

In This Issue

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This issue of the *Journal of Privacy and Confidentiality* is built around a single paper by Gerald W. Gates, “How Uncertainty about Privacy and Confidentiality Is Hampering Efforts to More Effectively Use Administrative Records in Producing U.S. National Statistics,” with accompanying discussion by George Duncan, Julia Lane, Jennifer Madans, Kenneth Prewitt, Jerry Reiter, Fritz Scheuren, Alan Zaslavsky, and myself.

“Jerry” Gates, as he is known to his friends and colleagues, has focused on privacy and confidentiality, record linkage, and the use of administrative records for the past three decades. He worked at the Census Bureau in a variety of capacities over a 38 year period. Most recently he served as the first Chief Privacy Officer of the Census Bureau from 2005 to his retirement in 2007. He is a fellow of the American Statistical Association and served on the ASA’s Committee on Privacy and Confidentiality over an extended period of time including two terms as committee chair. The discussants have all worked with or interacted with Jerry during his career both at the Census Bureau and subsequently.

As Ken Prewitt and I (Fienberg and Prewitt, 2010) and many others have noted: “Census-taking around the world is under assault, thanks to concerns about privacy, cost, and response rates.” For example, a recent U.S. Senate appropriations panel report directed that the cost of the next U.S. Decennial Census in 2020 be pared back to that of Census 2000 without adjustments for inflation (Lowenthal, 2011), and even suggested that perhaps the costs of the 1990 census might be a better target. The focus on cutting costs in the U.S. and elsewhere continues to look towards the enhanced use of technology (e.g., the use of the internet for responses) and administrative records. The use of records from other government agencies raises issues of privacy and confidentiality. In his paper, Gates reflects back upon his experiences dealing with these issues within the U.S. Census Bureau and suggests some directions and needs as we look to the future use of administrative records. The discussants provide a broader context for these issues and offer some alternative perspectives, both with regard to the past and the future.

References

Fienberg, S. E. and Prewitt, K. (2010). Save your census. *Nature*, 488: 1043.

Lowenthal, T. (2011). Back to the census future, *The Census Blog*. September 21, 2011 <http://censusprojectblog.org/2011/09/21/back-to-the-census-future/>.

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