News, Trends and Comments

News

Privatized dissemination

NTIS has decided to implement a new program for distributing its re-
ports (excluding exception-priced documents) via commercial sector
channels - whereby any vendor will be able to purchase microform copies
at an overall annual price, and then to sell the reports in a form
deemed appropriate. The reports can be bought in any quantity, and even
on an individual basis. The announcement came in late September.

Reducing the options

SDC (now "SDC Information Services") has shut down its dedicated line
to the United Kingdom, effective 1 August, because of the probability
that it will not be allowed to carry through traffic between the USA
and continental Europe via the UK.

Downloading

The European Space Agency Information Retrieval Service (ESA-IRS),
located in Frascati, Italy, has announced - under the banner 'DOWNLOAD
- another ESA-IRS "première"' - the inauguration of a service which
will allow you "to perform all those operations you have been dreaming
about on your own system". The enabling mechanism is a set of agree-
ments with data-base producers, and an "integral" and "intrinsic"
clause (number 8) incorporated in the standard dial-up user contract.
All the standard record formats are available for capture with the "DL"
command, at a per-record pricing. About two-thirds of ESA-IRS' 1983 ex-
ternally accessible data bases are subject to downloading under this
scheme - including, for example, NTIS, BIOSIS, INSPEC, Pascal, ABI/In-
form. Other producers obviously have decided, at least for the present,
not to go along with the vendor: for instance the NASA, Chemical Ab-
stracts, Compendex, INIS and AGRIS files are not involved. Per-record
downloading prices range from AU0.21 (US$0.205, for HSEline) to AU0.66
(for Telegen and Energynet).

CCN

During the course of this year, the Catalogue Collectif National, co-

vering approximately 180,000 periodicals, is being brought into operation in France - based on input by more than 4,000 institutions in that country, and involving a three-tiered organizational structure: a national center, thirty-two "regional" centers, and the other participating institutions. The twenty-two other centers are not assigned any subject-specialties, but there are nine subject-oriented "centers" in the Ile de France (such as for example the Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des langues orientales, the Bibliothèque interuniversitaire de médecine, the Bibliothèque centrale du Musée national d'histoire naturelle), plus the Centre de documentation scientifique et technique of the CNRS. The CCN was established on the basis of the file of the International Serials Data System. Each participating institution has agreed (by virtue of participation) to guarantee access to the periodicals involved, and there is an automated system for controlling information on conditions of access. On-line access to the union catalogue is in the process of implementation, and it is the intention to make the CCN the basis for national interlending management, including an electronic messaging system. Overall administration is in the hands of the Direction des bibliothèques, des musées et de l'information scientifique et technique (DBMIST - directeur: M. Varloot), and computerization was the responsibility of the Centre informatique de Grenoble. A COM version is also being produced. For further information: Monique Dubost, Centre national du CCN, 4 rue de Louvois, 75002 Paris, tel. 261-8283, poste 385; or, Christian Lupovici, DBMIST, 3-5 boulevard Pasteur, 75015 Paris, tel. 539-2575, poste 3178.

Rising above the flood

An Arbeitsgemeinschaft Fachinformation (AFI) has been established in the Federal Republic of Germany, under the chairmanship of Bärbel Breidenstein, whose objective it is to provide information on new technologies "especially to those who produce, handle, print, reproduce and store specialist information in libraries, publishing establishments and industrial firms, and those who transport this information by means of the new media". AFI "would like to contribute to finding out how to overcome the information deluge".

NTIA

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration in the USA, which has recently undergone a period of uncertainty concerning its future, and whose head resigned earlier this year, appears now to be gaining somewhat in stature, at least so far as the legislative branch of government is concerned. According to Communications International for 5 August 1983, the Senate Appropriations Committee has produced a report stating that it "supports the NTIA's efforts to promote the U.S. telecommunications/information industry in competition with those of other nations and urges the NTIA to expend the maximum effort to enhance the interests of American industry in this area". This report furthermore proposes that the NTIA produce an updated study on the definition and measurement of "the information economy". NTIA falls under the authority of the US Department of Commerce.

ISU interview

The next in the series of interviews to be published in Information Services & Use is with Melvin S. Day of the Information Technology Group. In addition to speaking about his more than 35-year career in the information world - which has included important positions with the Atomic Energy Commission, NASA, the National Library of Medicine and NTIS, and has involved him in such pioneering activities as the development of batch searching and SDI processing, the development of prototype on-line retrieval software and services, construction of the MEDLINE system, and participation in the establishment of public data networks - Mr. Day gives his opinions on such topics as US cooperation in international information organizations and systems, marketplace influence on public-sector information provision services, the question of cost-recovery by the NLM, the role of NTIS, the need for a US national information policy, and the information services conflict between Europe and the USA. This interview is scheduled to appear in vol. 3 no. 6 - the December issue of ISU, and we believe that our readers will find it a most interesting piece of reading.

ACSF

An Association des centres serveurs français has been formed in France. President is Michel Dancoisne (Télésystèmes-Questel) and secretary general Georges Callais (G.Cam). This vendors' association now forms a counterpiece to the Groupement français des producteurs de bases et banques de données, the national producers' group.

Better late than never?

The H.W. Wilson Company of New York has announced that its published subject-indexes will be mounted for on-line access by "late fall of 1984" - this access being made possible "through the retrieval subsystem of an automated information system developed to support the editorial and manufacturing processes involved in publishing the indexes". The automated system is called "Beacon" (cf. Wilson's well known logo), for which a development contract was awarded in 1980 to Logicon Inc. The retrieval software is based on Elhill 3. 2 from the National Library of Medicine.

Giving the user a hand

"Orbit SearchMaster" is the name chosen by SDC for its new software product designed to give information retrieval customers, operating on microcomputers, access to a store of pre-formulated search strategies kept on the vendor's computer. A test-phase version has been demonstrated at various conferences in the USA this year, but as of early October the product was not yet available for general use.

Toward an information policy?

"The Dutch Bureau for Information Provision must make a contribution in respect to mutually attuning information demand and information supply. To this end, it offers a series of services which are intended for government agencies as well as for the private sector, or business. In its mediating role, it brings together demand and supply, users and providers.... Of central importance is information for professional use - especially where new forms of information transfer are indicated.... The task will have a strong international orientation." This from a press release concerning the document "Perspectiefnota Nationaal Agentschap Informatieverzorging" in its definitive version. Thus we are dealing with a slightly modified form of the original plan (for details, see ISU vol. 1 no. 6, p. 373) to transform the Dutch on-line information commission COBIDOC into a more effective authority for promoting information services in the Netherlands, as a result of extensive comment on the earlier version of the "Perspectiefnota". The process has taken longer than first had been anticipated, and the ultimate objective is an integrated national information policy. According to the press release, "Because of the great significance of information for the economy, special attention must be given to the market sector."

EBIP

Under European Commission support, a cooperative European Biotechnology Information Project, centered at the British Library, will be carried out over a one-year period ending in August 1984. The objective is to determine the information-provision needs of research organizations and firms working in the field, and to explore the methods for effectively meeting those needs. For further information, contact John Leigh, EBIP, Science Reference Library (Aldwych), 9 Kean Street, London WC2B 4AT, UK.

Give them what they want

After testing the waters with librarians, and finding that in this particular case at least they would prefer microfiche over print on paper, the Library of Congress decided to discontinue publication of its "National Union Catalogs" in the latter form, and to adopt the former.

Keeping in touch

The American Library Association in September announced that it will on 2 January 1984 inaugurate an electronic mail and information service called ALANET for its member organizations, on a subscription basis ($30 initiation fee plus $7.50 per month for account maintenance), with connect-hour charges invoiced each month. Coverage is limited to the USA and Canada, and the system is offered in cooperation with ITT Dialcom. Some of the features are: connections with library suppliers, access to the UPI data base, and an on-line article-delivery service. A descriptive brochure and a subscription form are available from Joel

Lee, ALANET system manager, ALA Headquarters Library, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611, USA; tel. (312) 944-6780.

Data bases

In the previous issues of this third, 1983 volume of ISU (note that number 3, as a special issue, had no news section), we have reported on sixty-seven important data bases from more than fifty producers newly available on twenty-five different on-line systems in ten countries, in addition to information concerning significant re-loads and withdrawals. Below, we list twenty-three further files recently mounted, or soon to be made accessible, on fourteen different vendors in seven countries.

ESA-IRS has announced the imminent availability of Energynet, from the Environment Information Center (file 50, directory information on organizations); Merlin Tech, from Merlin Gérin (file 65, on electrotechnology); and EUDISED, from the Council of Europe (file 24, on educational research projects). This host has also re-loaded ABI/Inform (file 30), HSEline (file 47), and Aqualine (file 25), and extended its hours of on-line system availability for users in Europe. It has also decided to repeat this year the successful meeting of ESA-IRS data-base producers held in December 1982 at Frascati.

Nexis (Mead Data Central) has added the Financial Times in full text.

The Sydoni group of legal files is scheduled to move from G.Cam to Télésystèmes-Questel. The controlling interest in Sydoni is held by the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations, of which G.Cam is a subsidiary.

The French national vendor Télésystèmes-Questel has added the domestic legal data bases Juris-Data and Juridoc, both from the producer Juris-Data. (See also preceding item.)

The Chemical Information Division of the Institute for Scientific Information will early next year, in cooperation with Questel (and its DARC system), make available a new organic compound data base including eventually more than three million compounds first reported in the journal literature as new in the period from 1962 to the present. This file is the equivalent of the printed product Current Abstracts of Chemistry and Index Chemicus, and gives detailed bibliographic data.

I.P. Sharp is now making available the following additional files: FT Share Information (FTSTOCK, for the London Stock Exchange) - daily updates; FT Actuaries Share Indices (FTACT); US Flow of Funds Quarterly (from the Federal Reserve Board); BIS (Bank for International Settlements).

SIA (London, UK) is to host the Macro-economic Data Bank (1,000 time series) of the Central Statistical Office, and will likewise be marketing the tapes of this file.

The International Monetary Fund's International Financial Statistics file (17,000 time series) is now up on CISI (Paris, France). It had already been accessible on a number of other hosts.

Those interested in keeping up with US government contracts can now make use of CBD Plus on DRI. Updates are daily.

DIMDI is opening access to the PSTA/IPAB data base (packaging).

DIALOG has announced availability, beginning with September, of the bibliographic data base Mideast File (file 249, coverage from 1979, monthly updates).

BRS has added Excerpta Medica (coverage from 1980, weekly updates) to its collection of on-line files.

InnerLine has mounted the ABI/Inform file from Data Courier.

New on INKA is ECOMP (on energy, a supplement to INKA's PHYSCOMP). Also, this vendor has now re-opened access to CONF (upcoming conferences in energy, physics, mathematics, computer science, engineering etc. - updated weekly).

Scicon Computer Services, in the UK, has added Acompline, the urban affairs file of the Greater London Council, which is already available on ESA-IRS.

The Hoppenstedt data base (information on companies in the Federal Republic of Germany) was to become accessible on Data-Star, with planned semi-annual updates.

Data bases withdrawn

OECD-MEI (Main Economic Indicators)	Scicon
IMF-IFS (International Financial Statistics)	Scicon
CSO (UK Central Statistical Office)	Scicon
Sydoni	G.Cam
Environmental Impact Statements	BRS
Energyline	BRS
DOED	BRS
Enviroline	BRS

Keeping abreast of the technology

The Information Industry Association (IIA) in the USA has just set up a joint task force with the mandate of examining questions relating to video and optical disks in electronic publishing. The action was taken partially in response to disk-storage projects now underway at the Library of Congress. For more information, contact Bob Willard, IIA, 316 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20003, USA; tel. (202) 544-1969.

Getting into the act

Pergamon InfoLine's contribution to the move toward more powerful search facilities for the on-line information retrieval user (see also the item on ESA-IRS's "zoom" command in our December 1982 issue, p. 337) is its "get" command. The vendor describes it as a device which allows one to "carry out analyses on the contents of a document set", but its outstanding feature is a ranking capability which may be applied to specific fields within a record, and has especially interes-

ting possibilities in the area of patents. Many, but not all, fields are "gettable", and there is a built-in default to the most recently created set. The three specific varieties of the command are: "get ** count", "get ** show", and "get ** show rank" (operating on the <u>unique values</u> within a specified field over a given set), where ** = field la- bel. Pergamon InfoLine claims that this is the first of numerous new commands to be implemented in the context of its upgraded "version 2.2" search system. For further information: Pergamon InfoLine Ltd., 12 Vandy Street, London EC2A 2DE, UK, tel. (01) 377-4650; or, Pergamon In- ternational Information Corp., 1340 Old Chain Pridge Road, McLean, VA 22101, USA, tel. (703) 442-0900.

On-line services

The LINK Consulting Group's recent survey "Business Users of Electro- nic Information Services" indicates that "ease of use" receives a rela- tively low ranking among respondents as an important aspect of data- base service, below quality of information, timeliness, and data-base availability - in spite of all the noise that is currently being made about user-friendliness. Lawyers in firms (as opposed to company lawyers) and brokers find system reliability of paramount significance. Scope and depth of coverage come even below ease of use. Other interesting findings: only 30.8% reported using more than one da- ta base; mean budget allocations for data-base services in 1983 decreased by 16% against 1982; 12% of respondents reported a decrease in usage over the past year (while 53% reported an increase). In none of the nine occupational categories involved was usage of on-line ser- vices higher than fifty percent, and in one of them (purchasing agents) it came in at 2.5%. The study, which covers only users in the USA, may be purchased for US$12,000; contact Diane Gamble or Carolyn Wilki, LINK Resources, 215 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003, USA, tel. (212) 473-5600.

In passing

It might be interesting at this point to take notice of certain sta- tistics which were published this spring concerning two different na- tions in Europe. According to a report by Gilles de Luze (in IPA Pu- blishing News for June), there were in France in 1982 116,000 microcom- puters (mostly US-made machines, according to a recent EIU report), of which about 22% (25,000 or so) were equipped with a modem. The total figure for 1981 was 59,300, and the forecast for 1983 was 148,000. Market-segmentation is as follows: 50% business and professional use, 30% scientific use, 10% educational use, 10% hobbyists. There were, at end 1982, 9,400 connections to Transpac (the national packet-switched data network), and 15,000 were projected for 1983. So far as data-base production is concerned, 58% of files come from governmental bodies, 28% from the commercial sector, and 14% from not-for-profit organiza- tions; 39% are in the scientific and technical fields, and 28% in the area of economics and finance. Meanwhile in The Netherlands a recently publicized study has shown that approximately 12,000 hours of on-line information retrieval time were spent, and about 30,000 searches

performed, in the year 1981. The average organization made use of four
different on-line vendor systems, and the average searcher performed
247 searches.

Document ordering

The information retrieval vendor INKA in the FRG has implemented an
on-line ordering function. Document suppliers are the Technische Infor-
mationsbibliothek in Hannover and the Fachinformazionszentrum Energie,
Physik, Mathematik in Karlsruhe. According to INKA, the on-line user
"is informed immediately when the original documents are not avai-
lable".

Service to Spain

ESA-IRS's ESANET has been extended for Spanish users with the follo-
wing connections: Madrid-Barcelona-Frascati, Madrid to Frascati via
Transpac (France), Madrid to Frascati via PSS (UK).

Tools of the trade

Available free of charge is the BI/Data Forecasts Guide. Contact Bu-
siness International, Online Services department, 1 Dag Hammarskjold
Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA.

Daniel Farkas' Data Communications: Terms, Concepts, Definitions (in
loose-leaf form) is available from Carnegie Press (100 Kings Road, Ma-
dison, NJ 07940; tel. (201) 822-1240), at US$39.95 plus postage.

The American Society of Hospital Pharmacists (4630 Montgomery Avenue,
Bethesda, MD 20814, USA) has produced a second edition of its Thesaurus
of Subject Terms and Cross References for use in conjunction with the
data base International Pharmaceutical Abstracts. The price is US$20.

An American National Dictionary for Information Processing Systems
has been prepared by the American National Standards Committee X3. Con-
tact: X3 Secretariat, CBEMA, 311 First Street NW, Suite 500, Washing-
ton, DC 20001, USA. The work is defined as a technical report.

Gale Research has published the eighth edition of its Directory of
Special Libraries and Information Centers - containing over 16,000 en-
tries for establishments in the USA and Canada. The two-volume (plus
supplements due later) publication is edited by Brigitte T. Darnay. Vo-
lume 1 (in two parts, and including appendixes and subject index) costs
US$260, volume 2 (geographic and personnel indexes) $230, and the sup-
plements (volume 3) $240.

We note here, somewhat belatedly, the 1982 publication of the Glossar
zur BID-Informatik (Glossary of Information Processing for Libraries,
Information and Documentation), by the Deutsches Bibliotheksinstitut in
Berlin. It contains 879 entries, and includes many English-language
terms. Price unknown.

740 million dollars in cash

GTE Corporation has purchased Southern Pacific Communications Company and Southern Pacific Satellite Company, for the above-mentioned sum, from the Southern Pacific Company.

Revival

In volume 3 number 4 (p. 211) we reported that the European Information Providers Association (EURIPA) had failed in its efforts to get off the ground a project to produce a survey of the information industry in Europe. The decision to give up the project, at least for the time, was announced to member organizations already on the occasion of the annual symposium held in Luxemburg during the latter half of March. Now, the Association has issued a press release (received by us in late August) announcing that the survey will in fact be carried out. Indeed, a contract was to this end signed on 19 July with Business International S.A. of Geneva. Set to be finished by March of next year, the survey is supposed to involve approximately 2,000 companies active in the field of electronic information production, manipulation and transfer. Aside from the predictable data contents, the survey "will aim to identify key problems", for example: lack of investment, language factors, supply of trained personnel, marketing problems, legal and regulatory restrictions. The Commission of the European Communities is providing support for the survey, in the context of its policy of stimulating interest in and development of advanced information services in Europe as a balance to the progress made along these lines in the USA. Members of the survey committee are: W. Schmitz-Esser (Gruner & Jahr, FRG - chairman), G. Lubbock (Slamark, Italy), J.K.W. van Leeuwen (Netherlands Center for Information Policy), A.C. Hilscher (Manz'sche Verlags- und Universitätsbuchhandlung, Austria) and P. Labombarda (Sarin, Italy). (N.b., no representation for example from France, Scandinavia or the UK.)

We might incidentally note here that the survey produced by the Information Industry Association (IIA) in the USA - a successful project which was a prime impetus for EURIPA's intentions along these lines - will soon be issued in its second version (entitled "The Business of Information 1983"), in time for the IIA's annual convention to be held in New York on 7-9 November.

Videotex

1988 is the target year for nation-wide implementation in Japan of the videotex service CAPTAIN, and commercial operation is scheduled for November 1984 or earlier - with a capacity of 192,000 pages. Meanwhile, it has recently been announced that the Japan Cable Television Company has come to an agreement with Sony Corporation whereby the two organizations will jointly develop a national videotex system under the title "MICS", and will split up the marketing responsibilities for the service (see The Japan Economic Journal for 5 July 1983, p. 11).

Library automation: publications

James E. Rush Associates Inc. (2223 Carriage Road, Powell, OH 43065, USA; tel.: (614) 881-5949) is this year publishing a set of Library Systems Evaluation Guides, in eight volumes. Individual volumes cost US$59.50 apiece prepaid; the full set costs $395 prepaid. (Price includes postage for North America and parts of Latin America.) Subjects covered, per volume, are: serials control, circulation control, public service, acquisitions, management services, interlibrary loan, cataloguing, and system integration.

Meanwhile, the sixth in the series of Library and Information Technology Association (LITA, a division of the American Library Association) library automation bibliographies has very recently been published (by Pierian Press of Ann Arbor, Michigan) under the title Automation in Libraries, and covering the period 1978-1982. The arrangement is loosely by topic (but not without some strange anomalies, and the book contains neither cross references nor subject index), though the first three sections are "overview and general", "conferences" and "bibliographies", and the last five cover respectively Canada, Great Britain, Australia, Germany (i.e., almost entirely on the Federal Republic), and "foreign" (mostly English-language titles, but otherwise a few in French, German, Italian and Spanish only). Some important journals in the field appear to have been arbitrarily excluded from consideration. The entire volume, including the 19-page name index, amounts to viii + 177 pages (Pierian's September news release erroneously states 192 pages – which is only correct if you count all the blank leaves at the beginning and end), and sells for US$18.95. It is worth noting that the introduction by the five compilers (who at the same time make up the LITA/ISAS Committee on the Bibliography) states that "it is possible that this will be the last ALA bibliography on this rapidly expanding subject".

Budgets

In the first issue of this volume, we noted that the Library of Congress received an operating allotment of US$169.8 million for the fiscal year 1983. For the fiscal year 1984 budget, the LC requested $192.3 million. (Both figures exclude funding of the Congressional Research Service – for which the requested 1984 appropriation was $38.95 million.) It will probably receive ultimately something in the area of $175-180 million.

A shot in the arm

The University of Toronto Library Automation System (UTLAS), which has a great many participating institutons in Canada, and also now in the USA, has been given a $2 million grant from the Province of Ontario, to be used for upgrading and developmental purposes.

Another shot in the arm

H.M. Government in the United Kingdom will make available, over a

four-year period, £5 million for the development of data-base creation projects that show signs of eventual viability in the marketplace environment. The initial announcement of this intention was made on 28 June before the annual conference of the Institute of Information Scientists (IIS) by the minister for industry and information technology, Kenneth Baker, who said that the emphasis was on "data bases which provide information to industry and business... and which in themselves help to develop a strong information supply sector in the UK", and that "the central purpose is to pave the way for IT products, IT processes, and IT services, which can be sold in the market in competition with the rest of the world". Up to one third of developmental costs would be covered. (See Inform - the IIS newsletter - for September, p. 7.)

Right up there with the motor car...

... and slightly ahead of physical fitness: that's where libraries rank on the priorities-list of the British people. The question was: what made a valuable contribution to the quality of their lives, and it was posed in a Mori public opinion poll - as reported in The Economist of 9-15 July this year. Thirty-five percent mentioned libraries, exactly the same as "access to a car", while sports facilities came in with 33%, and theaters with 19%. The article points out that the British government spends £210 million per year on arts and libraries, but only £30 million on conservation of the countryside - the one element which was far and away the highest priority (53%) according to the results of the above-mentioned poll.

Standards contract

In our first issue of this year (p. 84), we described a proposal, placed last winter before the Association of American Publishers new technology committee, electronic publishing subcommittee, for developing standards and author guidelines on electronic manuscript preparation. A contractor has now been chosen, from among a number of bidders, to implement the project; it is Aspen Systems Corporation, of Rockville, Maryland (a member of the Wolters Samsom Group). In the meantime, the Council on Library Resources has come forth with a $50,000 grant in support of the project.

Standard numbering system ahead?

Devising a "standard computer software number" system (either independent of or in coordination with the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) system) is the task set for a new subcommittee of the American National Standards Committee Z39. The system is to be adaptable for international use. Readers should note that this is only one of several projects underway along the same lines; whether a consensus will be reached in the near future is another question.

Coming to terms

At a meeting held in Canada in May and June, representatives of the
five major existing terminological data banks - BTQ, Eurodicautom,
Lexis, TEAM and Termium - drafted an agreement concerning cooperation
in the future.

Limited edition

The New York Public Library dictionary catalogue publishing project
has been completed, and the printed version has been produced in only
100 copies, at US$36,000 per copy (pre-publication price was $24,000).
This reproduction of the NYPL Research Libraries catalogue is available
also on microfilm. The publisher is G.K. Hall of Boston.

New file

The University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) has plans to develop a new
on-line bibliographic data base on radical movements - based on the
collection of anarchist Jo Labadie, and made possible by a grant from
the National Endowment for the Humanities.

People

In the first issue of this volume (p. 87), we reported that Joseph
H. Howard, from the Library of Congress, had become interim director of
the National Agricultural Library (USA) after the retirement of Richard
A. Farley. Mr. Howard has now been appointed director of the NAL. He
had for five years been Assistant Librarian for processing services at
the LC, and took up his new position in July. He was a member of the
"blue ribbon" panel which earlier this year recommended a number of
measures aimed at retrieving the NAL from a state of deterioration in
the services which it offers.

Wilhelm K. Bartenbach, executive director of the Public Affairs In-
formation Service (PAIS), will in November be moving to the H.W. Wilson
Company in order to manage, as director of online services, that firm's
movement into the world of on-line secondary information data bases
(see item above, page 277).

Bonnie C. Carroll, of the US Department of Energy Technical Informa-
tion Center, has become president-elect of the American Society for In-
formation Science (ASIS), and will in October 1984 succeed Donald W.
King as president of the Society.

Vivian Arterbery has been chosen president-elect for 1983/1984 of the
Special Libraries Association in the USA.

We regret to have to announce the death, on 30 September 1983, of
Mr. Kenneth R. Brown. Mr. Brown had recently resigned as secretary ge-
neral of the Fédération Internationale de Documentation (see our previ-
ous issue).

On 1 January of this coming year, a new secretary general will take
office at FID. She is Stella Keenan, of the Department of Library and

Information Science of Loughborough University - and formerly executive director of the National Federation of Abstracting and Indexing Services in the USA.

Neal Kaske has left OCLC - where he had been director of the Office of Research. No replacement has been named, but Thomas Hickey has been designated as acting head of this section.

The 1983 Oberly award for bibliography in the agricultural sciences (only US citizens eligible; administered by the science and technology section of the Association of College & Research Libraries - a division of the American Library Association) has been given to J.R. Blanchard and Lois Farrell (both of the University of California) for their Guide to Sources for Agricultural and Biological Research (University of California Press, 1981).

Carrollton Press (producers of the REMARC file) has a new vice president for operations in the person of Parke Lightbown.

Edith S. Crockett is assuming responsibility for the Product Development Section at BioSciences Information Service in Philadelphia.

Trends

Strategic accomplishment

In the first issue of this year, we briefly mentioned the fact that (a controlling interest in) Wharton Econometric Forecasting Associates had been acquired by the French company CISI - a move whose imminence we had previously suggested. We have since noticed that an article on the subject appeared in the March 19 issue of Le Monde (of which we are for better or worse not regular readers), from which it may be interesting to quote (in translation) two sentences here: "The acquisition of Wharton, nevertheless, has all the appearance of a 'fine move' ['joli coup'] for CISI and for France. For CISI, one of the first two European data-processing service groups, because it is a question of a good means for adding value to its international network." CISI's M. Nollet calls it "a strategic decision which belongs to a scheme put together little-by-little - with the aim of no longer offering only the means for automated computations, but rather a number of more complete services". CISI already has working agreements with certain foreign or international organizations - such as the International Monetary Fund (see above under Data bases), the Financial Times and the OECD.

Customer services

For the occasion of an Information Industry Association seminar held on 21 September in Philadelphia, Fran Spigai of Database Services conducted a survey of major on-line data-base "suppliers" and vendors (31 questionnaires sent; 20 (14 suppliers, 6 vendors) usable responses) in

order to gather information concerning customer services practices and
attitudes. Some (to us) interesting results were: 80% do not charge the
user anything for any functions performed by customer services person-
nel (the others charge for training and/or certain other special func-
tions); 55% declined to reveal what proportion of the organization's
budget went to customer services, of the remainder 78% replied that it
was less than 7% , and two parties indicated 20-25%; 55% do not have
documented customer service policies, and 26% supply no training to
staff; 89% have toll-free telephone numbers; four of the six vendors
receive more than 10,000 telephone calls per month, and two of the sup-
pliers 500 to 1,000 (the remainder receiving fewer); most of the res-
pondents receive from ten to 100 letters per month; it was indicated
that the customer services department could be useful in terms of mar-
ket research, and might even generate new product ideas.

Down with competition

In France, the Compagnie Générale d'Electricité (CGE) and the Thomson
Group were attempting to implement a plan for trading industrial
assets, pending government approval - according to a report in the
Financial Times of 16 September. It is stated there that the action
"would lead to a major restructuring of the country's electronics and
telecommunications industries, involving the creation of one single
French telecommunications supplier" (i.e., telecommunication equipment
supplier). It is for this reason that the PTT - the French government
postal/telecommunication authority - had taken a stand in opposition to
the proposal. The idea was that CGE would take over Thomson's telecom-
munication equipment interests in exchange, among other considerations,
for the former's consumer electronics business. The President of the
Republic, François Mitterrand, has in the meantime given his approval
to the scheme. Both Thomson and CGE are nationalized companies.

Keeping pace

The Association of American Library Schools has recently changed its
name to the Association for Library and Information Science Education.
Such a decision was of course more or less to be expected, if only be-
cause of the name-changes adopted by many of its members over the last
few years - motivated by the desire to incorporate the word "informa-
tion". We are not aware to what extent the new designation may, if at
all, be intended to reflect a modification in the mandate or scope of
activities of the association.

Comments

Public/private involvement

Under the heading "Financing" in an official summary of an Expert Opinion by the president of the Federal Court of Accounts of the FRG, published in the spring of 1983, we read (here translated): "Information and documentation should in principle be financed in accordance with demand. Cost-covering remunerations are attainable exclusively in a few areas in which there is no competition. In so far as foreign competition exists, market prices might be achieved, but these would not then be sufficient for covering costs. In spite of failure to recover costs, documentation systems could be, as a matter of priority, maintained and financed by way of direct subventions or cost-covering remunerations of the 'public customers' - if in individual cases special reasons (e.g. German-language documentation for certain target groups, or self-sufficiency in areas of vital importance) demand this. Otherwise, a documentation system which can not operate on a cost-coverage basis should be discontinued, providing a comparable offering is available [our emphasis].... The public sector will furthermore have to see to it that users from its side have sufficient means to utilize fully a public documentation system, as well as to acquire the necessary primary documents - lest the usefulness of the documentation be thrown into question. Given current market prices, direct support of private customers is not in general necessary; if cost-covering prices are applied, such support can be appropriate for political reasons." We note that earlier on in the same summary it is stated that "A new policy on specialist information will have to provide an answer to the central question whether it is a matter here of an infrastructure which the public sector must supply, or a market segment, for which the state only establishes a framework.... The federal government should abandon its blanket approach, and say clearly which fields it wants in future to leave to private initiative, in which area it wants to promote private documentation systems or services, and in which specialties it wants to supply its own. Here one ought to draw distinctions among the different subject areas and functions, as well as among the different sorts of individuals to whom the services are addressed." One observation here certainly worth emphasizing is that the government should look systematically (and a list of criteria is given) not only at the advisability of new data banks which it might consider making available, but also at the appropriateness of existing data banks and services. One area in which extensive involvement by the government is held to be appropriate is that of education and training.

All of this is quite interesting, but we wonder to what extent it will correspond with the reality of the information provision scene in the future, anymore than in the past.

A look at Europe

Frost & Sullivan has issued a new report (price: US$1,500) called "Database Services Market in Western Europe", and you can perhaps judge for yourself the accuracy of the general perceptions that underly it

from this passage taken from the publicity brochure: "Among major European countries, the U.K. is well ahead in ranking, both nationally and as a European supplier. France is currently carrying out a concerted plan to expand its own natural sources and reduce dependence on U.S.-owned databases; while West Germany has in this instance been slower to adapt the new technology; and in Italy, growth is hindered by a conservative attitude to information technology and undeveloped transmission facilities. In technological terms, although EURONET successfully caters for present transnational communication, there is expected to be important development in inter-connection of public data networks and the expansion of privately-owned network carriers." We might also note that for purposes of market-sector forecasting, The Benelux, Scandinavia, Austria, Switzerland and Spain are lumped into a single category (while France, the United Kingdom, the FRG and Italy are treated separately). Data bases are divided into two classes: "reference" and "services/sources".

Who said what about jargon and acronyms?

Continuing in our recent tradition, we note the following headline from the 2 September 1983 issue of Communications International: "COMSAT ASKS FCC NOT TO NOTIFY ORBITAL SLOTS ON BEHALF OF ORION WITH IFRB". How many of you know what that sentence, by itself, might mean?