

**Database Users Continue to Talk Back at Fall Meeting
Vendors and Producers Respond
Marjorie Hlava Elected ASIDIC President**

One of the most successful and well attended ASIDIC meetings took place at the Park Plaza Hotel, Boston, MA, on September 30 and October 1, 1985. The meeting brought together major players in the "information triangle" of users, database producers, and search vendors. The theme of the Spring 1985 meeting, "Database Users Talk Back," was continued; five speakers from industry, academia, and the U.S. Government presented their views on today's online services and databases. Similar themes ran through all the presentations; users are concerned with command languages, document delivery, training, and customer service. Two panels, one of database producers and the second of vendors, responded to the users' concerns. Program chair for the user portion of the meeting was Bill Bartenbach (H.W. Wilson Co.); chair for the two panels was Harry Allcock (IFI/Plenum Data Corp.). There was lively interest in the technical content of the meeting; a summary of the presentations appears later in this Newsletter.

Attendance was over 100, making the Fall 1985 meeting the best attended ASIDIC meeting in recent history. A major attraction was the traditional New England clambake held at the New England Aquarium and ably hosted by Dan Wilde (NERAC); the lobster eating teams performed admirably, leaving large mounds of hulks for the cleanup crew.

Election Results

As is customary at Fall meetings, elections for ASIDIC officers were held. The candidates were:

President: Marjorie Hlava (Access Innovations)
Full Member-at-large: Taissa Kusma (American Mathematical Society)
Robert Lormand (Lawrence Livermore Laboratory)
Associate Member-at-large: Joseph Bremner (Database Development)

Since all the candidates were unopposed and no further nominations were received from the floor, the entire slate was declared unanimously elected. Congratulations to all the new officers!

Parting words by David Grooms, outgoing President, and Marjorie's first column as President appear in this Newsletter. A complete list of all ASIDIC officers and committee chairs is attached.

Committee Reports

Scott Kostenbauder (IBM), Finance Committee chair, reported that because of the excellent financial health of ASIDIC, membership fees will not be raised in 1986. Eight new members have joined ASIDIC since the last meeting; they are listed in this Newsletter. Total membership now stands at 113, of which 72 are full members. The Executive Committee met before the meeting and recommended that changes to the Constitution and By-Laws be sent to the membership in time for consideration before a vote at the Spring meeting. Dan Wilde closed the Business Meeting by describing the evening festivities and urging everyone to be careful and not fall into the shark tank.

Spring Meeting

The Spring, 1986 meeting will be held at the La Posada de Albuquerque Hotel in Albuquerque, NM on March 23-25, 1986. Special programs will be arranged for the weekend so that attendees can avail themselves of excursion fares requiring a Saturday night stay.

The theme of the Spring meeting will be Optical Disks: Applications and Implications. Program arrangements are being handled by Jim Terragno (Pergamon Info-Line); speakers will include Morris Goldstein (IAC), Al Langer (Prentice-Hall), William Marovitz (BRS), Fran Spigai (Database Services), and Roger Summit (Dialog Information Services). The program will also include four speakers who are users of optical disk systems in their libraries or information centers. Emphasis of the program will be on real, in-place applications. With optical disks being the newest technology to appear in the information retrieval industry, this meeting will be a "can't miss" event. More detailed information will be distributed later when all the arrangements are finalized; meanwhile, be sure and mark the dates of this important event on your calendar.

Future Meetings

The Fall, 1986 meeting will be in New York on September 14-16, 1986. The Spring, 1987 meeting will be in New Orleans, and consideration is being given to Toronto as the site for the Fall, 1987 meeting.

President's Column
by Marjorie Hlava

It is a great pleasure for me to be elected President of ASIDIC. I appreciate the vote of confidence from all of you and look forward to an exciting coming year. The program in Boston was a success. (Special thanks to Bill Bartenbach for chairing the meeting and to Dan Wilde for the superb local arrangements.) Everyone had a wonderful time at the clambake and listened with great interest to things that were said and not said by the panel members. As a followup to that, the Albuquerque meeting will concentrate on practical applications of optical disks. Vendors who have implementation already well on the road and products in the marketplace will be our prime speakers, as well as users from test sites.

The Executive Committee seems to retain the feeling that we should not take strong stands on policy issues for the industry, but rather continue to learn as quickly as we can about forthcoming events and technologies and how they will affect the products which we have to offer. I believe that the Boston and Albuquerque meetings reflect this theme. As we continue to provide a forum for discussion, we can all continue to learn and grow professionally and within our own organizations. Best regards.

Past-President's Column
by David Grooms

As I relinquish the Presidency of ASIDIC, I do so with the feeling that the duties are being transferred into the quite capable hands of Marjorie Hlava. Marjorie is well known in the circles of the information business. I'm sure ASIDIC is in for continued success as an organization with Marjorie at the helm.

Speaking of success, ASIDIC has had continued steady growth over the past two years in terms of membership. The financial condition is sound, and the semiannual meetings especially during 1985 were a resounding success. This is a reflection of the "Professional" volunteerism exhibited by ASIDIC members to make it a success. To me, the membership growth is an indication of the usefulness of the forum created by ASIDIC meetings to discuss topics of mutual interest in an informal setting. I'm sure we all can expect to continue to receive this kind of benefit from our ASIDIC association.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you who have personally helped me with the activities of ASIDIC during the last two years. This includes Jeanette Webb, the Secretariat of ASIDIC; the members of the Executive Committee--Rita Lerner, Marjorie Hlava, Taissa Kusma, Dennis Auld, and Bob Lormand; and the Program Chairs--Maureen Kelly, Scott Kostenbauder, Cathy Ferrere, and Dave Grossman. A special thanks goes to Donald Hawkins for all the nice work he does on the *ASIDIC Newsletter*.

Book Reviews
by Helen Citron

1985-86 Encyclopedia of Information Systems and Services. 6th Edition. Detroit, Gale, 1985, 2 volumes.

The 6th edition is 35% larger than the 5th. Volume 1 contains the international part, with volume 2 containing the U.S. information. Special attention has gone into expanding the publication section of each entry. Electronic mail information is also available with each entry. Indexing has also improved.

Information is given about organizations previously indexed who did not reply with updated information. But more importantly, organizations which are new have been included if only with abbreviated entries. This work is a useful source for data about systems and services.

Library Personnel Management, by Herbert S. White. White Plains, NY, Knowledge Industry Publications, 1985. 214p.

White, dean of the Indiana University School of Library and Information Science, maintains that library managers must examine their own unique environments and must work accordingly. He takes to task those management theorists who claim to have found some simple, single key to management. He makes it clear that successful managers of library personnel are not always people who would win popularity contests. They are people who can analyze the resources available and the tasks that need doing and who can get the tasks done with the resources available.

Contents include discussions of all management areas. Of particular note are:

- reconciling organizational and individual objectives,
- adapting to changes in technology,
- career development, training and continuing education,
- wage and salary administration,
- present and future issues for library managers.

New Members

ASIDIC welcomes the following new members:

Federal Document Retrieval, Inc.
514 C St. N.E.
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Ron Cornick & Associates
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NewsBank, Inc.
58 Pine St.
New Canaan, CT 06840
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Derwent, Inc.
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Mr. Jeffrey L. Foreman

The Jackson Laboratory
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Ms. Alison J. Baker

Information on Demand
P.O. Box 9550
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Ms. Reva Basch
Fall, 1984 Meeting Papers Distributed

The April, 1985 issue of *Information Services and Use*, containing the papers presented at the Fall, 1984 meeting in Georgetown was recently distributed to all ASIDIC members.

Cranfield Conference Announced

The 10th Cranfield International Conference on Mechanized Information Transfer will be held July 22-28, 1986 at the Cranfield Institute of Technology, Cranfield, England. Areas to be covered include database creation, storage and dissemination, retrieval, and influence on information flow. Further information is available from the Cranfield Conference Secretariat, c/o The Institution of Electrical Engineers, Savoy Place, London, WC2R 0BL, England.

FALL MEETING SUMMARY

Information Services at 3M.

Victoria K. Veach, 3M Corporation.

3M is a diverse company with over 87,000 employees and 40 product lines. Their information group offers technical library and information services, patent searching, current awareness, and has its own systems support. In 1984, they did over 6,300 searches, 39% of which were done by the technical library, 28% by the business library, and 19% by the patent library. Searches range in length from a few minutes to over an hour; in 1984, 3M used nearly 1,600 hours of connect time. Their heavily-used databases are *Chemical Abstracts*, Derwent, Claims, Predicasts, Medline, Nexis, INSPEC, and Excerpta Medica; vendors used are Dialog, BRS, STN, SDC, Mead, NLM, Info-Line, Dow-Jones, and Questel. A major factor in choosing databases for searches is information content, followed by cost. If abstracts are available, they are obtained. Factors in choosing a vendor are software features and familiarity with them.

Major problems are system crashes, response time, the "all ports full" message, and exclusive databases. Databases should be better indexed; more should have abstracts. Wider use of SIC codes and Registry Numbers would be useful. Databases covering Japanese information, international business, and the availability of translations are needed, as are those specific to industries (e.g. adhesives, abrasives, medical statistics, and physical properties).

A universal search language would be a major system improvement, even if only for details such as truncation character, logoff command, etc. With today's plethora of systems, people do not want or need to learn another one. It would be useful to search combinations of related files, and receive output with the search terms highlighted. Printing the toll-free help number online at logon was suggested. Regional printing centers might reduce delays in receipt of offline prints.

Systems not providing tailored print formats should do so; direct addressing of prints would be useful for a geographically dispersed company. The "continue printing?" message on SDC should be deleted. It is important for those designing databases to have a technical knowledge of the subject they are covering as well as a market knowledge.

Training is sometimes difficult to obtain, especially in the Midwest. Trainers need both system and subject expertise; often they lack enough subject knowledge to train effectively. Advanced training sessions should not be allowed to degrade into lower-level sessions when novices are present.

Columbia University Search Services.
Suzanne Fedunok, Columbia University

Columbia spends \$4 million per year on information, including \$50,000 on online services. An active end user searching program has reduced the number of library searches 25%. Most of their librarians are "holistic," providing all types of services; on-line searching is only a small part of their job. They do much multidisciplinary searching and use almost every existing database. In an academic environment, with long-term research projects, timeliness is often not a major consideration. Columbia's library system is decentralized, with 20 branches, so they need many passwords. They would like to combine them under master accounts to qualify for the maximum discount. They also need better billing and accounting because all their usage is billed back to users.

Training poses a problem because it is costly, time consuming, and not very effective. The library staff has too large a workload to spend time training end users. With so many new databases to learn, advance training and access to training files would be useful so that people could learn the database before they have to use them in the real world. More advance documentation is needed.

Data quality needs to be improved; many databases (especially nonbibliographic ones) do not identify the source of their information. Online retrieval is chaotic; it has no standards and resembles libraries 100 years ago before catalog standards were developed. Many librarians are used to working with authority files and are uncomfortable with free text access.

Online Use at Information on Demand. (IOD)
Reva Basch, Information on Demand

80% of IOD's projects involve online searches; 80% of those are in the business area. They spend \$5,000-7,000 a month for online services. Problems include shallow or nonexistent indexing, lack of abstracts in many databases, no way to eliminate duplicates, poor data quality, and the lack of standards. Many of IOD's customers are computer literate but information ignorant. They expect a database for everything as well as artificial intelligence in the search process! Many customers do not know how to use the output from a search.

Database selection is a balancing act; weaknesses of one are balanced by the strengths of others. Most of IOD's searches use many databases; a major selection criterion is the presence or absence of abstracts. The major cost consideration is, "Can we afford Nexis?". Indexing is important; therefore a short time lag is acceptable. Treatment codes are useful, as is the ability to limit to major concepts. Although full text newspaper files

can be valuable, they are used with caution because of costs. Regional information (especially on Japan) is needed, also information on state and local governments.

IOD searchers will not use a system that does not have proximity operators, nor a system with large up-front fees. They need better documentation, improved customer service, more training sessions, and longer hours of availability (particularly on Sunday). If the system is heavily loaded, an indication at logon would be useful. Other features needed are duplicate elimination, consistency in standard field labels, common command languages, left-hand truncation, and the ability to emulate other systems. Differences between systems should either be trivial or so significant that the choice is clear.

Searching Needs at Tufts University.

Ray Gerke, Tufts University

Although many searchers have called for a common command language, it probably will not arrive soon; new front end software packages may eliminate the need. A major need is customer service, particularly relating to new databases. Training programs should be examined; one system was advertised as being so user-friendly that documentation was not needed, but the library had to write a supporting manual! Help with searches must be taken seriously by the vendors; many searchers must learn many systems and databases. Online help (at a reduced price) may help searchers over some difficulties, but standards for customer service are still needed.

DuPont's Search Services.

Patricia Dorler, DuPont

DuPont has had centralized indexing and information retrieval services since the 1960's. Today, intermediary specialists do in-depth training in systems, databases, and company technology as well as searching; end users do only a limited amount of bibliographic searching, going to intermediaries for their advanced needs. Search requesters receive only formal reports from intermediaries; no raw output is given to them. Major vendors used are SDC and Dialog; major databases are Derwent, *Chemical Abstracts*, and Claims. Frequently, there is little choice of vendors because of exclusive databases. Derwent is searched on SDC because DuPont searchers are familiar with SDC's software; *Chemical Abstracts* is accessed on STN because it is all in one file, has the abstracts, and because Registry Number crossover is simple. Problems with SDC are the "continue printing?" message and the lack of the search profile on offline prints. Slow delivery of offline prints remains a problem with all services. Customer service before 11 A.M. Eastern time is difficult or does not exist.

In a patent-oriented environment, comprehensiveness is important, so thorough indexing and value-added databases are necessary. DuPont's main problems with databases lie in the area of indexing; they go to database producers for resolution. Indexing tends to be not current and lags new technology. More retrospective databases (before 1970) are needed; producers must realize that technology did not start in 1970. DuPont is still selling materials developed in the 1930's (nylon, for example) and often needs retrospective information.

Searchers are busy and cannot afford time for long training sessions; four hours is the optimum. Courses should be clearly advertised so attendees know what to expect; trainers should not teach to the lowest level of ability among the attendees. Finally, there needs to be more cooperation between database producers and vendors.

U.S. Patent Office Needs.

David Grooms, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO)

The PTO both produces and uses databases, spending nearly \$1 million for searching in 1985. With this volume, invoicing is a major concern. The lack of machine-readable invoices means that large amounts of paper must be handled, checking bills takes months, and it is difficult to keep control of the budget. The PTO asked for invoices on tape and was told that they were the only one asking; one vendor quoted \$10,000 for development work to produce machine-readable invoices. An online accounting file would be better than today's system; the user could download it and use it as needed.

Document delivery mechanisms need improvement. Searching without access to the documents does not help users; they perceive a lack of access to information. There should be a coalition between database producers and document delivery vendors. Customer service is necessary in all areas of information delivery; vendors need to touch customers occasionally, even if just to greet them.

DATABASE PRODUCER PANEL

Speakers on the producer and vendor panels gave short presentations on new developments in their organizations and responded to users' concerns.

Tom Aitchison, INSPEC.

INSPEC obtains customer input in the following ways:

⊕ Reports from representatives and Information Scientists who go to conferences, do searches, and gather opinions,

- ⊗ Visit reports circulated among the staff,
- ⊗ Close liaison with online service vendors,
- ⊗ Input from tape subscribers, and
- ⊗ Newly-formed special interest groups in various subject areas.

In response to user requests, INSPEC developed EMIS (Electronic Materials Information Service), launched *IT Focus* (with less technical abstracts for managers), added Copyright Clearance Center Codes to the database, and increased their coverage of Japanese literature. INSPEC encourages the British Library to subscribe to everything in the database so that users can use the library's excellent document delivery service.

Joseph Caponio, NTIS

NTIS, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, is continually striving to improve the quality of its abstracts. Even after 40 years, document delivery remains an issue. Their Japanese coverage has been expanded by agreements with Japan for an exchange of technical reports, but usage remains small.

Morris Goldstein, Information Access Corp. (IAC)

IAC faces the problem of a growing customer base, causing problems with large customers finding lines busy; even with the installation of 10 new toll-free lines, they lose about 60 calls a day. To provide better training, IAC has its own program and offers about 100 sessions/year. They have developed new manuals and give free time on their databases to new users.

IAC's databases continue to grow; over 700,000 records will be added this year. A new inputting and editing system has improved quality; subject authority controls are being revised. IAC continues to use the LC subject headings because of their orientation to the public and academic library markets, but they have augmented the headings where necessary. Unique company codes in their databases are coming.

IAC is exploring the use of new technology with their Info-Trak system, which uses a laser disk and PC's to access their databases. It offers the best features of the microfilm and on-line worlds. The PC-modem combination allows the user to access the laser disk for the retrospective information, then go online with the same terminal to get the more recent data. There is an automatic cross referencing facility as well as the ability to scroll through the database. The system is highly reliable, simple to use, and has all the advantages of a fixed price system.

Lois Granick, PsycINFO

When asking for improvements to databases, users must be aware of the many tradeoffs involved. Some of the considerations a database producer goes through are:

- ⊗ There is a fine line between more information in abstracts and a document surrogate. Should there be more information? Should it be more specific? More information will move us closer to providing document surrogates, which take extensive time to build and degrade timeliness and currency.
- ⊗ Database producers must decide between getting their product up on as many services as possible and looking for systems that enhance databases to produce a better product.
- ⊗ When updating indexing terminology, how does one resolve potential inconsistencies between new terminology and older terms? Retroactive indexing is expensive; how does one apply new terms to old records?
- ⊗ How much time should be spent on data quality?
- ⊗ If a search produces duplicates across databases, how does one decide from which database duplicates should be eliminated?

Edward Kennedy, BIOSIS

BIOSIS' objective is to be comprehensive in its field. It is adding patents to its database for the first time in 1986. New databases, Zoological Record and Biobusiness, have been developed in response to user demand. BIOSIS cannot provide document delivery but helps users find copies when possible. Free training sessions are provided.

BIOSIS is continually trying to find ways to improve database quality and change their indexing without introducing difficulties into the retrospective files. Strict quality controls help BIOSIS to maintain its reputation for quality.

William Koch, American Institute of Physics (AIP)

AIP is a group of professional societies totaling 85,000 members. It publishes about 110,000 pages of journal articles a year and produces the SPIN and other databases. Journals are produced by computer photocomposition; the tapes become input to AIP's databases. The databases are therefore very current; sometimes items appear in SPIN as much as two months before printing. AIP therefore hopes to educate physicists to use SPIN; many physicists do not use databases except for retrospective information requirements. AIP is watching the optical disk market and considering this medium for their databases.

James Kolleger, EIC/Intelligence

Issues must be addressed in the context of the marketplace which is in a state of flux. Intermediaries and end users form two distinct markets.

Intermediaries are often interested in fast changing areas; they access material to track technology. Since they are selective, the quality of the information is more important to them than its quantity.

The end user market is different; products designed for intermediaries cannot be simply cloned for end users. Databases must be simple, with easily used software. After a market study, EIC developed a database designed for end users in the telecommunications area. It is a purely electronic product updated hourly; the software is simple to use. EIC found that over half their usage came from senior managers.

The computer industry provides a model for the information industry. How many kinds of hardware and software are needed? Recently, there has been a consolidation of the industry, with defacto standards and major players emerging. The same thing will happen in the information industry; how many different patent databases, for example, are needed? Successful organizations will have market focus, control of the distribution network, control of costs, and be innovative.

VENDOR PANEL

Daniel Wilde, NERAC

NERAC is in the problem solving business; 85% of their business is comes from repeat customers. They are in business to satisfy their customers and cannot afford a "take it or leave it" attitude. Customers should be treated as if their problems are unique and not forced to learn awkward and differing systems; NERAC does that for them. Repeat business is critical and keeps the organization alive.

P. James Terragno, Pergamon Info-Line

Info-Line was acquired by Pergamon in 1980 with two databases. It has since grown to 40 databases and is adding one or two a month. Major subjects are patents, business, engineering, and technology; major customers are large corporate libraries and patent organizations. The software is based on Battelle's BASIS system, but it has been extensively customized and made to look like other major vendors. The innovative *get* command performs a statistical analysis on search results; it was developed in response to user requests.

Info-Line has automatic document ordering and a direct link with Information on Demand to reduce turnaround time. A full schedule of training is offered and is considered an important way to get feedback. They are working on improving their invoicing procedures. Complete feedback on users is provided to database producers.

Roger Summit, Dialog Information Services

A major goal of Dialog is to maximize customer satisfaction. They obtain user feedback from training sessions, customer service lines, Update sessions, exhibits at conferences, and direct calls. New system features under development include:

- ⊗ Dialmail, Dialog's electronic mail service, will debut on November 1. It will allow overnight delivery of offline prints to the user's mailbox. Direct addressing of offline prints is still under development.
- ⊗ Some large databases that have been split because of their size will be reunited. In particular, *Chemical Abstracts* will be unified before year end.
- ⊗ Customer service is staffed by people with MLS degrees. It will be open 24 hours a day before year end.
- ⊗ Invoices are being redesigned; the new ones will be introduced by June, 1986. It will be possible to get accounting information online.
- ⊗ Dialog-developed PC software will be available by year end.
- ⊗ Password masking and a search editor will also be available by year end.

Dialog's training department tries to screen attendees and tells its trainers to train high and not waste attendees' time. Additional training rooms in New York and Washington have been obtained and are used by database producers.

John Regazzi, H.W. Wilson Co.

Wilson's search system, Wilsonline, has 20 databases. Its primary market is libraries. Those who do much searching want a more powerful system, but public and school librarians want a less sophisticated software. A common command language may be feasible or desirable, but it is hard to be all things to all people. Functionality is important; Wilsonline has a rename command allowing the user to emulate other vendors.

Wilson's goal is to have the system up 99% of the time with 90% of all responses made within 3 seconds. In the first 10 months

of operation, these goals have been met. In a system offering databases from many producers, the user may be confused whether to go to the vendor or producer for training; Wilson does not have that problem. They have issued a tutorial guide; substantial informal training occurs on the toll-free customer service lines.

Data quality is a major concern; the Wilson system allows easy and frequent editing. Records are added to the system daily. Subject headings can be changed at any time and applied retroactively to the entire database if desired. Cross references are automatically generated; a user entering an obsolete term is automatically switched to the new one.

Jacques Michel, Questel

Questel's income in 1985 will be about \$10 million, 70% of it from France. A range of databases is offered, including *Chemical Abstracts*, a substructure searching system (DARC), *Derwent*, and *Index Chemicus*. The software is complex; the more intelligent a system is, the more difficult it is to have a common command language.

Users and database producers have different needs; the user wants a simple pricing scheme and an explicit invoice. Producers have other requirements. It is difficult to provide online accounting for complicated systems like DARC.

Cross database searching will be offered under Questel Plus; *Derwent* will be linked with *Chemical Abstracts* and *Merck Index*.

Online searching is now reaching a plateau; companies must diversify to continue growing. New technology, such as CD-ROM databases, provides this opportunity. The ADONIS project is being developed to provide optical disk delivery of about 500 journals.

Cynthia Hull, SDC

Running an online business is like changing a tire while the car is moving; one false move and you get run over! Systems are built differently; a common command language may require a complete software rewrite. ORBIT provides rename and terminal profile commands so that the user can emulate other systems. The uniform treatment of databases may make some people unhappy.

SDC interacts with database producers to provide them with statistics on users if they desire them. Complaints about the database are passed back to the producer.

Dale Baker, Chemical Abstracts Service

The origins of ASIDIC can be traced, in part, back to Chemical Abstracts Service, when a need was expressed for producers, vendors, and users to discuss common problems. Now there are two associations with this goal; why does ASIDIC not merge with NFAIS?

There are many barriers to a unified system; technological barriers can be overcome, but the political, legal, and financial ones are large. A single system would be efficient but not the best because there would be no competition, no challenges, and no new ideas.

STN was founded to establish direct interaction between database producers and users. They wanted to provide superior services, not be "just another vendor." Users say they have succeeded. STN's network of decentralized centers mounting different databases under the same software will grow with the addition of JICST in Japan. STN provides a high quality customer service, with about 10 people presenting over 250 workshops a year. A CAI program is being developed to train new CAS ONLINE users.

The document delivery problem will not be solved for a long time. By the year 2000, about 25% of the journal articles will be digitized. CAS provides an extensive document delivery service and has delivered over 100,000 documents to customers since the service began.

Japanese literature is covered comprehensively in CA. There are over 275 people in Japan providing input to them.

CAS is totally committed to customer service: "If you think something is more important than a customer, think again."

The meeting closed with a tribute to Dale Baker in honor of his retirement later this year.

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