

# *INTER-UNIVERSITY CONSORTIUM FOR POLITICAL RESEARCH*

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Memorandum: ICPR Membership Structure and Possible Improvements

From: Richard I. Hofferbert, Executive Director, ICPR

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Recent discussions and communication indicate a growing interest in amendment or addition to the present pattern of affiliation with ICPR. The staff, Council, and numerous scholars around the country have urged efforts to expand the range of institutions which can enjoy direct access to ICPR resources. In particular, several suggestions have been received with aim toward the creation of multi-institutional or network memberships.

The purpose of this memorandum is to invite interested parties to submit concrete plans and proposals for such multi-institutional arrangements. Suggestions received to date take various forms, but need further specification.

We are inviting specific proposals in order to assess the range of practical options that are available. Prior to receiving such proposals, it is impossible to project what action might be taken. We are using this channel to gather further information and find out whether or not we can move toward a multi-institutional membership category. The balance of this memo will discuss some of the objectives, possible mechanisms, and problems which we currently foresee.

## Advantages of a Multi-Institutional Membership Category

There are a number of apparent advantages to some such new category of membership. It could well be a way of extending availability of ICPR resources to institutions (junior colleges, smaller schools, etc.) that cannot afford independent membership. It might increase the total utilization of ICPR resources. It could serve as a way of taking cognizance of the current job market, wherein young scholars with modern analytical skills are being recruited to a broader range of institutions than was the case a few years ago. Multi-institutional memberships might allow for capitalization upon the potential economies and conveniences of computer networks. It may also be a way of broadening and stabilizing the financial bases for ICPR membership, thereby rationalizing membership from the standpoint of college and state administrators.

A number of more or less natural clusters of institutions suggest themselves. Others could certainly be

posed. Some that come to mind, largely because they have been specifically suggested by others, include:

Collectivities of state colleges within a single state

Groups of geographically proximate colleges already linked in some other pattern of inter-institutional cooperation

Institutions linked by one or another form of computer link

### Issues and Questions to Consider

Multi-institutional arrangements should look primarily toward increasing the availability and utilization of ICPR resources. The principle of institutional support through the membership fee, and the consequent freedom of access to data by staff and students, appears clearly worth preservation. In planning new patterns, several elements should be considered.

Should data and other resources be centralized within the multi-membership group? How can documentation and codebooks be made available at all institutions within the group? What arrangements might be made to assure that all institutions will receive adequate service?

Will the group be represented by a single individual or by several in the meetings of ICPR? How will costs be distributed? If a membership group is locally centralized, what financial resources will be required for its support? How will communication between ICPR and potential users on a number of campuses be maintained? Would the ICPR central staff respond to inquiries and requests from each institution within the group or only to a single designated individual from the whole group? How will participation in the summer program be apportioned and financial support, if any, be allocated?

Consideration should be given to the additional strain on the central ICPR staff that could result from such arrangements. Arrangements that increase demand for ICPR services while reducing or merely maintaining current income can only result in diminution of resource development (and ultimately services)-for the entire membership. The challenge, of course, is to package arrangements with sufficient guarantees of support such that the aggregate support for ICPR would be assured of increasing as some portion of the likely increase in demands.

No suggestions received to date suggest that it is not desirable to preserve the capacity of ICPR to develop and increase resources of social science for research and teaching. It is also necessary to maintain the capacity of the governing structure to ensure adequate representation and communication between ICPR and the affiliates.

A few assumptions in the current situation have been implicit in most of the discussions so far. The patterns of training of graduate students in recent years, coupled with the tightened job market, will expand the number of schools with quantitatively skilled staff and quantitatively oriented courses. Constraints upon research funding will increase the aggregate reliance upon inexpensive resources such as ICPR. The amount of data usage by the membership will continue to expand. Servicing this usage is the first obligation of the ICPR Operating Budget (members' fees). Given that the actual data dissemination has expanded by 142 percent between fiscal 1968-69 and 1970-71, while costs of servicing data have increased by only 71 percent, major savings in reduced services would be counter-productive. On the other hand, additional data requests might be serviced for proportionately smaller marginal income.

### Specific Steps

The staff is currently organizing and analyzing information on current and past membership patterns, usage of resources, and characteristics of member schools. Preliminary findings should be ready for consideration by the Council at its next meeting.

Those interested in aiding the effort to expand access to ICPR resources are urged to explore locally their own possibilities. Specific proposals for multi-institutional affiliation are invited. The staff and Council will consider such proposals, analyze the implications, and try to see where we can move.

A possibility for future planning is to schedule a small conference of those willing to help in this endeavor. A decision on this, however, should await compilation of specific proposals.

Any guidance or assistance that comes forth will *be* greatly appreciated and of considerable value to the current and future users of ICPR resources.

If you have any questions, I invite you to contact me for further discussion.

**[Editor's note: signature could not be scanned.]**

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