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**ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC
COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)
STATISTICS DIRECTORATE**

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(Geneva, 17-19 May 2004)

Topic (i): Web technology in statistical information systems

**INTERNET DATA COLLECTION AT THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
THE CENSUS TAKER SYSTEM**

Supporting Paper

Submitted by the U.S. Census Bureau, United States¹

Summary

1. The US Census Bureau's mission is to serve as the leading source of information on the nation's people and economy, with the goal of providing the best mix of timeliness, relevancy, quality, and cost for the data we collect and the services we provide. Section I will address the development of the Census Taker Internet Data Collection System (CTS). CTS is an effective means of electronic data collection that can accommodate a wide variety of surveys and censuses. CTS requires a standardized approach to security, architecture/hosting, programming, and form design.
2. CTS supports data collection through interactive web forms or via file transfers. In order to satisfy various data collection needs efficiently, it was necessary to incorporate both of these methods into one modularized system. CTS can accommodate either process based on the survey or census characteristics and requirements. Section II will discuss the two methods and their appropriate use. Table 1 below shows some of the current and planned censuses and surveys illustrating the flexibility of CTS.

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Table 1: Sample of CTS Activity

Survey	Sponsor	Type	Frequency	Universe
Manufactures' Shipments, Inventories, and Orders	Economic	Interactive	Monthly	7,900
Quarterly Financial Report (QFR)	Economic	File Transfer	Quarterly	6,300
2004 Company Organization Survey (COS)	Economic	File Transfer	Annual	53,000
Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS1)	Geography	Interactive	Annual	4,823
Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS5)	Geography	Interactive	Annual	295
2002 Economic Census (ec1)	Economic	File Transfer	5yr cycle	3,000,000
Private School Survey	Demographic	Interactive	2yr cycle	37,000
MQ335C	Economic	File Transfer	Quarterly	15

3. Section III will highlight the benefits gained through our standardized approach, versus a customized approach, to Internet data collection. The technical advantages include consistency in: survey/census design, user interface, and input/output data flows. There are procedural advantages as well that will be discussed.
4. Section IV will describe the infrastructure hardware, software (open source and commercial), security, and process design. This section will address why server-based programming is used exclusively.
5. Section V will take a closer look at the mechanics of interactive forms service. Details will be provided on how parameter files are used to drive the creation of web forms, define layouts, and enforce behavior.
6. Section VI will describe routine maintenance needs and address ongoing improvements that include the expanded use of XML.
