

Standards. The funds to develop the basic archive could be transferred to other agencies as a part of a controlled plan.

Several hundred thousand dollars might profitably be requested in the fiscal 1967 budget for this purpose.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX MEMORANDUM

Subject: Report of informal committee on the reference problem.

THE COMMITTEE

An informal ad hoc committee was assembled by Edgar Dunn, acting as chairman, to discuss the problem of developing an adequate reference service for the Federal Statistical System. The committee was composed of Joe Daly and Edwin Goldfield of the Bureau of the Census, Rudolph Mendelssohn and Robert Steffes of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Ezra Glaser of the Patent Office and Edgar Dunn, consultant to the Office of Statistical Standards. These individuals participated with the knowledge and consent of their agencies but served as individuals and informed professionals. No attempt was made to get agency clearance or establish agency points of view. It was merely an informal attempt to formulate some judgments about the nature of the problem and its solutions. The committee met on several occasions on an irregular schedule during the summer of 1965.

THE PROBLEM

It was agreed that one of the serious obstacles to the fullest utilization of the information resources of the Federal Statistical System is the absence of any clearly defined reference function. The inadequate nature of these services is traceable to the production orientation of the agencies stemming from their primary missions as data publishers. The reference function has generally been thought of as the responsibility of the documentary centers. To the extent that the agencies attempt to provide occasional reference assistance, the task falls to an individual whose mission is defined as a production responsibility. The inadequate nature of this kind of service is also traceable to the fragmented nature of the numerical records of the Federal Statistical System growing out of the divided agency responsibility for their generation and maintenance. Because of the decentralized nature of the Federal statistical program the referencing problem is made especially complex and no agency has been in a position to perform a generalized service with reference to the total file.

The problem is becoming increasingly important in recent years as important uses of the numerical files are more frequently taking the forms of records in machine readable form rather than the traditional documentary form. The problem is also fed by changes in information usage that are leading to more complicated information requirements. Records are needed more often in disaggregate or special form not met by traditional documentary formats and they are often used in combination in ways that require extensive intelligence about the compatibility of records in several dimensions.

DESIRED REFERENCE CAPABILITY

Ideally the Federal statistical system should be able to develop a reference system that has the capacity to deal with inquiries in an efficient and creative way that would facilitate access to the records and extend their utility. The clientele is conceived to cover a wide range of sophistication and types of need. However, the requirements for a reference capability stem primarily from a large and growing core of intermediate information processors that service the research aims of academia and the decision and administrative requirements of business and government at all levels.

Such a service should be able to:

1. Help the client refine his inquiry and frame it in a way acceptable to the system and, in the process, give some preliminary information about the scope and nature of materials implied in his request as an aid to further defining, sharpening, and limiting the inquiry. (Experience of the Science Information Exchange and the National Science Referral Center have pointed up the great importance of this function even in dealing with highly trained professionals.);

2. Provide, by drawing upon a reference index and other reference tools, a fairly complete documentation of formal intelligence concerning—