

Concluding summary

Final presentation

In her concluding presentation of the Meeting, Margaret Park attempted to outline some aspects of a realistic, pragmatic approach to reporting and accountability for re-packaging activity. Simplicity and flexibility are to be recommended, though there will be a need for multiple reporting and accounting systems. Partial solutions lie in the appropriate application of technological capabilities. It is, at any rate, the implementation of new services, not the exploitation of existing services, which should be expected to generate fresh revenues.

Discussion

Five discussion-groups were formed, each displaying a balanced representation of information producers, vendors and users. Afterwards, reports from these groups were given in full session. It was possible, as matters turned out, to reach some agreement on basic points. Re-formatting, editing and re-packaging (i.e., eliminating some portions, making corrections, augmentations, rearrangement, annotations and so on) of information as received from the vendor should in fact be accepted as reasonable use, not subject to any mandatory permission-procedure – so long as the objective is “one-time use”. Multiple use, resale, or derivative “data-base creation” (for subsequent searching by a user) would be quite a different matter, and should only occur after arrangement with, and possible payment to, the producer of the original information-product. If accounting-systems are to be effective, and respected, they must remain simple, fair, and not burdensome to the user. Re-packaging, and merging of search-results, could be greatly facilitated by standardization among data bases, but such standardization will be very difficult to accomplish.

The initial announcement of the 1981 ASIDIC Fall Meeting stated: “Intelligent, high-speed online terminals now make it possible to download data base subsets for later offline manipulation.... Organizations are now building tertiary data bases by merging offline appropriate subsets of secondary data bases. Almost daily, new ways of reusing and repackaging information are announced. Data base producers claim they should be compensated for reuse of their information. In contrast, consumers feel this reuse should be free.” These issues are not simple – either theoretically or in terms of actual day-to-day practice and

needs. The attendant problems may not quickly be solved. In any case, the issues and problems must be addressed, and this ASIDIC will continue to do.

Editor's note. This summary is based in part on a conference-report made for the Association by Donald T. Hawkins (of Bell Laboratories) and published in the ASIDIC Newsletter, no. 42.