information & the state

concepts of information
March 1

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information and the state

**studying information**

*a need for social theory?*


the nature of information

like a fact?

"An immense amount of physical and intellectual work is needed to create even the most simple statistical fact--indeed, the simpler a fact is, the more refinement, and therefore the more effort, is necessary. This aspect was noticed early on in the history of statistics, not least by Charles Babbage: facts have to be manufactured"


or a natural resources

Information (like Foucault's state)

"behind our backs"?
the nature of information

rival narratives?

"information wants to be free"

"People just produce whatever they want; the good stuff spreads, and the bad gets ignored"

Paul Graham, 2005

"information needs to be controlled"
information & the state

"origins of surveillance ... directly bound up with the formation of the nation-state. ... 'surveillance' ... first ... the accumulation of 'information' -- symbolic materials that can be stored by an agency or collectivity. Second ... the supervision of the activities of subordinates by their superiors within any collectivity."

Giddens, Power, Property & the State
overview

thematic issues
(roughly in this order)
'gathering' information--'legible' state

distributing information--'legible' government

stabilizing information -- 'reliable' information

surveilling throughout
becoming 'papermongers'

Roger of Sicily 1095-1154
1145, ordered all charters on paper to be copied to parchment then destroyed

Philip II 1527-1598 el rey papelero

Francis Bacon 1561-1626 New Atlantis

Jean-Baptiste Colbert 1619-1683 erudition d'état [and bookkeeping skills]
"the permanent patronym would take its place beside ... other 'optical technologies' ... weights & measures ... legal code ... cadastral maps ... property registers ... tax code, a common currency ... standard dialect," Scott et al

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Statutes of California, 1849-50

Monday, February 28, 2011
"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. ... And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the City of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the City of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house of David:) to be taxed with his espoused wife, being great with child." Luke, 2:4-5
still gathering
earlier counts

counting against the French
"the greatness of kings measured by the number of their subjects" -- Marshal Vauban

counting against 'declinists'
"the ancient world had been more populated than the modern one
-- Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, 1721

"Where there is room for more people they will alway arise, even without naturalization bills"
"On the Populousness of Ancient Nations"
-- David Hume, 1742
In Britain, however, the first census was taken, not out of a constitutional requirement, but as a way of resolving the Malthusian population controversy ... The 1800 Census Act was designed principally to determine whether or not the population was actually increasing.

Martin Campbell-Kelly, "Change in the British Census," 1996
"This boy must be put through a few preliminary paces. Name, Jo. Nothing else he knows on. Don't know that everybody has two names. Never heerd of such a think. Don't know that Jo is short for a longer name. Thinks it long enough for him. ... Spell it? No. ... Never been to school. ... What's home?

"... 'This won't do, gentlemen!' says the Coroner."

Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, 1853

**João in the Douro**
making indelible

**Foucault's hero**

"sailors ... trace their family .. .names upon the wrist ... If it were possible for such a practice to become universal ... Who are you? ... no room for prevarication in the answer ... men were thus held as it were by an invisible chain."

Jeremy Bentham,

*Principles of Penal Law* [1843]
resisting registration

the "civilizational project"

FLUELEN

Captain Macmorris, I think, look you, under your correction, there is not many of your nation ...

MACMORRIS

Of my nation! What ish my nation? Ish a villain, and a bastard, and a knave, and a rascal. What ish my nation? Who talks of my nation?
counting the dead before the living

births, marriages, deaths

bills of mortality

1603: regular bills of mortality

1611: incorporation of parish clerks counting by "searchers"

1629: other deaths

1728: age of deceased
The plague is much in Amsterdam, and we in fears of it here.

Pepys, Dec. 31, 1663

The talk upon the 'Change is, that De Ruyter is dead, with fifty men of his own ship, of the plague, at Cales

June 30, 1664

We were told to-day of a Dutch ship ... where all the men were dead of the plague, and the ship cast ashore at Gottenburgh

Sept. 24, 1664

Thence to the Coffee-house ... where all the newes is of the Dutch ... and of the plague growing upon us in this towne

May 24, 1665
The towne grows very sickly, and people to be afeard of it; there dying this last week of the plague 112, from 43 the week before,. The Mortality Bill is come to 267; June 29th, 1665 Above 700 died of the plague this week. **July 13, 1665**

The sickness is... almost every where, there dying 1089 of the plague this week. **July 19, 1665**
political arithmetic

politics and population

William Petty, RS
surveyor

Political Arithmetic of Ireland

velocity of circulation
natural vs market price
economic surplus
population change
"His Majesty gave this particular charge to His Society, that if they found any more such Tradesmen, they should be sure to admit them all, without any more ado."

--Pratt
other head counts

UK
marriage act, 1754
births, deaths, and marriages, 1836

France
prostitutes, 1816

aliens, deviants, criminals ...
other head counts

UK

marriage act, 1754
births, deaths, and marriages, 1836

France

prostitutes, 1816

aliens, deviants, criminals ...
more gathering

tax rolls: Domesday 1086

maps/addresses

national, naval, transnational

becoming more visible
more gathering

tax rolls:
Domesday 1086

maps/addresses
national, naval, transnational

becoming more visible
<table>
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<td>Bee-boxes</td>
<td>Samuel C. Myers</td>
<td>Mount Pleasant, Pa.</td>
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<td>Bee-boxes</td>
<td>John Sholl</td>
<td>New York</td>
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<td>Wallingford, Ct.</td>
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<td>Putney, Vt.</td>
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**Patents**

**GRANTED SEPTEMBER 3, 1890.**

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**Senators to Debate Patent Bill**

*By EDWARD WYATT*

Published: February 27, 2011

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Monday will begin debating a bill that critics say will undermine American strength abroad, plunder the United States economy and exceed the government’s constitutional authority.

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**gathering**

**property:** IP

patents

copyrights

trade marks

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**Add to Portfolio**

*International Business Machines Corporation*

*General Electric Co*

*your Portfolio →*

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The subject: patent reform.

Rarely has the Patent and Trademark Office elicited such passions. But included in the bill is a long-debated feature that would change the federal patent system to a “first to file” protocol of determining patent priority — one used by nearly all of the rest of the world — from its current “first to invent” system.

“This bill would be death to innovation in America,” said Phyllis Schlafly, the conservative leader and activist who has rallied opposition to the bill among conservative groups like the Owners of America and the Christian Coalition.
tracing trade

customs & excise

the search for statistical proof

"apprehension of the wrong
balance of trade, appears of such a
nature, that it discovers itself
wherever one is out of humour with
the ministry, or is in low spirits."

--David Hume,

"Of the balance of trade," 1758
"Brussels convention [1853] on naval meteorology had created a widely used standard meteorological logbook for ships at sea .. the oldest continuous quasi-global meteorological record"

-- Paul Edwards, "Meteorology as Infrastructure"
from gathering to distributing

**thematic issues**
(roughly in this order)

'gathering' *information* -- 'legible' *state*

*distributing information* -- 'legible' *government*

*stabilizing information* -- 'reliable' *information*

*surveilling* throughout
a democratic imperative
parliamentary information

"Mr Burke reprobated the Ministry for having refused to lay before the House the papers which had been required; and objected to Major Scott, a gentleman in the army, giving any official information to that House, which, he thought, would have been more proper for the Chairman of the Committee, or from some of the Directors themselves" 1785

gathering to distributing (and stabilising)
Hansard, monopoly
"Nothing important was ever brought before the government without a minster saying ... 'I have called for a report.'"

Balzac, *Bureaucracy, or A Civil Service Reformer*, 1824
... to civil society

beginning the century of statistics

"useful knowledge"

agricultural improvement:

"May commons be uncommon"

-- John Sinclair,

The Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791-99

a coasean endeavour?
official competition

the "incontinent printer"

Parliamentary Commissions & "Blue Books"

wars, colonies, trade

"moral statistics"

poor law
child labour
factories acts
mines
sanitary conditions
Welsh education ...
faith in facts

what the matter with Britain?

"If the parties who act contrary to their interest had a proper knowledge of that interest, they would act well."

-- James Mill, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1824
"A more general diffusion of accurate knowledge regarding the state of public affairs would tend to check that excitement and party spirit which has often been created by misrepresentation or exaggeration, and has produced an annoyance to the government and at least a temporary disaffection of the public mind."

-- William Jacob,
"Observations and Suggestions," 1832
faith in fact gatherers

Social Science Association, 1857
"volunteer legislators of Great Britain .. brings together persons of all opinions consistent with the profession of a desire for social improvement" --J.S. Mill

"to take up the raw materials of social legislation, and by the help of statistics ... to reduce the 'hard facts' to the condition of manageable matter"

Telegraph
loss of faith?

"the public at large remain without information and without interest on all great matters of practice; or if they have any knowledge of them, it is but a dilettante knowledge, like that which people have of the mechanical arts who have never handled a tool."

John Stuart Mill

*Considerations on Representative Government*, 1862
rival gatherings

Royal Statistical Society, 1833
"the first and most essential rule of its conduct to exclude all opinions"
-- Richard Jones, 1833

battling opinions

London SS v Manchester SS
urbanization v industrialization

The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes
unintended consequences?

"Leonard Horner was one of the Factory Inquiry Commissioners in 1833, and Inspector, or rather Censor of Factories till 1859. He rendered undying service to the English working class. He carried on a life-long contest, not only with the embittered manufacturers, but also with the Cabinet, to whom the number of votes given by the masters in the Lower House, was a matter of far greater importance than the number of hours worked by the 'hands' in the mills."

Karl Marx, *Capital*
more of the same?

"the arrival of the computer ... most recent important development in the expansion of surveillance as information control. ... But the computer is not as disjunctive from the early history of industrial capitalism as one might imagine ... common view that a 'post industrial society,' based upon the coding of information, has replaced ... the old 'industrial society' associated with the sweat of the factory ... a much more integral and continuous connection."

--Giddens
government machines

Babbage, Kelvin, Hollerith, Burroughs

telegraphs

"Telegraphs are machines for conveying information ... generally been established for the purpose of transmitting information during war"

Charles Babbage, *On the economy of machinery and manufactures*, 1832

typewriters, telephones, punch cards, ENIAC ...
to standardizing

thematic issues
(roughly in this order)
'gathering' information--'legible' state
distributing information--'legible' government
stabilizing information -- 'reliable' information
surveilling throughout
need for restraint

"Our most practical check upon existing abuses; and small is the error of giving too much information, in comparison of the guilt of withholding any." --*Times*, 1828

"The public cannot have too much information."

--*Times*, 1882

"It was not wise to give too much information with regard to the business they had in hand, as it might not be to the advantage of the company."

--*Times*, 1867
not an open market for information

"the provincial editor is in some sort a schoolmaster; granted: but who will guarantee his capacity? It is idle to say that in the competition of the market he who supplies the best information on national affairs will have the most customers. Experience proves the contrary: the statistics of journalism show the fact to be other wise. A thorough knowledge .. can only be obtained through a study of the opinions held, and of the facts collected, by those who have given them time and thought. These facts and opinions are only to be found .. in ... those fifty or sixty annual volumes of Parliamentary Blue Books. A writer may doubtless pick up a good deal of general information ... but a full and accurate comprehension .. is not to be gathered at second-hand"

Lord Stanley, What Shall We Do with Our Blue Books? Or Parliament, the National Schoolmaster, 1854
on the blue books

"Information of the most important kind rendered doubly valuable by the circumstances under which it has been collected."

Babbage, *On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures*, 1835
"The law would also put a Stop to a certain sort of Thieving which is now in full practice in England, and which no Law extends to punish, viz, some Printers and Booksellers printing Copies not their own. ... This is really a most injurious piece of Violence, and Grievance to all Mankind ... robs Men of the due Reward of Industry ... robs the Reader, by printing Copies of other Men **uncorrect and imperfect**, making surreptitious and spurious collections ... the printing of other Mens Copies...as unjust as lying with their Wives."

--Defoe, *Essay on the Regulation of the Press*, 1704
control v supervision

"origins of surveillance ... directly bound up with the formation of the nation-state. ... 'surveillance' ... first ... the accumulation of 'information' -- symbolic materials that can be stored by an agency or collectivity. Second ... the supervision of the activities of subordinates by their superiors within any collectivity."

Giddens, Power, Property & the State

market or hierarchy?
“It has long been considered a practicable scheme for any barrister and bookseller who unite together with a view to notoriety or profit, to add to the existing list of law reports”.

"... indiscriminately reporting cases ... the enormous mass of constantly accumulating materials ... these evils .. attributable to .. the multiplication of contemporaneous Reports .. has arisen from applying the principle of competition to correct the evils of prolixity, delay, and expense incident to the system of authorized reporting. ... new evils created .. confusion and uncertainty in the law producing perplexity in the administration of justice.

-- W.T.S. Daniel, History and Origin of Law Reports, 1884
self-evident fun?

INTRODUCING...

DOC PALIN!

I'm not one of those phony-baloney “insiders” who went to “medical school”!

I just go by my God-given sense of RIGHT and WRONG!
revolutionary thoughts

new science

"plea for liberty in science and equity for unrecognized genius"

--Gachet

"popular medicine infinitely preferable to, and more certain than, all the often erroneous practices of our physicians."

*Nouveau Plan... pour la Médecine en France, 1790*

popular medicine

Andre Jackson & the Thomsonian revolution
By the early 1680s, monopolists had begun to turn to the Court of Chancery seeking injunctions to restrain interference with rights conferred... The first case, in 1681, related to ... Stationers for the sole right to print statutes .... LC [Nottingham] granted injunction ... "the printing of the laws was a matter of state" in which accuracy was essential, but as far as concerned any other books .. he refused an injunction."

Norma Dawson, "English Trade Mark Law," 2003
current concerns

How the case against the MMR vaccine was fixed

Brian Deer, journalist

briandeer.com

In the first part of a special BMJ series, Brian Deer exposes the bogus data behind claims that launched a worldwide scare over the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine, and reveals how the appearance of a link with autism was manufactured at a London medical school.

When I broke the news to the father of child 11, at first he did not believe me. "Wakefield told us my son was the 13th child they saw," he said, gazing for the first time at the now infamous research paper which linked a purported new syndrome with the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine. "There's only 12 in this."

That paper was published in the Lancet on 28 February 1998. It was retracted on 2 February 2010. Authorised by Andrew Wakefield, John Walker-Smith, and 11 others from the Royal Free medical school, London, it reported on 12 developmentally challenged children, and triggered a decade long public health scare.
the new technology

"One great advantage which we may derive from machinery is from the check which it affords against the inattention, the idleness, or the dishonesty of human agents."

Babbage, *On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures*, 1835
the enduring question

surveillance and the state

a trade-off?

"Liberalism is not the same as despotism ... the creation of universal principles of law, behind which lies an ethos of rational justice, has the same double-edged character as prisons and their reform ... everyday life of capitalism organized via commodified time is smoothed of those interruptions that once provided the very marrow of the experience of temporality... sequestration is only a rather pronounced version of the time-space regionalization of activities distinctive of capitalist society ... For the public activities of presence in traditional urban life is substituted the 'absent' public of the mass media. ... I do ... want to emphasise the importance of the concept of surveillance to the analysis of the institutions of capitalism." --Giddens
conclusion

the state and information
an interdependency?

information and legitimacy