard Miller, secretary.
Edwin Kuh, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
Stanley Lebergott, Wesleyan University.
Guy Orcutt, University of Wisconsin.
Joseph Pechman, Brookings Institution.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

During the past four years the Committee on the Preservation and Use of Economic Data has met with a considerable number of Federal agencies concerned with the collection and use of data in machine readable form. The prime concern of the committee has been the development and preservation of data for use in economic research. Although considerable progress has been achieved in specific areas, the committee has concluded that three more general lines of action are required. Specifically, these are (1) the Federal Government should undertake the establishment of a Federal Data Center; (2) procedures should be established to insure the development and preservation of import data; and (3) research institutions and universities should develop an organization for coordinating their requests for economic data.

First, the committee urges that the Bureau of the Budget, in view of its responsibility for the Federal statistical program, immediately take steps to establish a Federal Data Center. Such a Federal Data Center should have the authority to obtain computer tapes and other machine readable data produced by all Federal agencies. It would have the function of providing data and service facilities so that within the proper safeguards concerning the disclosure of information both Federal agencies and users outside of the Government would have access to basic data. The Federal Data Center would require computer facilities, and it would need to be staffed with personnel capable of understanding the data problems in the various areas. In view of the importance of the Federal Data Center, the committee suggests that the Center be established with specific responsibilities for these functions and interagency authority to carry them out.

Second, the committee urges that the Office of Statistical Standards of the Bureau of the Budget place increased emphasis on the systematic preservation in usable form of important data prepared by those agencies engaging in statistical programs. In both the initial budget for statistical programs and the subsequent review of ongoing work, the Bureau of the Budget should see that provision is made for the development of computer tapes of important data, together with the supplementary material required for interpretation.

Third, the committee recommends that at an early date the Social Science Research Council convene representatives from research institutions and universities in order to develop an organization which can provide a clearinghouse and coordination of requests for data made by individual scholars from Federal agencies. In addition, such an organization would serve the Federal Government in an advisory capacity and provide a mechanism for the development of data tapes needed for research purposes in specific areas of economic research.