



# The Information State in England: The Central Collection of Information on Citizens since 1500

*Edward Higgs*

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## **The Information State in England: The Central Collection of Information on Citizens since 1500**

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Is the official collection of information on individuals inevitably leading to the creation of a 'Big Brother State'? In this innovative interdisciplinary study, Edward Higgs takes issue with writers such as Michel Foucault and Anthony Giddens who argue that state information gathering can be seen in terms of an expansion towards modernity, and as social control. Using ground-breaking historical research, Higgs reveals that, since 1500, the English state has always been an Information State although the nature of that state has changed markedly over the last 500 years. In its modern form, the Information State is as much about winning consent via the provision of benefits as repression in the interests of elites.

### *The Information State in England*

- draws upon a wide range of sociological theory and historical research, as well as evidence gathered from archival sources
  - challenges many assumptions about state formation and the role of information
  - views the development of the state in terms of the changing balance between decentralized and centralized forms of governance
- provides a critique of sociological and postmodernist concepts of modernity.

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