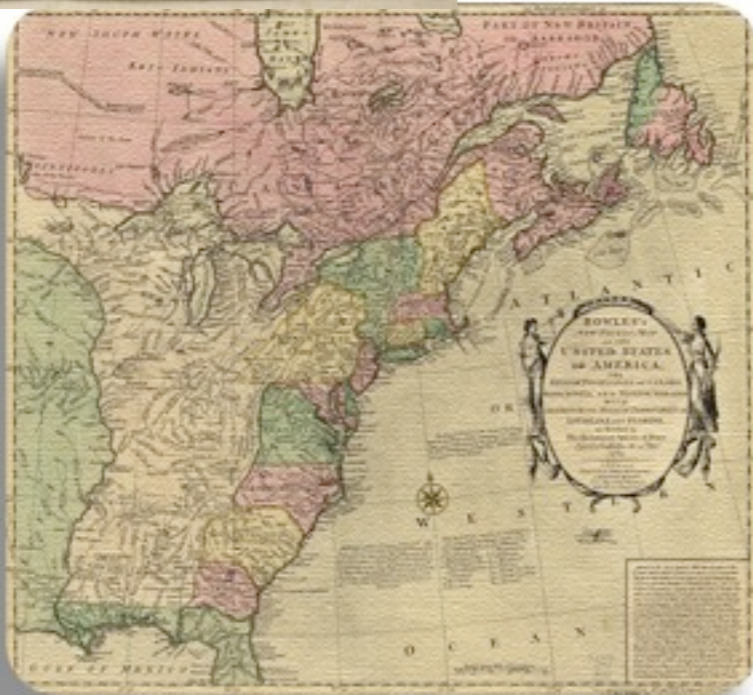




# information & the state

---



## concepts of information

Feb 21, 2012



ahead

---

## **surveillance and storage**

(i) the state (public information)-- *today*

(ii) the firm (private information?) -- *Thursday*

*from prisons to factories?*

cp Peter Burke,

"Controlling Knowledge: Churches & States"

cp Chandler & Cortada

*A Nation Transformed by Information*



# who's watching?

## NEWS



### UK Government To Demand Data On Every Call And Email

Plans could force ISPs and phone operators to hand over records on all phone calls, emails, Tweets and Facebook messages

On February 20, 2012 by Steve McCaskill 3

ISPs and landline and mobile phone operators could be forced to store records of calls, texts, emails and visited websites under a new government scheme designed to combat terrorism.

The government has begun negotiations with the companies involved and the new Communications Capabilities Development Programme (CCDP) could be announced as early as May, according to reports.



# invisible chains

Scanning 2.4 Billion Eyes, India Tries to Connect Poor to Growth



Ruth Fremson/The New York Times

"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]

# nature of information

---

## **Giddens**

accumulating/storing information

## **Scott & Co**

standardizing information

## **pull to push**

providing information

# aside: 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*"

--John Agar, *The Government Machine*, 2003

## **or a natural resource?**

"behind our backs"?

# surveillance of information

---

"information wants to be free"

"filosofar vuol esser libero"

-- Galileo

"libertas philosophandi"

--Kepler, Descartes, Spinoza

"oportet praeterea, liberali animo philosophum esse"

--Alcinous (?1 cent CE)

## **constraint - resource**

"information needs to be constrained"

to the state

---





"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

# states of information

Domesday

surveying

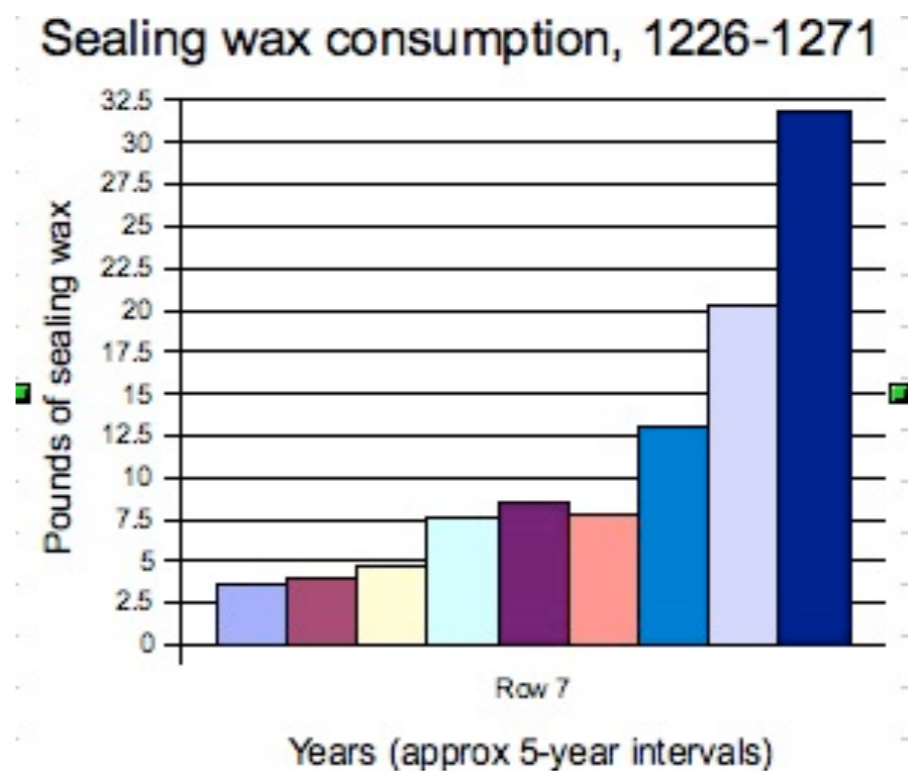
registering

storing

sealing

**pull & push**

citizenship, taxation, recruiting, property



# "papermongers"

---



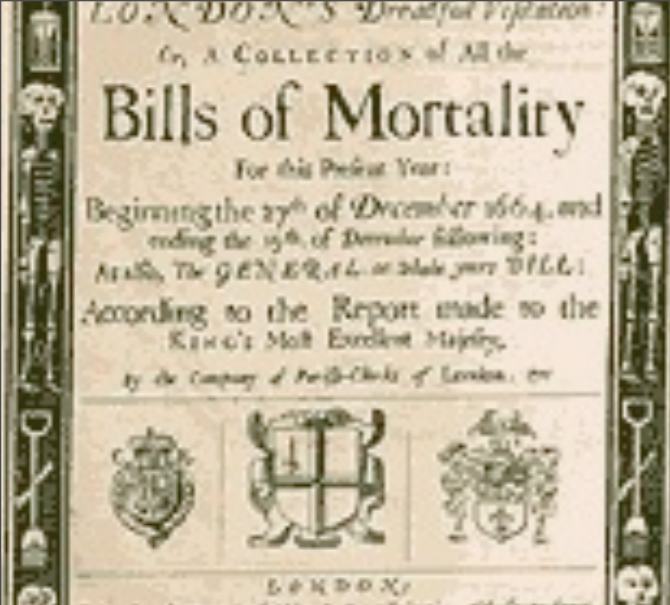
**Philip II 1527-1598**  
*el rey papelero*

**Jean-Baptiste Colbert 1619-1683**

"the information master"  
*erudition d'état*



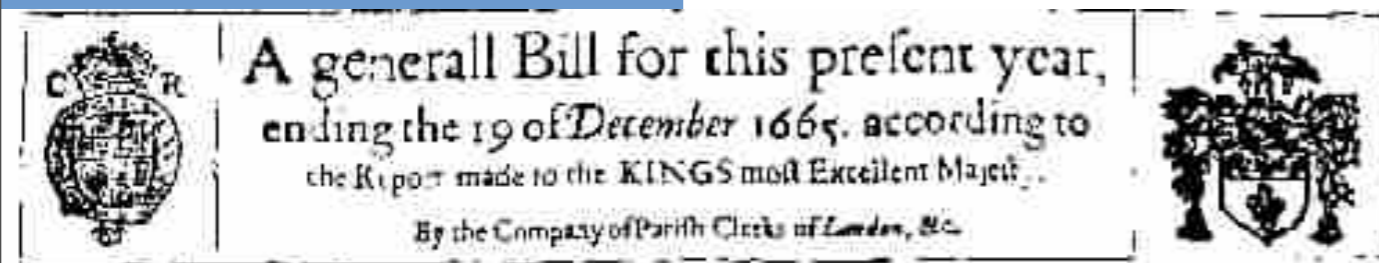
1648, Westphalia & *Staatkunde* to statistics



"The Mortality Bill is come to 267; June 29th, 1665 Above 700 died of the plague this week."

--Pepys, July 13, 1665

# from pull to push



*The Diseases and Casualties this year.*

Abortive and Stillborne	617	Executed	21	Pallie	30
Aged	1545	Flux and Small Pox	655	Plague	68578
Aque and Peaver	5257	Found dead in Streets, fields, &c.	2	Plasme	0
Appoplex and Suddenly	216	French Pox	86	Plurisie	19
Bedric	10	Frighted	23	Possonis	2
Blasind	9	Gout and Sciatica	27	Quinse	35
Bleeding	16	Grief	46	Rickets	117
Bloody Flux, Scouring & Flux	187	Gripping in the Guts	1238	Killing of the lights	157
Burnt and Scalded	8	Hanged & made away themselves	7	Rupture	14
Calenture	3	Headmole-shot & Moxle-fallen	14	Scurvy	1-7
Cancer, Gangrene and Fistula	56	Jaundies	120	Shingles and Swine pox	2
Canker, and Thrush	121	Imposiume	227	Sores, Ulcers, broken and heulid	2
Childbed	625	Kild by severall accidents	46	Limbs	82
Chriumes and Infants	1258	Kings Evill	86	Spleen	14
Cold and Cough	63	Lepronic	2	Spotted Fever and Purple	1929
Collick and Winde	134	Lethargy	14	Stopping at the stomack	332
Consumption and Tiflick	4808	Livergreen	21	Stops and Stranguy	8
Convulsion and Moxice	2056	Meagrom and Headach	82	Suctet	111
Distracted	3	Measles	7	Teeth and Worms	2014
Droole and Turpany	1476	Murthered and Sine	9	Vomiting	54
Drowned	3	Overjard & Starved	45	Vunn	7

Crashed Females	4853	Buried	Males	48569	Of the Plague	68578
In all	9567		Females	48317		
		In all	97306			

Increased in the Burials in the 130 Parishes and at the Pest-houses this year.	79009
Increased of the Plague in the 130 Parishes and at the Pest-houses this year.	68578

**1603:** regular bills of mortality

**1611:** incorporation of parish clerks counting by "searchers"

**1629:** other deaths

**1728:** age of deceased

**1837:** last bills



# Habermasian imperative

---

"something exceedingly ridiculous in the composition of monarchy; it first excludes a man from the means of information yet empowers him to act in cases where the highest judgement is required"

--Tom Paine, *Common Sense*, 1776

# Habermasian imperative

---

"It is certainly right and prudent to consult the public opinion. ... If the public opinion did not happen to square with mine; if, after pointing out to them the danger, they did not see it in the same light with me, or if they conceived that another remedy was preferable to mine, I should consider it as my due to my king, due to my Country, due to my honour to retire ... but one thing is clear, that I ought to give the public **the means of forming an opinion.**"

--Charles James Fox, 1792

# whatever happened to England?

---

"Give them fair and full information, and [the people] will do the thing that is right in consequence of it."

--Knox, *Spirit of Despotism*, 1795

"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

# pulling the other way

---

## **Society for Constitutional Information**

"... necessary that every Englishman should know what that constitution is ... and when endangered." --SCI, 1780

"great advantaged might be derived from a collection of well authenticated facts ... in order that the community may be possessed of the means of judging for themselves ... With a view of procuring the proper materials for such information ... country correspondents should be requested to supply ... [number of electors, number of resident electors, houses, diminution of voting ... what tenure ... corrupt usage]" --SCI, 1783



"the duty of every man to furnish himself ... with political information ... public Ignorance is in the interest of Oppressors, and public Information the interest of the people" --SCI, 1795

# statistics

THE  
STATISTICAL ACCOUNT  
OF  
SCOTLAND.  
DRAWN UP FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS  
OF THE  
*MINISTERS*  
OF THE  
DIFFERENT PARISHES.

---

By SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, BART.

---

VOLUME TWENTY-FIRST.

*"Ad consilium de republica dandum, caput est nosse rempublicam."*  
CICERO de Orat. lib. ii.

---

EDINBURGH:  
PRINTED AND SOLD BY WILLIAM CREECH;  
AND ALSO SOLD BY J. DONALDSON, A. GUTHRIE, W. LAING,  
AND JO. FAIRBAIRN, EDINBURGH; T. CADELL, J. DEB-  
RETT, AND J. SEWEL, LONDON; DUNLOP AND WIL-  
SON, GLAIGOW; ANGUS AND SON, ABERDEEN.

M,DCC,XCIX.

John Sinclair,  
*Statistical Account of  
Scotland, 1791-1799*

*Ur*-society: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge 1698 (to Maryland)

## societies

---

Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge 1826

Royal Statistical Society, 1833

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

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

# the state

---

"Nothing important was ever brought before the government without a minister saying ... 'I have called for a report.'"

--Balzac, *Bureaucracy,*  
*or A Civil Service Reformer*, 1824

# 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 ...

# attacking opinion

## Poor Law Commission

"We should make a gradual attack in public opinion"

Nassau Senior, Poor Law Commissioner

## SDUK-sponsorship

Harriet Martineau, *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* (1833)

UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF THE SOCIETY FOR  
THE DIFFUSION OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE.

POOR LAWS AND PAUPERS  
ILLUSTRATED.

I. THE PARISH.

A TALE.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

LONDON

CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1833.

# 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*

12 Cofl12 State 23

# spirit check

---

"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, 1832



# interest & information

---

"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

# push & pull

---

"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*

# shift in tactics

---

## circulation problems

Wilson, Keith M. 1983. "Refuse in the Usual Terms": The Foreign Office, the Press, & the Distribution of Blue Books: 1887-19. *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 16 (1) 14-20

## peccavi

Ansari, Sarah. 2005. "The Sind Blue Books of 1843 and 1844: The Political Laundering of Historical Evidence." *The English Historical Review* 120 (485): 35-65

## not so harmless

Steinem, Karl von den, 1970. "The Harmless Papers: Granville, Gladstone, and the Censorship of the Madagascar Blue Books of 1884." *Victorian Studies* 14(2): 165-176.

"He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient."

## state pull & push

---

### **US constitutional information**

census - art I §2

journal - art I §5

expenditure - art I §9

state of the union - art II §3s

### **France**

protected names

An XI (1803)

1810



# state mongering

## An act concerning...

1. public archive
2. state printer
3. pilots for SF
4. comptroller
5. treasurer
6. Sec. of state
8. translator
11. AG
14. Supreme Court
30. incorporation of cities
36. commissioner of deeds
41. notaries
49. lawful fences
48. incorporation of towns
53. weights & measures
55. limited partners
59. recorder's office
64. officers of health
67. surveyors
69. librarian
72. register of wills
89. marks & brands
90. reporter
93. conveyances
95. common law
117. incorp. of colleges
123. assayer

Statutes of California, 1849-50

# information & the state

---

**Giddens**, Anthony. 1981. "Surveillance and the Capitalist State," pp 169-176 in A. Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, vol 1 *Power, Property, and the State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

**Scott**, James C., John Tehranian, & Jeremy Mathias. 2002. "The Production of Legal identities Proper to States: The Case of the Permanent Family Surname" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44(1): 4-44.