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National Bureau of Economic Research

EDITOR'S CORNER

This issue of the *Annals* features papers presented at the NBER Conference on the Role of the Computer in Economic and Social Research in Latin America. The Conference was held in Cuernavaca, Mexico, October 25-29, 1971, and was sponsored and organized by the National Bureau of Economic Research, the Colegio de Mexico, the DiTella Institute, the Vargas Foundation, and the Latin American Social Science Council; funds were provided by the National Science Foundation and IBM. The aim of the Conference was to bring together social scientists from North and South America who are currently engaged in quantitative research. Both methodological and substantive papers were presented on topics which included government statistical systems, data banks and computer centers, micro and macro simulation models, demographic and manpower studies, and international comparisons. It was clear that the computer is going to have a significant impact on future economic and social research.

Given the subject matter and the desirability of rapid dissemination, the journal format is ideal for some of the papers presented at the Conference. They will also appear in the Conference Proceedings, to be published in book form at a later date (in Spanish, Portuguese, and English volumes). The program for the Conference appears in the announcements section of this issue.

The articles in this issue fall into three broad categories: research methodology, data banks, and computer software systems. The lead article by *James Schulz*, presented at the Latin American Conference, demonstrates the power of simulation studies which use large data bases. The distribution of social security benefits can be derived under different assumptions regarding the legal framework. The next paper, by *Paul Wachtel*, is an econometric study of the household demand for assets; interdependence within the adjustment process is particularly important in this research.

Researchers at the Urban Institute then provide a state-of-the-art progress report on the microanalytic model currently under development. *Harold Guthrie* gives an overview of the purpose and design of the model and *Guy Orcutt* describes the auxiliary aggregative model, which determines price and output movements. *Gerald Peabody* and *Steven Caldwell* provide information on the fertility and marital status aspects of the model, respectively. Then *George Sadowsky* describes the computer system used for creating and testing various substantive models.

The article by *Robert Leone* describes the Dun & Bradstreet data base - a unique microdata set which will be of use beyond urban workplace location studies, which is the particular application presented here. Leone's work could have appeared under the methodology section of this issue, since it demonstrates the need for identifying individual firm behavior, so that changes on the margin can be isolated and analyzed. Additional *data set reviews* are planned for future issues of the *Annals*.

Two other papers, both presented at the Latin American Conference, treat the problems and potential of micro and macro data sets. *Harold Watts*, describes his experience with the Survey of Economic Opportunity and the Graduated

Work Incentive Experiment; his recommendations regarding data collection and research should prove useful to other social scientists. Then the NBER Time Series Data Bank is described by *Charlotte Boschan*; the paper focuses on content, operation, and documentation. Now that economists have been alerted as to the existence of this data base, they will learn more about applications by users in future issues.

Another kind of machine-readable file is described by *Richard and Nancy Ruggles*: a central register for economists. The feasibility of computerized bibliographic systems is explored in the context of the current information explosion in science. This article could also have appeared in the section on programming, since it presents case studies of a system that could serve as the basis for such a central register.

The last two notes describe software systems and priorities for the development of systems. *Edwin Kuh* explains the research objectives of the new *NBER Computer Research Center in Economics and Management Science*; the two priorities for research are mathematical programming and data analysis. Such reports are intended to keep readers abreast of developments related to the Center.

The final note is the first in a series of reports on social science computing at particular installations in the United States, with an emphasis on exportable systems. *Max Ellis* describes two such systems developed at the University of Wisconsin, both of which have special applications to hierarchical data files. Coincidentally, an announcement from the National Program Library at the University of Wisconsin follows this note.

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