Census CounterParts

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Dedicated to improving the quality of communication to all Census employees

Census Bureau Hosts Canadian and Mexican Foreign Trade Statistics Delegations

by James W. Fitzsimmons (FASD)

Delegations from Canada and Mexico visited the Census Bureau June 4-6 to discuss ways to reconcile significant differences in their reporting of official merchandise-trade statistics.

Comparisons over recent years have revealed large discrepancies between Mexico's trade statistics and the corresponding U.S. and Canadian data. For example, in 1996 Mexico reported about $80 billion in merchandise exports to the United States while the United States reported about $73 billion in imports from Mexico, a difference of $7 billion.

Discrepancies also exist between U.S. exports and the corresponding Mexican imports, as well as the value of trade between Canada and Mexico.

The meeting focused on how to identify the major sources of discrepancies. Experience has shown that the most common source of discrepancies lies with what is covered and how it is covered. For example, Mexico includes both the export and import of electricity while the United States does not. The process of identifying and explaining such discrepancies is called a reconciliation study.

The Trilateral Reconciliation Study is part of a larger program to improve cooperation and consultation among the three signatories to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The Mexican delegates represented a variety of government agencies: the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics; Customs; the Bank of Mexico; the Department of Commerce and Industrial Development; and the Bank of Foreign Trade. The Canadian delegates were from Statistics Canada. *—Continued on page 3.*

Smithsonian Institution Recognizes Automated Export System (AES)

The voluntary electronic export-reporting program called the Automated Export System (AES), developed by the Census Bureau, along with the U.S. Customs Service, the Bureau of Export Administration, the State Department and other federal agencies, has been formally inducted into the Smithsonian Institution's Permanent Research Collection of Information Technology Innovation.

Designed to increase the competitiveness of American companies in the global marketplace and accelerate and improve the availability and quality of export statistics, AES was one of 321 innovative information technology applications from 39 states and 21 countries nominated by the Computerworld Smithsonian Chairmen's Committee for inclusion in the Smithsonian's 1997 National IT Innovation Collection. The collection is housed at the National Museum of American History in downtown Washington, D.C.

"The Automated Export System is using information technology to create strides toward remarkable social improvement in government and the nonprofit world," said David Allison, chairman of the National Museum of American History's Division of Information Technology and Society. "We are delighted to have this excellent example of how information technology is being used to improve our world included in the national collection."

AES is the central point through which export shipment data required by multiple agencies is filed electronically to Customs. AES uses the efficiencies of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) to facilitate the movement of U.S. exports. *—Continued on page 3.*

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A REPORT FROM THE REGIONS

Boston in the Spotlight

Featuring the Boston Regional Office Geography Staff

By Tia Costello and Vincent Pito (Boston RO)

"Individualism," "Yankee ways," and "ingenuity" are words often used to describe the typical New Englander. This unique region of our country has always taken pride in being distinctive. But these character traits can pose a challenge of sorts to Census Bureau geographers charged with updating street records in preparation for the decennial census. Why a challenge and how is the Census Bureau tackling it?

One challenge stems from the governmental roots of these six northeastern states. Strong town governments, many dating back to colonial times, abound in New England while county governments remain weak or simply do not exist. Instead of contacting New England's 67 counties, Boston Regional Office geographers must call more than 1,600 city and town governments to obtain reference materials to update our geographic records. For example, geographers use town tax maps obtained from local tax assessors offices, but assessors are usually very busy with local property tax issues and sometimes do not have the time to provide requested information. In other cases, small town offices are only open in the evenings and we have to contact officials at home. Patience, persistence and good negotiating skills are necessities in obtaining reference sources from small New England towns.

After receiving materials, Boston Regional Office geographers face another challenge: working with reference materials that vary in type and style because the level of sophistication in updating and recording changes in streets varies from town to town. For example, the City of Boston provided an electronic file showing all the parcels in the city, a very good source that helped us update our address records very quickly. Boston was the first city in the country to provide the Census Bureau with updated address information in preparation for Census 2000 – Thanks, Boston!

We are not always so fortunate, however, when dealing with rural areas. We sometimes receive only lists of streets within a town, maps that are difficult to read or maps that do not contain any address information at all. In such cases, we rely upon private companies to obtain addresses and address locations or we manually link address names to mapped parcels. These different types and styles of reference sources visually and mentally challenge our geographic support staff who must determine the accuracy of the source materials.

If this is so difficult and cumbersome, why do we bother? The Census Bureau is all about numbers, but the numbers we collect are meaningless until they are fixed to a physical location. We use addresses in order to identify the geographic location of the people. Without this information, states would be unable to properly redistrict their populations into the allowable number of congressional districts. By knowing where people are physically located, states can equitably distribute the population by district and maintain our representative form of government. Similarly, the statistics generated by the Census Bureau only have context within a geographic framework. The number 1,043 means nothing until it is explained in terms of geography: in 1990 there were 1,043 persons living in the town of Cabot, Vt. Census enumerators and field representatives need current maps in order to know where to locate the people to be interviewed. These are the reasons why the updating of geographic records is such an important function of the Census Bureau and why the Boston Regional Office geographers persevere.



Colleen Carbone, cartographic aide and Phil Busch, lead clerk

To handle the thousands of street updates to the Census Bureau's geographic records that occur every year in the New England region, the geography staff at the Boston Regional Office has grown in the past 20 years from one geographer to a staff of 18: four geographers, two geographic specialists and 11 cartographic aides all under the direction of one geographic coordinator. Although New England cities and towns provide us with a wide array of source materials, our staff can handle the challenge because they all have related degrees in geography and are highly trained. The Boston region's geographic support staff does not just focus on New England for Census 2000; we are also updating 53 counties in upstate New York and all of Puerto Rico. We are proud of our geography staff and of their contributions to ensuring greater accuracy in the collection of census data. ■



Chuck Woods and Anita Brown – the management team for AES.

Smithsonian Institution Recognizes Automated Export System (AES)—continued from page 1.

This newly developed cooperative system alleviates the hassles that can hinder quick and efficient exporting. Inaccurate information, filling out paper forms, duplicate reporting – the difficulties that impede the exporting business – are eliminated by AES.

AES collects information electronically, correcting errors up front. Paper copies of the Shippers Export Declaration (SED) are no longer needed. Duplicate reporting to multiple agencies is reduced.

The Foreign Trade Division cooperated in this effort under the management of Chuck Woods and Anita Brown. Census Bureau survey statisticians and programming staff participating in the program, including Harold Blyweiss, Gerald Horner and Mike Schreffler are working at the U.S. Customs Service.

"The Foreign Trade Division is very pleased to have been selected to participate in this innovative cooperative effort" said Harvey Monk, FTD chief.

Census Bureau Hosts Canadian and Mexican Foreign Trade Statistics Delegations—continued from page 1.

Harvey Monk, chief of the U.S. Census Bureau's Foreign Trade Division (FTD), welcomed the guests from Canada and Mexico. Chuck Woods, assistant (FTD) chief for Data Systems and Collection, and Bill Regina, Foreign Trade's Methods Research and Quality Assurance Branch, gave presentations on the processing and editing of U.S. trade data, respectively.

Well experienced in this area, the Special Projects Branch, currently headed by Diane Oberg, has completed reconciliations with Canada, Japan, Australia, the European Union, and South Korea. The Census Bureau completed its first trade reconciliation with Canada more than 20 years ago.

Held regularly every few months on a rotating basis in each country since November 1996, the reconciliation meetings provide a forum for discussing trade data in depth, as well as an opportunity for the participants to get to know their counterparts across the borders.

The participants concluded during a lengthy discussion that the difficulties of measuring the flow of trade between Mexico and Canada resulted in part from the volume of shipments passing through the United States.

The three countries agreed on which datasets to use, how to present the results and a plan for future work. The partners also agreed to meet next in Ottawa in October.

Mexico, Canada, and the United States are currently planning to publish their results in a joint publication next spring.

"I am impressed by how much has been accomplished." Monk said, "With the working plans that we just agreed upon, I believe we have taken an important step towards getting improved trade data."



The participants at the trilateral meeting on foreign trade statistics are gathered together after the final session.

Peace Corps Volunteers Then, Census Bureau Employees Now

By Molly Abramowitz

This is the first of a two-part series on Census Bureau employees who served in the Peace Corps. Next month's article will focus on the group's experiences.

Unbeknownst to many of us as we toil on censuses or surveys is that a special group of our coworkers gave two years of their lives before coming here to promote world peace and friendship in mostly underdeveloped nations.

They were trained in language, technical and cross-cultural skills. And during the two years they served they became members of the overseas communities where they worked. They participated in projects, ranging from agriculture and rural development to health and education. They are the Census Bureau's former Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs).

CounterParts asked for details and 30 people responded. They answered questions about their years in the Peace Corps, with many of the answers charged with the idealism and sense of adventure and commitment that influenced the rest of their lives.



A representative group of Census employees who served in the Peace Corps.



Will Caldwell (r) serving in Kathmandu, Nepal, 1977.

Countries where they were stationed:

Brazil, Chile, Fiji, Gabon, The Gambia, Honduras, Kenya, Korea, Liberia, Malaysia, Mali, Nepal, Nigeria, Paraguay, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Thailand, Togo, Venezuela.

The duties varied. Carol Gunlicks (DSMD) served in Thailand from 1966 to 1968.

"I worked with midwives in several villages promoting school health projects and developing educational sessions for pregnant women that dealt with child care, feeding and family planning," she said. Brenda August (C2PO), another early Peace Corps volunteer, served in Honduras from 1962 to 1964. Among her list of duties was the development and implementation of a prison rehabilitation program where she conducted health and hygiene classes for women prisoners. She had to conduct classes for children as well, because "there were no facilities for the children, so when their mothers went to prison the children went also."

Julia Buckley Ess (DMD) was a home extensionist in Paraguay. "I worked with women and girls through a 4-H type format on home gardens, nutrition and raising chickens." Selma Sawaya (IPC) was a visiting nurse in Brazil. Karl Kindel (GOVS) was involved in a forestry program in Chile from 1966 to 1969. "I ran a forest nursery which produced six million seedlings for forest planting each year. In addition, I developed a national forestry statistical plan for the country, much of which was implemented."

John Kavaliunas (MSO) worked in community development in Brazil. Other business-type activities included the kind that Peter Wobus (SVSD) was involved in in Malaysia. "I was a business advisor for a group of farmer cooperatives. My job was to help them to become profitable, viable businesses," he said.

> *"life is not as serious as we might think or as unforgiving as we might fear" ...*

Many of the volunteers worked in education. Ramona Rantala (EPCD) served in Swaziland from 1981 to 1983 teaching math and chemistry among other courses in a secondary boarding school for refugees. Bruce Durdling (IPC) taught the same in Nigeria and Liberia. Don Dalzell (DSMD) taught applied math and physics in Malaysia "to students who thought faster than I did." Tony Costanzo (GEO) taught English as a foreign language in Korea while Jane Comstock (POL) did the same in Mali.

Some like Will Caldwell, who served in

—*Continued on next page*.

Peace Corps Volunteers Then, Census Bureau Employees Now—continued from page 4.

Nepal, taught math and science in Nepali and Mark Gorsak (DSMD) taught math in Togo in French. George Gatewood (POL) taught history and math in Sierra Leone. Nola Krasko (FLD) worked in special education in Chile. Chris Corlett (IPC) taught math in Gabon. Al Pfeiffer (GEO) served in Figi in the Geographic Department at the University of the South Pacific. A more recent participant, Richard Smiley (SRD), served in The Gambia from 1992 to 1994 teaching math and statistics.

> *... the sound of rain falling on a thatched roof is comforting."*

For most of the volunteers the experience is more than 20 years old. When asked what they learned that has influenced their lives, the answers that came back resonated with humility and tolerance for other cultures. Some of the comments :

"How to survive in unfavorable situations"... "life is not as serious as we might think or as unforgiving as we might fear" ..." I was blessed by the experience" ... "take nothing for granted (electricity, flushing toilet, water, food, shelter, life)" ... "be patient and tolerant ... self reliance ... "Life is short, the world is big and Americans are a minority ... Things are not necessities, family and friends are ... it's the journey that makes life rich, not the destination or the accessories ... happiness is a decision, independent of circumstances ... the sound of rain falling on a thatched roof is comforting."

Many of the participants echoed the comments of Jane Comstock (POL) one of the volunteers from Mali:

"As a Peace Corps Volunteer, I prospered in a primarily Muslim and polygamous society which incorporates traditional tribal languages and customs into all aspects of daily life.

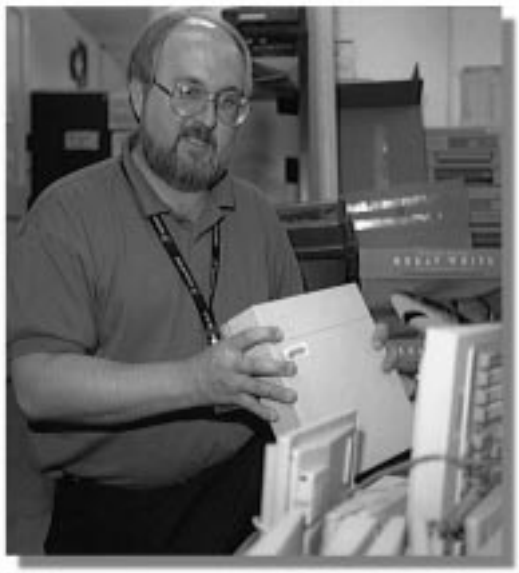
"In addition to learning, practicing, and absorbing the different languages, behavioral norms, and traditional/tribal standards, the most profound understanding I gained through the PCV experience was the recognition of my own personal value system and biases. Unless a person identifies and recognizes their own individual boundaries and weighs the values which created them, they can not fully appreciate and understand those set by other people."

Most of the group said they would love to have the experience again, some hope to return to the countries where they served after retirement and some would do it again if only they could turn back the clock. ■

Taking a Break from Work to Help Others

Would you give up the comfort and security of a federal job to start a non-profit corporation that works with old, potentially obsolete computer equipment?

That's what Bill Lloyd, of Demographic Surveys Division (DSD), did for three months this year. He took a leave of absence from the Census Bureau to help establish a non-profit corporation called Computer Reclamation, Inc. The company takes donated surplus computer equipment, refurbishes it and makes it available to schools, churches and synagogues, day care centers and other types of non-profit organizations nationwide. Computer Reclamation regularly refurbishes over 400 computers per month – any equipment that can't be repaired is sent to a recycler, so that the local landfills aren't overrun with old monitors and dead computer parts.



Obsolete is a relative term to Bill LLoyd.

The corporation just opened a new 9,000-square-foot training and recycling facility in a warehouse in Silver Spring. Part of Lloyd's job was to train 13 unemployed individuals on how to repair and upgrade IBM-compatible computers. The training led these people towards taking permanent jobs as certified computer repair technicians. For eight hours a day the students were paid $5.50 an hour to attend classes on PC hardware and repair and then to work on computers for the balance of the day. Other students from Montgomery and Prince George's Community colleges received the same training and volunteered their time to repair and test computer equipment. At the end of the three-month program, the students received job placement assistance in finding computer repair jobs in the DC area. Now that Lloyd has returned to the Census Bureau, an instructor that he trained will continue to teach these classes, using the curriculum that Lloyd developed.

Computer Reclamation does not give away these refurbished computers; the company charges a fee for each computer in order to recover the costs involved in running the program, paying the employees and covering the monthly rent and utility bills. By doing this, Computer Reclamation is able to sustain itself without need of any federal, state or local funding.

Individuals and companies that give equipment to Computer Reclamation get a tax receipt for their donation. The unusable or broken computer parts are sold to recyclers who extract the gold or precious metals from the boards or melt down the glass in the monitors. Volunteers also help the program by donating their time and skills to help refurbish and evaluate equipment. By running an efficient organization, the company can derive the needed income to support the current center and prepare to open new training and recycling centers planned for the northern Virginia and Richmond areas.*—Continued on page 6.*



How We Market the American Community Survey

By Vicky Brinson (MSO)

For years, data users have been requesting more timely data that would give consistent measures for all areas. The American Community Survey (ACS) answers this need by offering an up-to-date, annual statistical picture, not just once every 10 years. Communities can use the data to track the well-being of children, determine where to build new highways, evaluate programs such as welfare assistance and much more.

For any new survey to be successful, a host of technical issues must be resolved and the ACS is no exception. Besides data collection and analysis and field operations, communication at all levels and in each part of the development process is a priority.

The Marketing Services Office (MSO), working with the Continuous Measurement Office and the Demographic Statistical Methods Division, currently is focusing its communications efforts for the ACS on three key audiences: Congress, customers and employees.

Congress

The outreach plan for Congress is designed to inform and educate key members of the House and Senate and congressional staff about the ACS. The Census Bureau is working directly with elected officials and data users in ACS locations to educate them and keep them up-to-date about the ACS and to enlist support for the program.

The message to this audience has been supported by the development of a brochure and the drafting of letters and press releases to notify congressmen and senators who represent the test sites that will be added in 1998.

Customers

One of MSO's goals is to lead in the development of customer-valued products and services and continually strengthen the Census Bureau's customer orientation. If we want to increase our sales and customer satisfaction, we have to give the customers what they want. We cannot guess what that is; customers must tell us.

In support of this, one of the first things the Bureau did was to form an ACS product development group of experienced data users to advise us on the ACS. From this group representing academia, local government and federal agencies, among others, we have received input as to the types of data products that should come from the survey and how the data should be used.

Employees

The Census Bureau wants employees to know about the ACS – what is happening, what is planned and how it might affect them. "Town meetings" for employees at headquarters like the ones held in June and July are one way to communicate that information.

For additional information on the ACS, employees can look for Continuous Measurement on cc: mail, electronic bulletin board and the new Intranet site. ■

Taking a break from work to help others—continued from page 5.

Lloyd said that he's glad to be back at the Census Bureau, and that his experience working at Computer Reclamation was a very positive one. "It was very tiring at times," he said, "investing yourself deeply in the lives of others. But the rewards that come from helping people in need are immeasurable. Although I am back working full-time at the Bureau, I expect that my commitment to Computer Reclamation will continue for some time to come."

If you would like to know more about Computer Reclamation, if you have computer equipment you would like to donate, if you would like to obtain a computer for your charitable organization, or if you would like to volunteer some time working on computer equipment, you can call Computer Reclamation on 301-495-0280. They are located at 8880 Monard Drive in Silver Spring, Md. You also can e-mail Bill Lloyd with questions at *wlloyd@census.gov.* ■

Census Bureau Golf Club Marshals the 1997 U.S. Open

By Chris Dyke (SRD) and Janice Sebold (DSD)

In the spring of 1996 the Census Golf Club made an offer to the Congressional Golf Club, host of the 1997 U.S. Open, to assist with marshaling one of golfdom's premier tournaments. To everyone's amazement, the offer was accepted and the Census Golf Club, which in case you didn't know, is not a ritzy course, was asked to provide 20 volunteers. Our assignment: "You will be roving marshals."

While many of the clubs that applied for marshaling assignments got specific holes to police, we were responsible for crowd control between the driving range and the 1st tee, between the 9th green and the 10th tee and at bleachers throughout the course. By far our biggest surprise and most enjoyable perk was walking the course with the players.



The "roving marshals" – (l to r) Jack Leidich, Jean Sebold, Roy Borgstede, Bill Russo, Greg Abbott, Howard Kaufmann, Bob Munsey, Phil Salopek, Dave Word, and Carol Briggs. Not pictured: Roger Beinhart, Chris Dyke, Jerry Gates, Leland Harvey, Ben Hannon, JJ Lantz, John McCormick, Mike Mersch, Charlie Moon and Janice Sebold .

There were approximately 3,700 volunteers working the tournament, with close to 1,000 of them working as marshals. We purchased our shirts and hats and, in return, got to see many of golf's greatest players up close, making incredible shots. We had special parking close to the course, a volunteer's tent with sodas and restrooms and credentials for the entire week.

Most of the marshals agreed that this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that was both rewarding and sometimes frustrating. The rewarding part was being a part of this event, watching all the pros in action and being inside the ropes!

We all marveled at Tiger's swing. After Jack Nicklaus and his son teed off, Nicklaus turned to the crowd and exclaimed, "It doesn't get any better than this!" A little known golfer, PJ Cowan charmed marshals and the crowd alike. When asked for his autograph, Cowan would ask the people if they knew who he was. Most people didn't know!

While we all were impressed with the autograph signing that most of the pros did, one of our marshals while walking with some of the better known golfers discovered how the pros handle autograph signing. They grabbed the article from the fan, signed while walking, and handed the signed object to our marshall who returned the object to the fan. While one of the marshals was taking pictures during the practice round, the pro asked the marshall to give her camera to someone else and join him in the picture.

Payne Stewart was another favorite. After the third-round rain delay, Stewart was practicing on the putting green. He missed six straight eight-foot putts before a fan hollered out, "I'll bet $5 you can't make that putt." He looked at the fan and said, "You're on." Stewart proceeded to sink the putt and went over to the fan and said, "Show me the money." He accepted the fan's $5. Stewart and Paul Azinger proceeded to play this game with other fans.

While most of the crowds were nice, some of the frustration came from crowd reaction. One tough marshaling assignment was clearing the grandstands for approaching inclement weather. Several of the players were less than cordial but for the most part they were extremely receptive, especially during the practice rounds.

Our club was treated very well by the staff at Congressional and our assignments included walking with some of the biggest names in golf – Ernie Els, Nick Price, Payne Stewart, Greg Norman, Jack Nicklaus, Fuzzy Zoeller, Ben Crenshaw, V.J. Singh to name a few.

Chris Dyke made all the arrangements and coordinated communication between the tournament organizers and the Census Golf Club. ■

Your Contributions Made a Difference

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who contributed money and clothing and other items when my house burned in May of this year. I want to say to them, that without their help I would not have been able to carry on each day.

I would like to thank the people who gave, those who prayed, and those who wanted to help but could not.
I want to let everyone know that with God's help things have improved. Again thanks to all of you.

Rosa Montgomery (ACSD)

Work and Family Programs Receive Honorable Mention

By Katherine Booth (HRD)

On June 11, 1997 the Census Bureau received the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Director's Honorable Mention award for its Work and Family Programs. Each year OPM honors those federal agencies that have demonstrated exceptional commitment to creating a family-friendly environment for employees. This year three agencies received the Director's Award for Outstanding Work and Family Programs, and three received honorable mention citations for progressive and innovative initiatives. The six 1997 recipients were selected from a field of 36 nominated agencies.

The Work and Family Programs Award supports presidential directives to departments and agencies to provide employees with an array of flexible programs to help them manage family responsibilities while serving the government through federal employment. It serves as a vehicle for highlighting the importance of programs that help workers achieve balance in their lives, and it demonstrates OPM's commitment to bringing real change to the business landscape through active support of such programs. As Jim King, OPM Chief, opened the awards ceremony, he spoke briefly about the importance of creating a better, happier, more productive government through programs that recognize the totality of employees' lives.

In the private and public sectors, work and family programs are becoming a part of the fabric of our workplace culture as workers at all organizational levels struggle to achieve the optimum balance between work and family. The Census Bureau is proud of the efforts it has made to address these vital issues. In keeping with our mission statement, we demonstrate that we value our employees by providing viable family-friendly and other innovative work options and benefits. The yield is enhanced productivity and responsiveness to our customers.

Nancy Potok, the Principal Associate Director and Chief Financial Officer, accepted the Work and Family Programs award on behalf of the Census Bureau. Among the benefits which OPM noted in citing Census for its family-friendly profile are:

- The Bureautots Day Care Center
- Flexitime and 5-4/9 tours of duty
- The Employee Assistance Program
- Part-time employment and job sharing
- The Mother's Time Out Room (nursing support for new mothers)
- The annual Take Our Children to Work Day

OPM evaluated these and other program elements against criteria that measured program scope and objectives, program administration, employee participation and results.



A happy trio discuss the Work and Family Programs award (l to r) Deputy Director Brad Huther, Director Martha Riche and Associate Director Nancy Potok.

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