

Electronic Birth Certificates

I read the recent article on implications of new information technology on the vital statistics system with considerable interest (Starr P, Starr S. "Reinventing Vital Statistics: The Impact of changes in information technology, welfare policy, and health care." *Public Health Reports* September/October 1995 pp. 534-544). However, I was surprised that the authors failed to mention the most sophisticated software available for electronic birth registration—the ADIOS™ Electronic Birth Certificate.

This application, developed and marketed by JK, Inc of Arvada, Colorado has been implemented in my own state of Maine and in Iowa and South Dakota. Individual birthing facilities elsewhere also are using the ADIOS-EBC, and numerous state vital statistics offices are preparing to adopt the system, in some cases replacing their existing EBC applications.

ADIOS is the only system currently available commercially that is Windows™-based. The system includes timely, direct exports in various formats to the National Center for Health Statistics, the Social Security Administration, and state programs such as child immunization, newborn screening, high-risk infant tracking, welfare, child support enforcement, and other programs in a timely manner. ADIOS modules also are available for electronic registration of deaths, marriages, fetal deaths and induced terminations of pregnancy, and for immunization tracking. Local registrars may have on-line access for certification. Features are highly modifiable.

Many of the issues raised by the authors in their call for reengineering the birth registration system already are addressed by the ADIOS system. By devoting attention to the coverage and capacities of older applications, the authors missed an opportunity to address the more dynamic activity ongoing in vital statistics technology development. As State Registrar and Director of Maine's Office of Data, Research, and

Vital Statistics, I know of the commitment of vital statistics offices around the country to extend the usefulness of state vital records data for public health and policy purposes. As one of our greatest challenges is keeping abreast of current developments in technology, I hope my colleagues will not restrict their exploration to the products and concepts discussed in this article.

ELLEN NAOR

State Registrar and Director
Office of Data, Research and
Vital Statistics
Department of Health and
Human Services
State of Maine

Our article did not review the merits of specific company's products, and unlike Ms. Naor's letter, it was not intended to promote a particular product. Products come and go. Given the advance of Web technology, the Windows-based solution she is touting is already out of date.

PAUL STARR

Professor of Sociology
Princeton University

SANDRA STARR

Director, Office of Information and
Technology Development
Health Research and Educational
Trust of New Jersey

Salute to Tebben

In celebration of Marian Tebben, I pay tribute to the contributions she made to the public health field during her remarkable 37-year association with *Public Health Reports*, 23 years as editor. Ms. Tebben joined the *PHR* staff in 1957, assumed the responsibilities of managing editor in 1965 and of executive editor in 1972. For many of these years, I often had the opportunity to work with her. I was constantly impressed by her knowledge, ability, and integrity and amazed at what she and her small staff, who were never rich in resources other than their own talents, were able to accomplish.

One of Ms. Tebben's peers has described her as "dedicated, careful, well respected, able to say no gracefully and helpfully, and an excellent editor." She was always available to provide counsel and direction to young federal staff as they entered the world of professional publication. Under her leadership, *PHR* was a venue for contributors to react to changes in policies and practice, to report on projects, and to review or be reviewed by their peers. Her readers were kept up to date on what was happening with people, programs, places, and policies. In short, it was a publication of, by, and for public health professionals which filled a great communication need. Ms. Tebben saw her role as that of a facilitator. Not she—but the message was important.

On occasion, *PHR* presented issues focused on one subject—AIDS, minority health or violence. On other occasions, *PHR* produced special issues on a single subject by soliciting papers from inside and outside the government for a comprehensive picture, e.g. National Health Service Corps, health care costs. I would like to thank Ms. Tebben for these and for all of her other special contributions.

Since retiring, Ms. Tebben claims she had become incredible lazy; however, she and her husband were in England in September; the West Indies in December; California in January. She went to Florida in March for a reunion before the gardening and sailing season starts. Add in her quilting and other church activities and you have the feeling that Ms. Tebben is bringing the same energy, enthusiasm, dedication, and special talent to retirement that she brought to *PHR*.

The new look of *Public Health Reports* is built on what went before. Marian Tebben provided the commitment, leadership, and daily labor to maintain the quality of the journal over an extended period of time. That is a cause for celebration.

VINCE L. HUTCHINS, MD MPH
Silver Spring, MD