



The Politics of Large Numbers: A History of Statistical Reasoning

Alain Desrosières

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Statistics-driven thinking is ubiquitous in modern society. In this ambitious and sophisticated study of the history of statistics, which begins with probability theory in the seventeenth century, Alain Desrosières shows how the evolution of modern statistics has been inextricably bound up with the knowledge and power of governments. He traces the complex reciprocity between modern governments and the mathematical artifacts that both dictate the duties of the state and measure its successes.

No other work, in any language, covers such a broad spectrum--probability, mathematical statistics, psychology, economics, sociology, surveys, public health, medical statistics--in accurately synthesizing the history of statistics, with an emphasis on the conceptual development of social statistics, culminating in twentieth-century applied econometrics.

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