

Letter to Mildred Dresselhaus

January 12, 1998

Mildred S. Dresselhaus, Ph.D.
President, American Association for
the Advancement of Science
Institute Professor of Electrical Engineering & Physics
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
77 Massachusetts Ave., Room 13-3005
Cambridge, MA 02139-4307

Dear President Dresselhaus:

In response to your letter of November 6, 1997, I am pleased to report that the Board of Directors of the American Statistical Association voted unanimously on December 6, 1998 to endorse the AAAS Statement on Intellectual Property Protection for Databases, while expressing additional concerns. A copy of our statement of endorsement is enclosed. The statements will also be included on our web page for ready access by our members and other persons interested in professional application of statistical methods.

We are grateful for the leadership and coordination provided by Mark Frankel, Ph.D., and Alex Fowler of your Program on Scientific Freedom, Responsibility, and Law. We also appreciate the inclusion of our representative, John S. Gardenier, D.B.A., in the AAAS Working Group on Database Intellectual Property Rights. We understand that AAAS is continuing its efforts in this area along with the National Research Council under NAE President William Wulf and Paul Uhler. As an AAAS affiliate with broad interests in science, economics, policy, public health, environment, and sports, we hope to stay informed and involved as deliberation on these important issues progresses.

In addition to the importance of sound intellectual property principles to the conduct of scientific research and other statistical applications, the current debate has important additional moral and economic consequences, as you probably realize:

Democracy depends on an informed citizenry; restrictive access to policy-relevant databases damages the capacity for informed debate on issues of general public interest.

Some proposals would inhibit information product innovation and market differentiation, which can damage U. S. global economic competitiveness.

Restrictive pricing would also exacerbate the separation of informational "haves" and "have nots" globally, thereby retarding needed economic development and increasing international tensions.

Yours truly,

David S. Moore
1998 President
American Statistical Association

cc: Richard Nicholson
Executive Officer
American Association for the Advancement of Science

Mark Frankel

Alex Fowler

John Gardenier

William Wulf

Paul Uhler