

and that an important criterion for evaluating existing standards for intermediate aggregates is the extent to which they can serve as useful intermediate building blocks that obviate the necessity for returning to the respondent unit for many programs.

Unless something of significance is done to modify current practice in these production procedures, the matching of data from diverse sources will remain generally impracticable and often impossible.

*Associative records that do not exist*

Many of the most important analytical and policy issues of today require the association of existing records with records that do not exist. There are serious gaps in the public record of social activity.

There is a particularly important class of records that is missing. It can be identified by examining the problems of some of the most important Federal programs. Missing are the records that enable policymakers and planners to understand adequately how people, households, regions, activities, enterprises, and administrative units are functionally related and how they change over time.

The importance of such a capability is readily apparent. There is a large array of new and old welfare programs involved in trying to ameliorate various forms of social pathology and transform people (e.g., poverty, education, health), and regions (e.g., EDA, rural redevelopment), and the activities that engage them (e.g., Small Business Administration and large elements of the agricultural program). There is a large array of new and old programs engaged in planning for and providing public facilities (e.g., highways, mass transportation, water resources, urban development and housing, etc.). In each of these programs considerable effort, planning, and resources are expended for program development, in establishing the formulary for program management, and in evaluating program results. Indeed, Federal legislation in these areas impose planning requirements as a condition of grants-in-aid and other forms of assistance upon State and local governments and other State, local, and regional activities in at least a dozen large programs.

To date, the problems have been formidable and the results unimpressive for one principal reason. The information base that exists and can be economically accessed tells us a great deal about the characteristics of people, households, activities, enterprises and their institutions at any one point, but tell us very little about how they are linked into functional networks or how they transform over time. These latter are the most relevant information resources for policymaking and program evaluation in these areas. What form of job training, what form of regional assistance, what kind of road networks, what modes of mass transportation, what kinds of cities are questions that need to be answered on the basis of some knowledge of functional linkages and evaluated in terms of measurement of change. The responsible planners and administrators of these programs are feeling a keen sense of frustration because of the paucity and irrelevance of much of the information available to them. Some of the records they need to associate to resolve these issues do not exist.

The information gap related to these requirements reveals two elements of significance for the present evaluation:

First, a large part of the apparent gap in the kind of information needed is a direct function of the same system anomalies outlined above. In many cases, the problem does not rest upon the fact that the relevant attributes of people, activities, or institutions are not included in existing records. It rests with the fact that these attributes cannot be associated in functional configurations or traced through a historical sequence. We see the evidence of this in the widespread current interest in what is characterized as "longitudinal" data—(the ability to trace attributes of the same respondent through time in order to identify transformations—i.e., from and to movements in relations to places, activities, occupations, institutional affiliation, welfare categories, etc.). Therefore, many of these requirements could be met if the problem of file compatibility could be resolved through an extension of the servicing capability and some modification of the production practice of the Federal statistical system. This underscores the observation made in the introduction that the problems of file accessibility cannot be successfully separated from all of the issues related to the quality and scope of the files. In a fundamental way, file accessibility is the issue of file compatibility which is inseparable from the production practices that determine the organization and quality of the file. It is important to note that steps that can be taken to improve file compatibility