News, Trends and Comments

News

Software companies head list of merger/acquisitions in computer industry

Broadview Associates, who track this type of activity in the computer industry, have reported that 60% of the 146 mergers reported for the category in 1983 involved software companies. The total value of these transactions was US$1.01 billion.

Proposed US tax legislation encourages publishers to retain inventories

A bill has been introduced in the US Senate that would allow publishers to value unsold inventory at the cost of disposal. The bill's sponsor, Senator D.P. Moynihan, has said that the current status provides publishers with an incentive to destroy unsold books rather than storing them. This effectively works against works of academic merit which have a low demand, but over a long time period.

IBM announces videotex software for PC

Using the North American Presentation Level Protocol Syntax (NAPLPS) developed by AT&T and CBS, this software will be available by October 1984 at US$250.

Association of American Publishers takes position on developing country "piracy"

In testimony before a US Senate committee, the AAP has linked the piracy practices with the benefits accorded developing countries under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) legislation. GSP links trade beneficiary status with the protection of intellectual property. AAP stated: "It is not too much to require such countries to protect US intellectual property interests in exchange for the very substantial trade benefits accorded them under the GSP." Eleven of the top fifteen trade beneficiaries (1982 data) failed to provide such protection. The amount of such pirated works is said to be in excess of US$100 million annually.

IIIP

It is well known that government-supported or other formal participation by the USA in the activities of international information-sector organizations (e.g. ICSU/AB, FID, IIASA, CODATA, UNESCO-PGI) has in some cases been curtailed or abandoned, in others looks likely to be discontinued, and in yet others displays less than optimal coordination. Even the active interest among US authorities and individuals in what is going on elsewhere seems now, to some concerned observers - both within and outside of the USA - unduly low. A potential effort to counteract the situation has recently developed in the form of a proposed "Institute for International Information Programs". Perhaps surprisingly, it is the National Federation of Abstracting and Information Services (NFAIS) (a grouping of mainly not-for-profit data-base producers) which is behind this initiative. Funding and other necessary support for the IIIP is as yet questionable, and it may very well not actually get off the ground. If it does, we shall be very eager to see what it in fact can accomplish.

New arrangements

SDC Information Services has announced that it will open a new European marketing office in London on 1 October 1984 - the day on which the Derwent-SDC Search Service will go out of business. The new office, to be managed by Susan Inglis, will in the words of SDC be devoted "exclusively to supporting its ORBIT Search Service [located in Santa Monica, California] and marketing related products such as the ORBIT information retrieval system and the SearchMaster software package".

Telecommunications environment

Consider the following statements. "Charges [for telecommunication services] - be they high or low - based on considerations other than cost can seriously distort the growth and potential of electronic information services and are therefore regarded as undesirable interference and distortion." "... if data network services required cannot for any reason be provided by public Administrations, physical or legal obstacles should not be placed in the way of other bodies offering to provide the required service or services. " "... Administrations should not seek to discourage, delay, hinder, obstruct or forbid the connection of normal information equipment via approved interfaces.", and "should not discriminate for or against equipment on political, geographic or economic grounds, nor should approval, where necessary, be cumbersome, time-consuming or unreasonably expensive to obtain." "Administrations should recognise that, whereas their main preoccupations are inevitably national, the preoccupations of many of their customers in the information industry are inevitably continental and intercontinental." "Economic or political considerations on the part of Administrations should not be allowed to impact significantly on the viability of the information industry." "Any actions taken by Administrations to force all traffic on to public networks ... is ... regarded as undesirable interference."

These statements may appear slightly peculiar to some of our readers (i.e., specifically those in North America), but they indeed address

some of the frustratingly real problems which still confront the users of data communication facilities in western Europe. The "Administrations" are the various national telephone and telecommunication authorities (or PTTs - in most cases state monopolies). The quotations are excerpts from a set of ten guidelines concerning "Telecommunications for Publicly-available Information Services" issued in draft form (to its members) by the European Association of Information Services (EUSIDIC) on 30 May of this year. There is little new in these (here of course only implied) complaints, which have been voiced on many occasions (and likewise often in the pages of this journal) for years now. Nonetheless, EUSIDIC has managed to embody them succinctly and cogently in a two-page document which is very well written and sufficiently forceful - while avoiding the polemical tone that one might well have expected and has often detected in previous commentaries on the topic. Whether these proposed guidelines will have any effect on the attitudes or policies of the government authorities concerned is quite another matter. The chances seem very poor, at least for the near future.

Note that most of the statements quoted above correspond closely with the recently released draft recommendations endorsed by a group of US information industry executives concerned with questions of international telecommunications (see the Chronicle of International Communication, vol. 5 no. 3, April 1984, p. 3).

Updating

The Cataloging Distribution Service of the US Library of Congress has announced that it is now issuing, on a monthly basis, LC Subject Headings Weekly Lists - embodying new, changed and canceled subject headings and references, retroactive to January of this year. These reflect essentially the internal requirements of the library's Subject Cataloging Division, but the service is publicly available at a subscription rate of US$65 for 1984. Contact: Cataloging Distribution Service, Customer Services Section, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20541, USA; tel. (202) 287-6100.This move may serve to counteract somewhat one of the major reservations concerning the external usefulness of the LC Subject Headings: that they were not kept sufficiently up to date.

Proposed new research institute in The Netherlands

On 17 May, a special commission established to investigate the current state of research into information provision in The Netherlands submitted its final report to the minister for education and sciences, in his capacity as coordinator for science policy. The conclusion was that such research is not keeping pace with new technological developments, and that it must somehow receive further stimulus. The commission proposes an annual reserve, for this purpose, of Dfl.7 million (approx. US$2.26 million). The lion's share would go toward maintaining an institute for research into the (primarily applications-oriented aspects of) provision of information - via computer-based systems, libraries etc. Dfl.2 million would be, furthermore, allocated as a one-time start-up investment. The report emphasizes that too great a gap exists between scientific research and technology application. The provision

of medical information constitutes one of the few possible exceptions to this assessment. One additional suggestion of the commission, incidentally, was that data communications tariffs should be lowered.

Data bases

Datasolve (Sunbury-on-Thames, UK) has now, as earlier foreshadowed in these columns, announced the addition of The Washington Post ("Washington Post Library" - TWP) and The Guardian ("Guardian Library" - GDN) to its full-text World Reporter Service. The Washington Post file (which will not include local or sports news) is to be updated once a week, from tapes supplied by the newspaper itself. Guardian updates will also be weekly; text input will occur via Datasolve's optical scanning of facsimile proofs, using Kurzweil machinery. The Guardian deal represents an exclusive arrangement. Datasolve will also be offering a service called World Exporter (the first file is Plans and Projects Monitor), which is meant to be complementary to its World Reporter service.

Dow Jones News/Retrieval has mounted (exclusively) the full text of the Wall Street Journal, retroactive to 1 January 1984, with daily updates.

The DPB (Department of Printed Books, Reference Division, British Library) Catalogue is now available on BLAISE-Line. The present 550,000+ records will be augmented with about 1,000 new records weekly. Coverage is of post-1970 publications acquired since 1976 (Department of Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books acquisitions since 1980; India Office Library and Records acquisitions since 1983).

FIZ Technik (Frankfurt a.M., FRG) has added the file EK-MRA (produced by Hoppenstedt), which gives information on almost 1,900 technological equipment (measurement and testing apparatus, control devices, automation systems) manufacturers in the FRG, Austria and Switzerland.

Data-Star has added the companies data base Hoppenstedt Austria, as well as The Computer Database, and plans to mount Wiley's Medical Research Directory (on projects specifically in the United Kingdom).

BRS has now made its full-text American Chemical Society journals (see ISU vol. 3 no. 1/2, p. 77) available to its After Dark users.

SOLIS is a German-language data base containing references to the literature of sociology and peripheral areas, produced by the Informationszentrum Sozialwissenschaften in the FRG, and now accessible on IN-KA.

Now newly accessible on DIALOG are Canadian Business and Current Affairs (file 262, updated monthly, available since April), Investext (file 545, financial research reports from twenty-seven North American, European and Japanese investment banking firms, from Business Research Corporation, coverage from July 1982 onwards, weekly updates, available since April), Magazine ASAP (file 647, full text, coverage from January 1983 onwards, available since May), and Trade and Industry ASAP (file 648, full text, coverage from January 1983 onwards, available since May). DIALOG has reloaded the International Software Database (file 232, in April), which is now called ".MENU".

The files IBSEDEX and Laboratory Hazards Bulletin, previously announced, have now been made available on Pergamon InfoLine, which has also reloaded its version of Patlaw. As of 1 May, World Surface Coatings Abstracts is exclusive on this UK service.

SDC now has online the index to its Chemical Economics Handbook file (from SRI International).

DIMDI has mounted separate subfiles of the EMBASE (formerly Excerpta Medica) data base, and ESA-IRS intends to do the same. Royalty rates are lower than for the complete file.

HBR/Online (Harvard Business Review) has now gone up also on Mead Data Central's Nexis service.

The group of Sydoni legal files mounted on Télésystèmes-Questel (see ISU vol. 3 no. 5, p. 279) has now grown with the addition of Banque (banking regulations and law), Discompta (accountancy practices), and others.

Phycom, an online version of the Physicians' Desk Reference, is now available over the GTE Telenet Minet service. Access to the file itself is free.

ESA-IRS, DIALOG and Data-Star are all mounting the Business/Professional Software Database - a product of Information Sources inc. and Data Courier. The file lists 3,000 software packages available for use on mini- and microcomputers.

Negotiations have been underway to add US calls for tender to the TED (Tenders Electronic Daily) data bank maintained on ECHO, the online information retrieval service operated by the Commission of the European Communities in Luxemburg. TED added Japanese calls for tender in March of this year, and the file now has input from more than sixty nations. The CEC claims that TED represents about US$6 billion worth of potential business. The file is searchable in six different European languages (including English). ECHO is offering a special TED selective dissemination of information service via telex.

The Society of Manufacturing Engineers data base, as well as the Federal Research in Progress file (supplied by NTIS), are now searchable - offline - on the NRAC service.

Data bases withdrawn

BIOSIS	SDC
Surface Coatings Abstracts	DIALOG

Improved Japanese access to CAS Online; STN up and running

A dedicated data communication line between the Japan Association for International Chemical Information in Tokyo/Osaka and the Chemical Abstracts Service computer center in Columbus, Ohio, USA, went into service on 2 April. Just over a month later, on 7 May, the STN International (see our December 1983 issue, p. 343-345) connection between Karlsruhe, FRG, and Columbus went live - meaning that the new network system is now a reality.

EBIP

On page 278 of our previous volume, we reported briefly on the European Commission-supported exploratory European Biotechnology Information Project, centered at the British Library (Science Reference Library) in London. This project has now belatedly gotten off the ground, and is described in more detail in the April issue of British Library News, as well as in the June issue of SRL [Science Reference Library] News. An interesting aspect is that both Prestel (the UK videotex system) and DIMDI (the online information retrieval service in Köln, FRG) are to be involved in the project as information disseminators - but just how this will work in the case of the latter has not yet been made clear. The Prestel offering, called "Biotel", is already available, on *505109#. The new EBIP direct telephone number is (01) 379-6488.

US connection

Europe's most popular and most innovative online host, ESA-IRS, has now designated a US promotion and user-support agent, in the person of Donald V. Black (formerly with SDC) - in the name of Black's company, Information Services Associates of Los Altos, California.

Tools of the trade

R.R. Bowker (P.O. Box 1807, Ann Arbor, MI 48106; tel. (800) 521-8110) has recently published an approximately 700-page Subject Thesaurus for Bowker Online Databases, containing around 85,000 subject headings. Price: US$25 tentative. ISBN: 0-8352-1889-9.

Control Data (International Development Services) of Minneapolis has produced a thesaurus for its DEVELOP data bank (see ISU vol. 3 no. 6, p. 351).

The 1983-84 NTIS Title Index (Current) is available in microfiche on subscription (quarterly) for US$300 in North America (price elsewhere on request).

Last time, we announced that the second edition (first edition: 1974) of the PRECIS Manual was forthcoming. We can now inform you that it costs (in paperback) £8.50 (£7.95 in the UK), and may be ordered from the Sales and Payments Unit, British Library, Bibliographic Services Division, 2 Sheraton Street, London WIV 4BH, UK; tel. (01) 636-1544, ext. 242 or 284. The actual subtitle is "A Manual of Concept Analysis and Subject Indexing". ("PRECIS" stands for "PREserved Context Index System.)

The BLAISE-Line Mini Manual is available for £10 from the same address as given immediately above.

You may order the updated AWWA Waternet User Guide for US$6.90 (member price: $5) from American Water Works Association, Information Services Dept., 6666 West Quincy Avenue, Denver, CO 80235, USA; tel. (303) 794-7711.

"To provide a detailed and structured method for recording a number of mandatory and optional data elements in a computer-readable biblio-

graphic record for exchange purposes between two or more computer-based systems", and thereby "to facilitate the communication of bibliographic information among sectors of the information community in order to facilitate the communication of bibliographic information among computer-based systems, large and small, around the world", are the stated objectives of the Common Communication Format published this year by UNESCO in the context of its General Information Program (and UNISIST). The 185-page manual (PGI-84/WS/4) was prepared in cooperation with experts from Canada, France, Hungary, the United Kingdom, the United Nations and the USA. Editors are Peter Simmons and Alan Hopkinson. The format, which conforms in structure to the international standard ISO 2709, is meant to be expanded eventually, as circumstances dictate. One consideration lying behind the project was the lack of uniformity between standards favored on the one hand by libraries and national bibliographic agencies, and on the other by abstracting and indexing services.

Consultancy

In volume 3 number 4 we commented (p. 217-218) on the "code of practice for consultancy in Librarianship and information science" which had been distributed in draft form at the Institute of Information-Scientists (IIS) annual conference in the summer of 1983. This document has now been approved by the governing bodies of both the IIS and the Library Association of the United Kingdom. Just what this approval entails is not clear, and could be indeed a thorny question. ASLIB has, incidentally, not yet officially taken a stand on the code, so far as we know.

Library automation

The Canadian bibliographic utility UTLAS has recently opened a US office in White Plains, NY (701 Westchester Avenue, Suite 308W; tel. (914) 997-1495), under the responsibility of Joanna Rood. The company has also just released, under the name InfoQUEST, its microcomputer-based online public access catalogue software designed to operate on the IBM PC and compatible machines.

In the black

On 10 May, ASLIB announced that its 1983 accounts showed an operating surplus (£14,930) for the first time in five years. Also, the association's gross income exceeded £1 million for the first time.

New special librarianship journal

Blackwell Scientific Publications (P.O. Box 88, Oxford, UK) has announced the inauguration in 1984 of a new quarterly periodical under the title Health Libraries Review. Editors are Shane Godbolt (Charing Cross Hospital Medical School, London) and Paul Valentine (St.

Bernard's Hospital, Middlesex), who intend to treat even such topics as public health education, patient requirements, and talking books. The journal will incorporate the newsletter of the UK Library Association's Medical, Health and Welfare Libraries Group, and costs, for 1984, £33 (US$55; £27.50 in the UK).

Librarians to discuss practical applications of downloading/uploading

Hardware and software for downloading and uploading of online data bases and catalogues, utilization of downloaded data, uploading searches, and copyright implications are some of the topics scheduled to be addressed at the 1985 Congress for Librarians, 18 February of next year in Jamaica, NY. The organizers intend to select speakers by 1 September, and can be contacted at the address given in our Calendar of Events section.

BT to increase capacity

British Telecom intends to expand its domestic (PSS) and international (IPSS) packet-switched services, through the installation of new switching equipment - including new high-speed switches developed by GTE Telenet.

SDI on MDC

Mead Data Central (Nexis, Lexis) is now offering a selective dissemination of information service, under the name Eclipse. Cost is variable, depending on the files involved.

CLR issues bibliographic services and user needs report

The Council on Library Resources has announced the publication of Bibliographic Services and User Needs. Compiled and edited by Paul Peterson, the report is one result of a conference held at Linda Hall Library in December 1983 to review the progress of the Council's Bibliographic Service Development Program (BSDP) and to help determine future program directions. The thirty-two invited participants included research library administrators, foundation officers, network and computing center administrators, and library/communications school faculty.

The report consists of a summary of the opening session, the four keynote papers (including "Integrated academic information systems: the bibliographic interface" by Nina Matheson, and "The knowledge business: economic issues of access to bibliographic information" by Carlton Rochell), the discussion group reports, and the conference recommendations. A background paper providing information on BSDP progress, a bibliography of BSDP publications, the meeting agenda, and a list of participants are included as appendixes. Bibliographic Services and User Needs is available for US$10 (prepaid only) from the Council on Library Resources, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036, USA; tel. (202) 483-7474.

ISI Award

Each year, an Institute of Information Scientists jury selects to receive the Institute for Scientific Information Award, what it judges to be the best article published during the preceding year in the Journal of Information Science: Principles & Practice. The award winner this year is "Distributed expert problem treatment as a model for information system analysis and design", by N.J. Belkin, Thomas Seeger, and Gernot Wersig. This paper appears in volume 5 number 5, pages 153-167.

MCSA growth

More than 100 microcomputer software publishers and developers have joined the Microcomputer Software Association (MCSA), a section of the Association of Data Processing Service Organizations (ADAPSO). These companies include industry leaders such as Ashton-Tate, VisiCorp, Software Arts, Lotus Development, Peachtree Software, State-of-the-Art, Microsoft, Perfect Software, Micropro, Software Publishing, and Informatics General Corporation.

Formed in 1982, MCSA has established itself as a spokesman for the microcomputer software industry. In 1984, MCSA is furthermore developing a massive educational, advertising and promotional campaign to curb software piracy, as well as a brochure aimed at end-users and meant to explain the need for computer and software training, in addition to options available, and a survey on microcomputer support and training.

"MCSA has evolved through ADAPSO as the association which truly represents the microcomputer software industry", stated Jerome L. Dreyer, president of ADAPSO. "Since its formation, MCSA has established a clearinghouse for technical software protection techniques, published a survey on support strategies, acted as spokesman for the industry on legislation before Congress and regulatory agencies, and published an operating ratios study." ADAPSO, established in 1961, represents more than 650 corporate members marketing remote and batch processing services; mainframe, mini, and micro computer software; integrated computer hardware and software systems; professional services; and education and training.

People

BRS has appointed, as its new vice president of marketing, Mark Bayer - who was formerly with Disclosure inc.

After several years with the publications department of DIALOG, Barbara Anderson will take over as its manager of customer services (replacing Charles T. Meadow - who has become development manager for technology applications).

Dennis Rediker has become vice president of strategy and market development at Mead Data Central in Dayton, Ohio. Rediker came to MDC in 1983 from IBM. Until this promotion, he was MDC's director of systems product development.

Associated Information Managers, the IIA offshoot, has announced that its new chairman will be Herbert R. Brinberg, president of Aspen Systems Corporation and managing director of Wolters Samsom Group-US. Dr. Brinberg was also at one time (1976-1978) the chairman of the board of the IIA (Information Industry Association).

The new National Librarian of Canada, replacing Guy Sylvestre, is Marianne Scott. Ms. Scott had been director of libraries at McGill University in Montréal, Québec.

Edward C. Weiss has left the National Science Foundation in the USA, where he had been director of the Division of Information Science & Technology within the Directorate for Biological, Behavioral and Social Sciences. Weiss had been with the NSF since 1967. The position is in future to be held by successive individuals for terms of two years each. The first of these has yet to be named.

New managing director of the European branch of the Institute for Scientific Information is Peter Nichols, formerly marketing manager for Pergamon InfoLine.

The Library Association in the United Kingdom has a new chief executive in the person of George Cunningham, who was a Member of Parliament (Labour, then Social Democratic) from 1970 until 1983, and afterwards joined the BBC (external services). Like his predecessor, Keith Lawrey, he has no professional background in librarianship. Mr. Lawrey, incidentally, will become dean of the faculty of business and management at the Harrow College of Higher Education - a position similar to the one he held before coming to the Library Association.

Eugene Garfield, ISI president, is the most recent recipient of the John Price Wetherill medal of the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia.

Charles T. Meadow, who has served as editor of the Journal of the American Society for Information Science since volume 28 number 6 (November, 1977), has announced his intention to resign from this function. (Meadow had succeeded Arthur W. Elias, who was editor from 1962 until September 1977.) The publisher, John Wiley & Sons, in cooperation with the Society, is seeking a replacement for Dr. Meadow.

New Principal Information Officer at the Online Information Centre (housed by ASLIB in London) is Gerrie Turpie.

John A. Young, president of the Hewlett-Packard Company, has been awarded the 1984 William T. Knox outstanding information manager award, by the Associated Information Managers.

Roger Miller has been succeeded by Anne Filippone as vice president of sales and marketing at Source Telecomputing.

Dana Ellingen, ex DIALOG, and Debbie Dawson, consultant, have been named to marketing positions by Menlo Corporation, producer of In-Search, front end software for DIALOG services.

New director (previously acting director) of the Office of Planning and Development at the US Library of Congress is Robert G. Zich, who has been with the LC since 1963.

Winston Tabb has been appointed chief of the Information and Reference Division within the Copyright Office at the US Library of Congress. He replaces Michael S. Keplinger. Tabb had previously worked in

the Congressional Research Service and in the LC's General Reading Rooms Division.

The directorship of ESRIN (European Space Research Institute) in Frascati, Italy, has passed from Timothy F. Howell to Francis Roscian. One of ESRIN's operational programs is ESA-IRS, Europe's leading online information retrieval service.

Sir Basil Blackwell has died at the age of 94, on 9 April of this year.

Trends

Keeping up

Reflecting a perhaps interesting trend in the orientation and content of various existing online data bases, and presumably in user interests, DIALOG Information Services has announced the creation of a new category within its DIALINDEX file (no. 411). The category is called "Leisure". Presently indexed under this category are: Magazine Index, CAB Abstracts, GPO Monthly Catalog, National Newspaper Index and Newsearch. Three of these data bases come from Information Access Corporation.

Comments

Downloading

In May, the European Association of Information Services (EUSIDIC) distributed to its members yet another draft code of practice, this one addressing the subject of downloading - defined in the document as "the activity whereby a selection of records from a database is copied on the users [sic] own electronical storage device, with the intention of manipulation and multiple reuse of these data at future dates". Unsatisfactory as this definition for a number of reasons is, the draft code itself (comprising a set of "guiding principles" and a two-point recommendation) is even less so. The wording is imprecise and often unclear, and the perception of the problem which lies behind it seems oddly underdeveloped - even naïve. The document is a considerable disappointment, coming as it does from an organization which should represent some of the best, most creative thinking on the subject. The idea is that EUSIDIC members will offer (by the end of July), their comments on the draft code, which will then apparently be reissued after revision. Arguably, it would be preferable however for EUSIDIC to drop the whole undertaking, since recent and current developments in the information retrieval business - not to mention the likely course of future technological offerings - may render the need for such a code questionable to say the least. Earlier, EUSIDIC issued brief draft codes of

practice for data-base and data-bank producers, and for host services, which constituted useful bases for discussion among members.