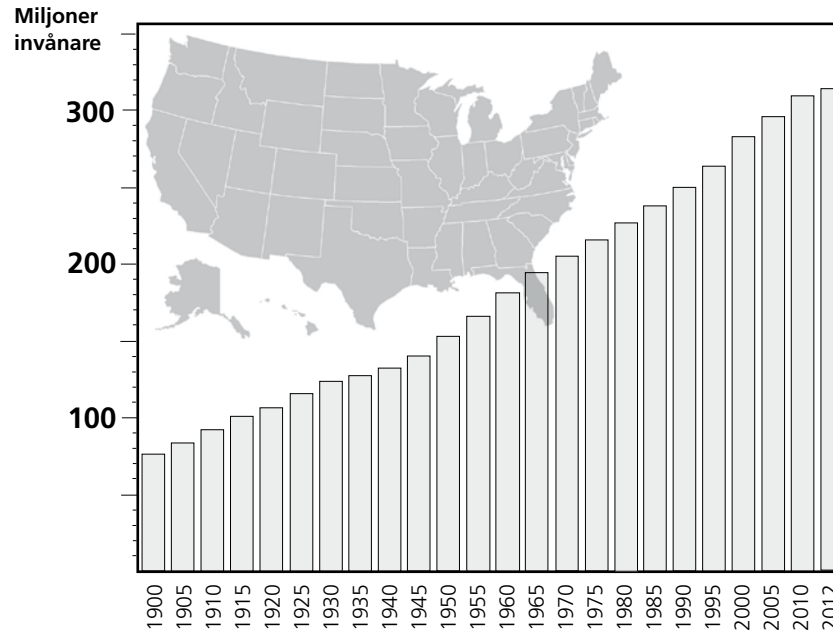


USA:s demografer firar Nerdvana

Dagens Nyheter den 16 augusti kunde man läsa att USA:s befolkning två dagar tidigare hade uppnått det imponerande antalet av 314 159 265 personer, vilket är lika med π*100 miljoner. Dagens Nyheter citerar Howard Hogan på US Census Bureau som uppmanar folket att gå ut och fira. Lite googlande avslöjade raskt att händelsen uppmärksammades på flera håll i världen, främst förstås på hemmaplan.

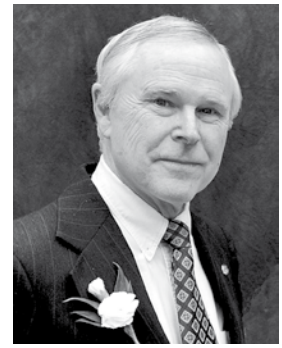
Jag skickade Dagens Nyheters notis till Howard Hogan, som talar lite svenska och vars korrekta titel är Chief Demographer of the US Census Bureau, och passade på att intervjua honom om den märkvärdiga dagen:

It is obviously a good idea to keep track of mathematical constants in the population figures since it has attracted a lot of attention, even as far away as in Sweden, but how did the idea appear in the first place?

– We came up with the idea last March 14 (3-14) when someone brought in a pie for "π day." It was simple to project that our population would soon reach 314,159,265 and the demographers began to joke that this was the real day to celebrate.

Are you looking for other constants too?

– We had big media events when the US



Howard Hogan, Chief Demographer of the US Census Bureau

population reached 200 million in 1967 and 300 million in 2006. I don't think anyone even noticed when our population reached 271,828,182, and 602,214,129 seems a long way off.

How did you celebrate this particular day at the Census Bureau?

– With apple pies and cherry pies, of course.

What has been the reaction among people in general? Will it be a lasting effect of good will or a growing interest in population statistics? Or could it even be the case that some people think that important things like population figures shouldn't be treated in such a frivolous way?

– We were surprised about how much fun people had with this, with reporters talking about "Nerdvana" and "math nerds rejoice." Of course, the real "math nerds" criticized us for not being more precise. We should have written population = integer($\pi 10^8$). For me, seeing the clip in Dagens Nyheter was absolutely the best!

How does your population clock work?

-We started with the most recent census number, which was 308,745,538 as of April 1, 2010. We then used data on births, deaths and migration to bring it forward to our most recent population estimate of 311,591,917, as of July 1, 2011. We then made short term projections and worked out the implied components per second. The current settings are:

- One birth every 8 seconds
- One death every 14 seconds
- One international migrant (net) every 46 seconds
- Net gain of one person every 13 seconds

INGEGERD JANSSON

Noter:

- Man hittar Censusbyråns Population Clock enklast genom att googla på "population clock census".
- Talet 2,71828182 är "e", basen för den naturliga logaritmen, med åtta decimaler.
  Talet 6,02214129 -10^{23} är ett skattat värde av Avogadros tal.