The conference was organized around five modules: (1) Perspectives of current occupational systems; (2) new challenges and alternative approaches to occupational classification; (3) user needs and experiences with different occupational classification systems; (4) possibilities for a unifying classification system; and (5) international perspectives on occupational classification. The proceedings from the conference were published in September 1993.1 At the conclusion of the conference, there was agreement that work should begin on developing a new SOC.

The changing world of work requires a new approach to statistical classification, such as developing a single system to meet multiple needs or using a single database to develop multiple classifications. Therefore, a revision of the SOC is being undertaken. The Office of Management and Budget has formed the Standard Occupational Classification Revision Policy Committee to coordinate activities leading to a new SOC. The charter for that committee is included near the end of this notice.

#### **Uses of Occupational Data**

When devising a data classification system, it is crucial to begin with a clear vision of how the data to be classified will be used in order to structure the classification to maximize the usefulness of the data. The uses of occupational data vary widely. Uses include investigating the supply and demand of labor, planning education and training programs, fostering career choices and facilitating placement, studying labor mobility, analyzing the return on alternative investments in human capital, establishing comparable pay schedules, surveying labor productivity, and assessing employment benefits, stability, and working conditions. Not all of such uses will be equally well-served by any given classification.

Moreover, existing occupational information systems typically have data and information from various sources such as the Census of Population and Housing, the OES surveys, and the DOT. Currently, crosswalks provide bridges from one system to another. In the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee's Occupational Information System, data from these

different sources are presented together through the use of these crosswalks.

Unfortunately, linkages from occupations in one system to another are not always exact. In these cases, the crosswalk uses a "best fit" approach to link the systems. If Federal agencies all used one classification system, an SOC, the need for a crosswalk would be obviated or at least minimized.

# **Request for Comments**

The Committee invites comments from members of the public on their uses of occupational data and the applicability of existing and potential classification systems to those uses. Descriptions of specific strengths and shortcomings users have experienced with data based on the existing occupational classification systems, including experiences related to the need to employ crosswalks, are most welcome.

## **Purpose and Scope of the SOC**

The Standard Occupational Classification provides a mechanism for cross-referencing and aggregating occupation-related data collected by social and economic statistical reporting programs. The system is designed to maximize the analytical utility of statistics on labor force, employment, income, and other occupational data collected for a variety of purposes by various agencies of the United States Government, State agencies, professional associations, labor unions and private research organizations.

The classification covers all occupations in which work is performed for pay or profit, including work performed in family-operated enterprises where direct remuneration may or may not be made to family members. The SOC may also be used to classify volunteers, but occupations unique to volunteer settings were not included in the 1980 SOC.

The SOC provides a coding system and nomenclature for identifying and classifying occupations within a framework suitable for use in and out of government. However, because of the vast amount of occupational detail that was considered in developing such a system, and the wide variety of uses of occupational data, it was not possible to construct a system that would meet the specific needs of all organizations. The level of detail, for example, may not be sufficient for specialized analytical purposes or for internal organizational management requirements. In such cases, however, approaches generally can be taken that will not conflict with the overall scheme of the system.

## **Request for Comments**

The Committee invites comments on the purpose and scope of the SOC.

### **Principles Underlying the Current SOC**

The principles adopted in the new SOC should be relevant to the existing world of work. The twelve classification principles used in the 1980 SOC are listed below. Following some of the principles are questions designed to facilitate public comment.

1. The classification should realistically reflect the current occupational structure of the United States

Should the new system attempt to reflect what analysts see as the future occupational structure?

2. An occupation should be classified on the basis of work performed. Skill level, training, education, licensing and credential requirements usually associated with job performance should be considered only when an inaccurate picture of the occupational structure would be presented without such consideration.

Should work performed continue to be the underlying principle of classification in the new SOC, or should skills or something else provide a new basis for classification?

3. Place of work (industry) should be considered in classifying an occupation only when the work setting alters the nature of the work sufficiently to warrant separate classification. For example, cooks in private households and commercial settings were classified in different unit groups because work is significantly dissimilar in their respective work settings.

4. The occupations should be classified in homogeneous groups that can be defined so that the content of each group is well delineated.

What factor(s) should be used to determine what is an occupational group?

5. An occupation that combines two distinct activities should be classified in one group on the basis of the primary activity—the one that accounts for the major portion of the worker's time. However, in cases where one activity requires special skills that are crucial in carrying out the duties of the occupation (although not required for as much time as other activities), that activity should determine the classification of the occupation.

Approximately what percentage of time should a worker in an occupation perform the highest skilled activity in order for the occupation to be classified based on that skill?

6. Each occupation should be assigned to only one group at the most

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Copies of the International Occupational Classification Conference proceedings may be obtained by writing to the Occupational Employment Statistics Program, Suite 4840, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE., Washington, DC 20212, or calling 202–606–6569.