

Introduction

The Symposium Planning Committee carefully considered many appropriate topics before selecting the theme for this symposium, "Information for the Advancement of Science—Past, Present and Future". The theme is most appropriate for the occasion and for the message that BIOSIS, with its historical and current role in the information community, wishes to communicate to our friends and colleagues. Our data bank provides access to the world literature in the life sciences, and is a precious commodity and, indeed, a national resource. During the past fifty-five years a major archival record has been constructed that is unmatched. Nowhere else in the world are the needs of scientists in the pure and applied fields met in a single data base that is built on such a comprehensive definition of biology. Certainly BIOSIS can be considered synonymous with biology. Biology is the life sciences—medicine, agriculture, botany, zoology, with all the ramifications of the interrelated disciplines of the plant and animal sciences, and microbiology, the microbes and sub-units of the microbial world, including unicellular and subcellular units contributing to life processes.

The BIOSIS data base is a massive compilation of bibliographic information organized to lead the user to an original research document by organism name, hierarchical organism relationships, subject concepts and names of scientists or authors. BIOSIS provides a path to original documents via bibliographic citations. Historically, that record has been accompanied by abstracts and indexes. Through the decades the library has provided original documents in hard copy to back up the data bank. Now BIOSIS is in a new technological age and has a new generation of users. The library function is changing as full text searching and publication on demand, and, in fact, the concept of the electronic library, moves closer to reality. Computers are not only found in data processing departments of big business. In fact, they have entered offices and laboratories and the homes of technically literate, and, surprisingly, also nontechnical families. The sophistication of computer networks promises new opportunities for the working scientist and a challenge to his creativity. Even the homemaker, her family and its activities are part of this revolution. Both developed and developing countries are drawn into the technological web.

An assemblage of stimulating speakers has been brought together to provide a most appropriate forum for those interested in science and information transfer.

H. Edward Kennedy