

OCT 12 1972

NYTimes

DATA BANK PERIL HELD OVERRATED

But Study Urges Steps to
Bar Privacy Invasion

By JOHN DARNTON

Information data banks actually know a lot less about the personal affairs of individuals than the public believes, according to a three-year study by the National Academy of Sciences on the effects of computerization upon civil liberties.

The study, released yesterday found that the data banks collected the same kind of information that was collected before computerization, that such information that was collected before computerization, that such information was not widely shared among organizations, and that the most sensitive information was still only in manual files.

However, noting that computerization of personal-information files was spreading rapidly in the governmental and private sectors, and that few regulations governed it, the report said, "The next five years will be the critical time for the public to consider the boundary lines between proper and improper uses of computers."

The 500-page study called for legislation and policy changes to protect against invasions of privacy, and recommend six areas of priority. The first five included the individual's right of access to his own record; restrictions upon the type of information collected and disseminated; technological safeguards; confidentiality rules for the police, bank and credit card systems, and the creation of "information trust" agencies to handle sensitive files.

Information-Sharing

Of particular concern, the report said, is the fact that information-sharing among computerized data-collecting organizations will become easier and less costly. To this end, the report suggested a sixth priority,

limiting use of the Social Security number as a "universal citizen identifier" that can aid in the linkage between data banks.

The study was conducted by the academy's Computer Science and Engineering Board. It was directed by Dr. Alan F. Westin, professor of public law and government at Columbia University, author of "Privacy and Freedom," an authority on data surveillance and storage who leans to a civil-libertarian view. It was financed by grants of \$164,000 from the Russell Sage Foundation, a research-sponsoring organization in New York.

For consultation, there was an 18-member advisory group, whose views on the privacy issue covered a broad spectrum.

Its members included Ralph Nader, the consumer advocate; Representative Ogden R. Reid, Democrat of Westchester; Representative Cornelius E. Gallagher, Democrat of New Jersey; Nicholas deB Katzenbach, former United States Attorney General and now president of the International Business Machines Corporation; and Dr. John H. Knowles, president of the Rockefeller Foundation.

Specialists on Staff

The project was conducted by a 15-member staff of specialists in law, computer sciences and social sciences. They collected materials on more than 500 organizations with personal-record systems, interviewed computer industry and civil liberty groups, surveyed 1,500 government and private organizations by mail, and conducted 55 on-site inspections to the 55 most advanced computerized agencies in the country.

These included the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Crime Information Center, the United States Social Security Administration, the aBnk of America, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the aKnsas iCty (Missouri) Police Department and the Mutual of Amaha Insurance Company. Not included were governmental agencies with classified information or the Army.

"It was something of a surprise," said Dr. Westin, at a news conference, "to find out how little information there actually was in these data banks."