

Preface

Scientific information is a key commodity for the United States and other industrialized nations and is becoming increasingly important for developing nations. Clearly, societal change is being dictated by scientific information, its uses and, perhaps, misuses.

On the occasion of the dedication of the new building for BIOSIS, it is auspicious to evaluate where we have been, where we are going and what the future holds in the area of scientific information and information science.

BIOSIS has contributed significantly to the modernization of information exchange and has provided the major tool in the creative efforts of biological scientists. The role of the information broker is such that biological discovery pivots on the availability and utility of scientific information, particularly when it is provided in abstracted and concisely condensed form readily utilized in building on past discoveries to achieve new findings.

The many facets of scientific information for creative biological research are touched upon by contributors to this volume. They have reviewed the past history of the formation and development of BIOSIS and of biological information, its storage, retrieval and transfer. The world of scientific information and its place in international scientific development is discussed, as are some provocative and thoughtful predictions of the changing electronic information environment. That is, what is in store for us in the future. This future is described not as to be feared, but to be encouraged. There is no question that the future of science rests on how well we use what we know and how concisely and precisely we are able to transmit the information to our colleagues and users, whether laymen or the cognoscenti in the biosciences.

The essays which follow are easy reading, but provide some very hard thinking.

Rita R. Colwell
Editor