

Record of American Democracy, 1984–1990

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A massive, new aggregate dataset on American politics is now available. The Record of American Democracy (ROAD) data include election returns, socioeconomic summaries, and demographic measures of the American public at unusually low levels of geographic aggregation. The NSF-supported ROAD project covers every state in the country from 1984 through 1990 (including some off-year elections). One set of files includes every election at and above state House, along with party registration and other variables, in each state for the roughly 170,000 precincts nationwide (about 60 times the number of counties). Another set of files has added to these roughly 30–40 political variables an additional 3,725 variables merged from the 1990 U.S. Census for 47,327 aggregate units (about 15 times the number of counties) about the size of one or more cities or towns. These units completely tile the U.S. land-mass. This collection also includes geographic boundary files so users can easily draw maps with these data.

We find it remarkable that the electoral record of the world's leading democracy is routinely lost or discarded. Election returns in the U.S. are collected by precinct and passed on to county offices in every state. In these county offices, the official electoral record then gets stuffed under desks, recycled, occasionally put into archives, or — most

often — discarded. With the ROAD data, for the first time a substantial piece of the entire electoral record of American democracy has been preserved. We hope that some person or agency (or our elected officials) takes on the task of institutionalizing the formal preservation of this record into the future. For now, we encourage the scientific community to take advantage of this unprecedented research resource.

Research Opportunities

The ROAD data present opportunities for political scientists, geographers, quantitative historians, sociologists, and others to learn about electoral behavior, the political characteristics of local community context, electoral geography, the role of minority groups in elections and legislative redistricting, split-ticket voting and divided government, elections under federalism, and numerous other topics of central importance to many disciplines.

Some examples:

- With few exceptions, scholars until now have had access to district-level (i.e. state, county, or constituency) electoral information at best, usually for only one office at a time. Presidential election results broken down by congressional districts are impossible to obtain except for a few recent years and are of dubious

quality; more detailed disaggregation is usually not available. In contrast, the ROAD data can provide presidential (and other) election results broken down by the much smaller state House districts and can even show detailed geographic variation across precincts within a state House district.

- A recent state legislative data collection project led by Malcolm Jewell (1992) (see **State Legislative Election Returns in the United States, 1968–1989** [ICPSR 8907]) provided valuable district-level data, from which scholars have learned an enormous amount. By continuing in this tradition, precinct-level data will increase the resolution of our knowledge of electoral politics substantially. In contrast to data on the 50 states, 435 U.S. House districts, 1,916 state Senate districts, 3,139 counties, and even the 4,675 districts of the lower house of state legislatures, the approximately 170,000 precincts in the U.S. provide considerably more detailed information. They supply information about small, local communities, with much more variation than the higher-level aggregates.
- Scholars using electoral data recognize its geographical nature, but they have rarely been able to access

The ROAD data are available on the Web from the Harvard-MIT Data Center (dynamically subtableable by geographic area and variable, and convertible to many formats) at <http://data.fas.harvard.edu/ROAD> and on CD-ROM from ICPSR (ICPSR 2162). CD-ROM contents include:

- **Root Directory.** Contains a "readme" file that describes the files contained on the CD-ROM, an abridged version of the codebook (not including basic voting variable statistics) in Portable Document Format (PDF), and the program PKUNZIP, to uncompress the compressed files. (The files were compressed using WINZIP, but can be uncompressed using WINZIP in Windows, PKUNZIP in DOS, or UNZIP in UNIX.)
- **DOCS Directory.** Contains complete documentation for the ROAD data in HTML format. The file "road.html" is the root file for the HTML version of the codebook, and contains the table of contents and links to all other codebook files.
- **PRECINCT Directory.** Contains 205 SPSS portable files including data for every election at and above state House, along with party registration and other variables, in each state for the roughly 170,000 precincts nationwide.
- **MCDGRP Directory.** Contains 52 SPSS portable files supplying data for 47,327 aggregate units called MCD Groups. The MCD Group, a construct for purposes of this data collection, is based on a merging of the electoral precincts and Census Minor Civil Divisions (MCDs).
- **BOUNDS Directory.** Contains the shape files describing the geographic boundaries of each MCD Group in ArcView 2.0 format.
- **NOTES Directory.** Contains the following subdirectories: MATCH, which provides files documenting the process of matching precincts and MCD groups; and EXCEPT, which furnishes information on exceptions for each applicable state.
- **KEY Directory.** Contains the following subdirectories: KEYS, which supplies SPSS portable files providing matches of MCDs (or counties) to MCD groups; and precincts to MCD groups; INPUT, which contains ASCII files listing precincts and MCDs (by precinct) used as input for the program used to create the match files described above; PROGRAMS, which contains the program itself, along with the C++ code used to create it; and OUTPUT, which includes other files generated by the program.
- **ACROBAT Directory.** Contains Adobe Acrobat Reader software, for viewing the PDF files on the CD-ROM.

geographical information. As a result, the vast majority of published analyses, even those on topics such as redistricting or political geography, have necessarily ignored the geographic placement of districts. Maps have not had a central place in the study of American politics since V.O. Key was writing. The ROAD data enable scholars to study the geographic nature of American politics and to draw maps easily. That is, not only are precinct-level data available, but the data are also provided in geographic formats when possible, thus yielding information on local context. Scholars will be able to use mapping software, such as ArcView or MapInfo, to analyze geographical features of American politics and to merge them with other types of geographical data.

- Researchers can use these aggregate data to draw inferences about individual behavior using newly available methods of ecological inference (King, 1997) and associated public domain software programs (available at <http://gking.harvard.edu>). Survey research has taught us a great deal, but as data on random collections of isolated individuals from unknown geographic locations, it misses much that the ROAD project can provide. To put it differently, an ambitious graduate student in the late 1940s or before interested in the quantitative study of American politics would probably be drawing maps, doing detailed studies of local politics. But almost everyone in the field today — those who started any time during the second half of this century, after Robinson's (1950) ecological fallacy article and following the advent of modern survey research — became a survey researcher. Today, the literature is dominated by survey analyses, but with new aggregate data and meth-

ods, we have many new opportunities to redress this imbalance.

- For the first time, scholars will be able to study data from numerous offices at many different levels of aggregation — from precincts, to state assembly districts, to state Senate districts, to U.S. House districts, or to states. (Counties and other aggregation levels are also possible.) Even without survey data, it is possible to study how the same voter groups cast their ballots across many different offices. The ROAD data will enable more detailed studies of split-ticket voting and of the factors leading to divided government at many levels, for any or all states.
- The ROAD data should stimulate new studies of legislative redistricting, and associated analyses and forecasts of political and racial fairness, compactness, the consequences of equal population constraints on gerrymanderers, and related issues.
- Finally, this is the first dataset to be generally available to the academic community that is on par in terms of quality and quantity with the data politicians and political strategists have been using for decades to target campaign resources. As a result, this dataset could also produce new, more detailed studies of campaign strategy, but on a massive and comprehensive nationwide scale.

Accessing the ROAD Data

In part because this dataset is of such exceptional value, and in part because it would take many researchers many lifetimes to exploit it fully, we are releasing it prior to publishing much from it. The data have been deposited at ICPSR (see box on this page). The

ROAD data and documentation, along with additional information about the study, are also available at <http://data.fas.harvard.edu/ROAD/>. □

References

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Gary King is Professor of Government at Harvard University and Director of the Harvard-MIT Data Center. He has authored and coauthored numerous articles and books in the field of political methodology, including most recently A Solution to the Ecological Inference Problem: Reconstructing Individual Behavior From Aggregate Data (Princeton University Press, 1997). His website, which provides links to data and public domain statistical software he has prepared, can be accessed at <http://gking.harvard.edu>.

Bradley Palmquist, currently Assistant Professor of Government at Harvard University, will join the political science department at Vanderbilt University in fall of 1998. His research interests include the methodological problems of aggregate data analysis with application to historical and current elections.

The ROAD team, in addition to King and Palmquist, has included at different times Greg Adams, Micah Altman, Kenneth Benoit, Claudine Gay, Jeffrey B. Lewis, Russ Mayer, and Eric Reinhardt.

Other Election Data Available From ICPSR

Users should note that in addition to the study **State Legislative Election Returns in the United States, 1968–1989** (ICPSR 8907) mentioned in the article above, ICPSR has acquired an update to this series, **State Legislative Election Candidate and Constituency Data, 1993–1994** (ICPSR 2019). This dataset provides election data at the district level for state legislative races contested in the United States in 1993 and 1994. General election returns for all 50 states are included, as well as special election returns, if they were provided as part of the official returns for the states. ICPSR also expects to receive similar data for the 1991–1992 election cycle in the near future. These data will then be merged and included in ICPSR 8907.

Users should also be advised that updates to the following collections are also planned: **General Election Data for the United States, 1950–1990** (ICPSR 0013); **Candidate Name and Constituency Totals, 1788–1990** (ICPSR 0002); **Candidate and Constituency Statistics of Elections in the United States, 1788–1990** (ICPSR 7757); and **Referenda and Primary Election Materials** (ICPSR 0006). These studies complement ICPSR's collection of historical election returns from 1788 to 1968 (ICPSR 0079 and ICPSR 0001).

To access additional information about the data collections below, please consult the ICPSR Website at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu>.

- Age at Menarche of Poor Viennese Women, 1907** — John Komlos (ICPSR 6804)
- American Housing Survey, 1995: National File** — United States Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census (ICPSR 2188)
- Bicol Multipurpose Survey (BMS), 1983: [Philippines]** — Bicol River Basin Development Program (ICPSR 6889)
- Bicol Multipurpose Survey (BMS), 1994: [Philippines]** — Leonard Lanzona (ICPSR 6890)
- Central and Eastern Eurobarometer 7: Status of the European Union, October–November 1996** — George Cunningham (ICPSR 2296)
- Cleveland Study of the Elderly: A Follow-Up, 1984–1988** — Amasa B. Ford (ICPSR 6985)
- Consumer Expenditure Survey, 1993–1994: Addendum Files** — United States Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics (ICPSR 2261)
- Consumer Expenditure Survey, 1995: Diary Survey** — United States Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics (ICPSR 2263)
- Consumer Expenditure Survey, 1995: Interview Survey and Detailed Expenditure Files** — United States Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics (ICPSR 2264)
- Current Population Survey, October 1994: School Enrollment** — United States Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census (ICPSR 6738)
- Current Population Survey, October 1995: School Enrollment** — United States Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census (ICPSR 6984)
- Directory of Law Enforcement Agencies, 1992: [United States]** — United States Department of Justice. Bureau of Justice Statistics (ICPSR 2266)
- Dutch Parliamentary Election Panel Study, 1986–1989** — C. van der Eijk, G.A. Irwin, and B. Niemoeller (ICPSR 6742)
- Dynamics of Population Aging in Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Countries, Census Microdata Samples: Bulgaria, 1992** — United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Population Activities Unit (ICPSR 2200)
- Height of Students of the Ecole Polytechnique, 1794–1887** — John Komlos (ICPSR 6800)
- Immigrants Admitted to the United States, 1993–1995** — United States Department of Justice. Immigration and Naturalization Service (ICPSR 2267)
- Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS): Earned Degrees, 1992–1993** — United States Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics (ICPSR 6931)
- Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS): Earned Degrees, 1994–1995** — United States Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics (ICPSR 2293)
- Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS): Institutional Characteristics, 1995–1996** — United States Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics (ICPSR 2153)
- Marital Instability Over the Life Course [United States]: A Four-Wave Panel Study, 1980, 1983, 1988, 1992–1994** — Alan Booth *et al.* (ICPSR 2163)
- National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey III, 1988–1994** — United States Department of Health and Human Services. National Center for Health Statistics (ICPSR 2231)
- National Hospital Discharge Survey, 1994** — United States Department of Health and Human Services. National Center for Health Statistics (ICPSR 2283)
- National Hospital Discharge Survey, 1995** — United States Department of Health and Human Services. National Center for Health Statistics (ICPSR 2284)
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- Current Population Surveys: March Individual-Level Extracts, 1968–1992** — Robert Moffitt (ICPSR 6171)
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- Detroit Area Study, 1987: A Study of Greater Detroit** — Duane F. Alwin (ICPSR 6412)
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- Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies Data Source Book, 1971–1989** — Raymond Horstman and Jan W. van Deth (ICPSR 6744)
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- Euro-Barometer 41.0: Trade Issues, Blood Donation, AIDS, and Smoking, March–June 1994** — Karlheinz Reif and Eric Marlier (ICPSR 6422)
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- National Crime Victimization Survey, 1992–1995** — United States Department of Justice. Bureau of Justice Statistics (ICPSR 6406)
- National Health Interview Survey: Longitudinal Study of Aging, 70 Years and Over, 1984–1990** — United States Department of Health and Human Services. National Center for Health Statistics (ICPSR 8719)
- National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 1994** — United States Department of Health and Human Services. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Office of Applied Studies (ICPSR 6949)
- National Survey of Jails: Jurisdiction-Level Data, 1989** — United States Department of Justice. Bureau of Justice Statistics (ICPSR 9373)
- Police Documentation of Drunk Driving Arrests, 1984–1987: Los Angeles, Denver, and Boston** — John R. Snortum *et al.* (ICPSR 9400)
- RAND Health Insurance Experiment [in Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Areas of the United States], 1974–1982** — Joseph P. Newhouse (ICPSR 6439)
- Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) 1992 Panel** — United States Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census (ICPSR 6429)
- Uniform Crime Reporting Program Data: [United States]** — United States Department of Justice. Federal Bureau of Investigation (ICPSR 9028)
- Voting Results Under a Single-Transferable-Vote System in Malta, 1921–1996** — John C. Lane (ICPSR 6657)

Publication Archive Additions

- David Duke Campaigns: County-Level Louisiana Data** — D. Stephen Voss (ICPSR 1130)
- Repression and Dissent: Substitution, Context, and Timing** — Will H. Moore (ICPSR 1139)

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ORs Urged to Cast Ballots

At its March 1998 meeting, Council prepared an amendment to the Preamble of the ICPSR Constitution; the change relates to the new reporting and financial relationship of ICPSR with its host institution, the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. This amendment must be approved by a two-thirds majority of ICPSR Official Representatives in order to take effect.

Ballots were mailed to all ORs on April 1, 1998, and voting will end on June 30, 1998. Your vote on this proposed amendment is critical. If you haven't yet cast your ballot, please do so.

ICPSR's Area Code to Change

Please note that the area code to use in contacting ICPSR will officially change to "734" on July 25, 1998. ICPSR's central number will then be 734-764-2570; the fax number will be 734-764-8041.

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Since May of 1997, ICPSR has welcomed several institutions into the membership:

- Ball State University
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- Federal University of Minas Gerais Brazil

- Georgia Institute of Technology
- Illinois Wesleyan University
- Kalamazoo College (Joined Associated Colleges of the Midwest)
- Korean Social Science Data Center—Korean National Member
- Mary Washington College (Joined the Virginia Federation)
- MGH Institute of Health Professions
- University of Missouri, Kansas City
- Pontifical Catholic University of Peru
- Rochester Institute of Technology
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In addition, the following new federation has been formed:

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- University of the South (New member)
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- Trinity University (New member)

ICPSR Implements New Processing Strategy

In February 1998, ICPSR began to implement the new data processing strategy outlined in the July 1997 report of the Archival Development Committee of the ICPSR Council.

The New Acquisitions Preservation Archive (NAPA) strategy enables ICPSR to allocate resources for processing more efficiently. Studies identified as suitable NAPA candidates are released soon after their arrival at ICPSR, in the same format in which they arrived. Confidentiality concerns are resolved, and hardcopy documentation is converted to electronic form, but no further processing is undertaken.

Under this new scheme, a list of studies released in this manner is periodically reviewed by the Archival Development Committee. If the committee determines that a study warrants further processing, based on the criteria for prioritizing collections put forth in the NAPA report, the collection will undergo more intensive processing by ICPSR. For many studies, however, the version that is originally released by ICPSR will be the only version ICPSR makes available.

Another component of the NAPA strategy is the virtual archiving concept. ICPSR plans to link to other data sites, including but not limited to sites of the federal government, so that users have ready access to data not in the ICPSR holdings.

As an additional aspect of the implementation of this new strategy, ICPSR also plans to develop search capabilities for studies that have been acquired by ICPSR but not yet released.

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The *ICPSR Bulletin* is published four times during each academic year (in September, December, February, and May) to inform Official Representatives at the member campuses, ICPSR Council members, and other interested scholars of activities occurring at ICPSR and at other member institutions and to list the data collections most recently released or updated by ICPSR. For subscription information, contact the Editor.

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