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Author(s): Kenneth Janda

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Data Bases, Computers, and the Social Sciences by Ralph L. Bisco

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but, for all that, its connections with political reality are tenuous.

Yet, Bentham encouraged the founding of a statistical-gathering society, invented the "scale of belief" to measure attitudes, and coined the one indispensable word in the vocabulary of social science, *data*. The fact is, it is precisely those aspects of Bentham's thought which seem so "modern" in light of the orientation and practices of contemporary political science which also explain the embarrassment of an explicit association with his political theory. For, while many political scientists would agree that social behavior can be studied scientifically, recognize the need for classifications and definitions, and call for the formulation of a broad-gauged political theory, Bentham was convinced that he *had* accomplished just this. Whereas he was bold in his speculations and untroubled by complexities, contemporary political science trains men to be modest and cautious in their approach to social problems. A social science which measures usefulness by incremental additions has little need for the simple madness of a theorist like Bentham. Perhaps the best that can be said for the *Principles of Morals and Legislation* is that it would be the most useful of the classic texts in political theory to have in one's possession if one were stranded on a desert island ruled by Talcott Parsons and B. F. Skinner.

Again, it would be a mistake to read this criticism as a denial of Bentham's practical influence. As Mill noted, Bentham's ideas crashed through the fortress of the English legal tradition allowing others to overrun the barriers and gain the victories of legal reform. For Bentham as for the Lord Chancellor in *Iolanthe*, "the law is the true embodiment/of everything that is excellent." In fact, to say that he was obsessed with punishment for humanitarian reasons is to capture the essence of Bentham's thought, and perhaps the essence of utilitarianism as a philosophical movement. Men are evil, punishment is evil, and government, which is a blending of both, is also evil. Bentham's vision of the good society rarely extends beyond a hope that the scientific legislator wielding the scalpel of pain amongst a collection of felons will be generally successful in his attempts at performing criminal lobotomies. The prospects of success, however, are not easily calculated, and the effort necessary for undertaking such a calculation, learning the rules, mastering the definitions, remembering the classifications, etc., as set forth in the *Principles of Morals and Legislation* is likely to produce more pain than pleasure.

Nevertheless, for anyone wishing to pursue Bentham through the Augean stables of philosophy, the Herculean task has been made easier by the editor's helpful textual notes and the excellent index.

RICHARD ASHCRAFT

U.C.L.A.

Data Bases, Computers, and the Social Sciences. Edited by Ralph L. Bisco. (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1970. Pp. 291. \$12.50.)

This volume is presented as the *product* of the 1967 Conference of the Council of Social Science Data Archives rather than its *proceedings* because some conference presentations were omitted. In selecting the papers and organizing them for publication, Ralph Bisco—who died tragically on April 21, 1970 as the book was being published—did fashion a product that enhances my own recollection of that Conference.

Besides Bisco's introductory and concluding comments, the book is divided into seven rather equal parts, with two or at most three chapters per part. Part I raises the "Problems and Prospects" of data archives. Deutsch's keynote speech portrays the bright prospects of data archives that might help determine even "the half-life of a prejudice in food" and "the military participation ratio in the crusades." Campbell focuses more on archival problems, asking what is going into them and who is making the decisions about what goes in. Studying the usage of archives, Bell finds that archival data are hard to locate, existing archives are underused, and users are often unhappy with data obtained.

Part II contains two articles by government officials on "Government as the Major Producer, User, and Archivist of Social Science Data Bases." Bowman is concerned with protection of privacy in a federal data center, listing certain data that should not be included (but the criterion for exclusion seems weak) and arguing that data should be restricted to samples, not universes. Lowry accounts for the growth of federal information systems and shows how performance budgeting has produced information systems that may change "not only the course of executive decision-making but even the terms of political debate and policy-making."

Two "Case Studies in the Development and Use of Complex Data Bases" in Part III illustrate the enormity of such research. Miller and Roberts report that the Bay Area Transportation Study processed an estimated 20 million

words of data. Despite their sophisticated SPAN system, they needed additional software, and they recommend that "concerted system design"—for data collection, processing, and analysis—be part of future large scale efforts. Despite funds from six sources, Bauman, David, and Miller still lacked adequate support to acquire data processing talent on the Wisconsin Assets and Income Studies Archive, which had no SPAN-type system to manage its eight massive data files and which operated with acute confidentiality problems.

The subject of "Computer Systems for Managing Complex Data Structures" is treated by itself in Part V. Castleman describes in lay language one system which operates in an interactive mode to manage files and generate reports, but no mention is made of its status for distribution, its name, or the computer on which it operates. Braddock's "The Informatics MARK IV File-Management System," names and describes a batch-processing approach to file definition, updating, and retrieval (for the System 360), but it does not disclose who uses it for what.

In "Handling Missing-Data Problems," the topic for Part V, Miller narrates an imaginative tale of sleuthing out estimated values for observations missing from a set of files on investment behavior. His work might inspire some social scientist to fill in data blanks—if he is blessed with overlapping data that permit such inference. The Elashoffs deal more generally with the topic, outlining estimation procedures for missing data when observations are missing at random. But in more typical situations, when missing values depend on values of other variables, they find that standard estimation procedures exist only for special cases if at all.

Three chapters comprise Part VI, "Data-Linkage Problems and Solutions." Fay touches on the linkage of geographical areas through the address-coding-guide technique—which relies on zip-codes and is intended to link with data bearing only street addresses; and Horwood presents the method of geocoding areal units by the grid block concept. But data linkage by area is of less interest at present than linkage by person, and that is treated nicely by Steinberg, who explains the construction of social security account numbers and elaborates agency policy regarding their misuse.

"The Protection of Privacy," a theme running through most chapters, is confronted finally in Part VII. Rothman proposes several protective computer devices, granting their expense and imperfection but valuing the protection they afford. Feige and Watts pursue the protection of privacy through partial aggrega-

tion of microunits into groups and calculation of mean values for grouped observations. Noting that such aggregation works for specific analytical models, they find some future in "multipurpose" aggregation to support multipurpose inquiries.

Bisco in his introduction treats various administrative aspects of data archives. He promises a report on CSSDA plans to attenuate user problems, which contribute to the low usage rates that cause him to wonder if archives can justify their continued existence. His conclusion returns to the future of data archives, stating that they must work toward developing information-transfer networks that permit easy access to and linkage with diverse data sets—with suitable protections of privacy—before they will be socially useful.

As the product of a conference, the book is inevitably uneven, but its contents do have a coherent relationship to its title. Although the conference was held in 1967 and many selections have lost some relevance, none seem obsolete. The book does not seem suitable for methodology courses, but it might function as a stimulus for seminar reports and discussions, especially when keyed to the issue of privacy or to the problems of users of data archives. Otherwise, it will probably interest scholars for some of its parts, rather than the whole.

Bisco, in questioning the future of data archives, asked in 1967 if they could justify their continued existence. The history of CSSDA itself since 1967 might raise some doubt. The Fifth and last Annual CSSDA Conference was held in 1968, and NSF support of the Council was curtailed in 1969. (For a summary of CSSDA history, see the article by Beck and Farber in the *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*.) Shoots of the organization are being preserved at the University of Pittsburgh, but hopes for solutions to users' problems coming from a revived confederation of data archives are weak. On the other hand, most member archives in the old Council continue to exist, if not thrive, and new archives have been founded. In the current period of tight money for academic enterprises, data archives are bound to undergo a real test of survival in the competition for scarce funds. Will they be reduced to pleading for their lives according to market criteria based on usage rates or will they be treated as intellectual resources and be judged by more scholarly criteria? Only time will tell. And Ralph Bisco deserved to be present at the outcome.

KENNETH JANDA

Visiting Fellow 1970–1971
University of Pennsylvania