



For Immediate Release

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Rescuing Important Data: Peru 1981

MANHASSET, NY —JANUARY 2011 —Late in the fall of 2010, two extremely well made wooden crates arrived by diplomatic transport at the New York Peruvian Consulate. They contained what are by some standards “ancient” computer tape reels. This was the culmination of several months of discussion, careful planning and testing. The principal parties were: the Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI) and the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series organization (IPUMS). The tapes were being entrusted to a company known to many as the *“Raiders of the Lost Archives”*.



INEI, but this was a special case.

In English, we’d say “National Institute of Statistics and Informatics”. It is a Peruvian government agency which coordinates, compiles, and evaluates statistical information for the country. The INEI eases decision-making with the help of quality statistical information and the use of information technology and thus helps develop the society. There are very few technology issues that can’t be handled internally at



IPUMS is the world's largest individual-level population database. Records are converted into a consistent format and made available to subscribers through a web-based system. Special features protect privacy while also ensuring maximum value of the data for scientific research. The organization is part of the Minnesota Population Center, which is based at the University of Minnesota.



Muller Media Conversions was founded on 1978 with the purpose of transforming digital information to more useful forms. System migration, printing/publishing, as well as litigation and legal compliance were often the drivers. MMC’s long connection with the National Archives made the *“Raiders”* tag irresistible. Over the past decade or so, many of MMC’s most challenging and interesting projects have been those done for IPUMS. “It’s a real boost for the staff when they see tapes and disks coming in from all over the world. Our work for IPUMS continues to be a real source of pride.” says founder Chris Muller.

This Latest Challenge: IPUMS was interested in working with data from the Peru Census of 1981. Unfortunately, the only available copy of the raw data was on old tape reels—some of which had physically deteriorated. On top of that, a proprietary record formatting and compression scheme was used originally to write the tapes. Earlier attempts to recover the data, both internally and by an international group had met with no success. Based on a steady stream of good results with MMC, IPUMS leadership convinced INEI to send a few sample tapes to MMC for testing during the Spring. After careful analysis it was determined that some custom software along with special hardware procedures would enable capture of most of the data. Later in the year, the tape-crates were picked up by MMC staff at the Peruvian Consulate in New York.



The Result: More than 97% of the data was recovered. Muller Media Conversions is grateful to INEI and IPUMS for the opportunity to participate in the recovery and preservation of this important data. The company website is www.mullermedia.com.