

BOSTON, WASHINGTON MEETINGS COVERED NONBIBLIOGRAPHIC DATABASES, NEW TECHNOLOGIES OF PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND USE OF INFORMATION SERVICES

Nonbibliographic databases and the new technologies for production and distribution of information services in the 1980's were the themes of the September, 1979, and March, 1980, ASIDIC meetings.

Boston's Parker House Hotel was the site of the fall meeting that concentrated on the nonbibliographic databases. This well organized meeting was hosted by NERAC, under the direction of ASIDIC President, Dan Wilde, and his staff, led by Jean Carter. A special part of the Boston meeting was the special Monday evening clam bake and dolphin show at the famed New England Aquarium.

ASIDIC and NFAIS (the National Federation of Abstracting and Indexing Services), held a joint meeting at the Sheraton National Hotel in Arlington, Virginia, the first week of March, 1980. NFAIS acted as organizing host for the conference that took up three full days and offered a wide assortment of views and insights in to the technology of information service production and distribution that will impact on the industry during the 1980's.

The Boston meeting will be reported in this issue of the newsletter. The joint NFAIS/ASIDIC meeting held in March will be reported in the newsletter issue that will be delivered the first week in June.

NONBIB DATABASES SOURCE, ANSWER ORIENTED, NOT REFERENCE TOOLS: USERS, APPLICATIONS DIFFERENT, CHALLENGING FOR TRADITIONAL LIBRARY OR INFORMATION INTERMEDIARY DELIVERY STYLES

Traditional libraries and information centers in the 1980's will be pushed to examine their role as information resource centers. To broaden their service base and effectiveness in any organization, the libraries will have to learn to apply nonbibliographic databases on a regular basis. This was the main message presented to the fall 1979 ASIDIC meeting by Judith Wanger, leadoff speaker at the meeting.

Wanger, with Cuadra Associates, Inc., pointed out that nonbibliographic databases are usually source files of information and are not referral files that point users to source documents and information. This difference is significant in the way these databases are used and who is using them. According to Wanger, users of nonbibliographic files tend to be departmental end users. The traditional library intermediaries who search bibliographic systems and systems and databases are noticeably absent from user groups of nonbib files.

Nonbibliographic databases can be classed as numeric, text/numeric, properties, or full text. Most nonbibliographic databases and systems are user oriented and flexible to apply. They are used to control, retrieve or manipulate, and format reports from information in the files available to the user. The traditional bibliographic files allowed retrieval and only slight manipulation of output formats with no real manipulation or change occurring in the information file.

While usage of nonbibliographic databases is significantly greater in terms of dollars spent than bibliographic files, there are problems of standardization and representation of numeric and other nonbib files not present in most bibliographic files. The great diversity in scope and structure among nonbib files,

combined with subject expertise or training in evaluating and applying the files, are problems and challenges for traditional libraries and information centers to deal with in expanding their reach as information resources.

HIGH PRICED, ELABORATE NONBIB SYSTEMS ARE READY

John J. Quann, of the Goddard Space Flight Center, demonstrated a prototype population and demographic information system built on census information that was developed on a sophisticated satellite reporting and mapping system. Colorful, responsive, and too costly to be practical under current configurations, the technologies of a state of the art scientific and engineering system can work for population and demographic data. Mr. Quann emphasized that the government is not spending great amounts of money to bring this system into widespread use. Its applications are mostly for demonstration purposes.

Even though such sophisticated systems are now not economically feasible, they will be someday, and they are keyed to numeric and modeling information bases.

PRACTICALITY OF NONBIBLIOGRAPHIC DATABASES AT BELL LABS

Don Hawkins, a familiar speaker to past ASIDIC meetings, brought attendees back into today's applications of nonbib files as he told of the experiences with such databases at Bell Labs. Hawkins talked about the online applications of handbooks of properties, an essential ingredient in the daily work of engineers and scientists at the Labs.

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These nonbibliographic files present problems to librarians if they are not technical subject specialists with a high degree of training. "Librarians tend to fear numbers," according to Hawkins. Also, there is no numeric database supermarket such as exist with the bibliographic files. The software for manipulating, searching, or controlling nonbib files is very diverse. There are special contract and purchase agreements for some files that are vastly different than for most bibliographic files.

In many cases, according to Hawkins, there is little connection between bibliographic and a nonbib database, which makes it strange for users from the library community to get used to. Many nonbib files are infrequently and sometimes never updated.

ROPER CENTER STUDIES, MEASURES SOCIETIES

While not in the conventional database business, whether numeric or bibliographic, the Roper Center collects and analyzes data and produces studies and reports on conditions in society. The activities and services of the Roper Center, part of the University of Connecticut, were outlined by William J. Gammell.

The story of data gathering manipulation and report generation show how non-bibliographic information services fit into the "information chain."

GE INFORMATION SERVICES NETWORK SPANS THE GLOBE - WORLD'S LARGEST

Carol Herrick described briefly the organization and functions of the world wide General Electric Information Services Company. With over 600 nodes in 60 countries, GE serves organizations with raw computer power and with a library of over 1,800 programs for management applications. Also, user oriented languages for data analysis and manipulation and report generating are available with timely, dependable and accurate performance.

Herrick showed the vast network of interconnected computers and communications facilities GE supports. With sales of about \$500,000,000 annually, this operation dwarfs the entire bibliographic industry.

Long before Euronet was functional, GE was serving many more European areas than Euronet ever will. With the packages of planning and analysis and reporting systems, as well as custom applications for many clients, the future for GE is bright.

Herrick pointed out that bibliographic and nonbib files structure and storage requirements are vastly different and may never be harmonized without significant changes in system and application software that handles these files.

DUALABS DUO LEADS SOCIAL SCIENCE DB 'EXPERIENCE'

Monday afternoon of the meeting was devoted to a "learn by doing" session conducted by John C. Beresford and Rebecca E. Hutchins, both of Dualabs of Arlington, Virginia.

Interleafing practical database building and coding small group sessions with lectures and demonstrations, the area of social science databases, including census files and population studies information, was explored. The problems of data definitions, coding, gathering and transcription with common meanings were explored.

Small groups carried out population counts involving different aspects or characteristics of the groups determined through questionnaires. Sample size, bias errors and confidence factors in result presentations were factors highlighted during the afternoon.

One attendee commented, "The data gathering and validation process on the scale of significant national studies is mind boggling. I'll stick to abstracting

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and indexing." Another said, "I'm not sure if I learned - but I appreciated."

INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS, OPPORTUNITIES REAL FOR INFO PRODUCERS, USERS

Gesina Carter, of the National Academy of Sciences, reviewed data activities going on in the U.S. and on an international level for ASIDIC attendees.

Carter reviewed the history of the Numerical Data Advisory Board and the cooperation between the National Academy of Sciences and the National Bureau of Standards. She also touched on the cooperation between ICSU and CODATA, the ASM, the Euronet development between European governments.

Problems in numeric databases are of international concern, according to Carter. Can the characterization or the source of the data be trusted? The nonuniformity of data presents difficult problems that can slow research and reporting of important findings. System query and manipulation problems also are important for database producers and users. The proper identification of data sources is logical, but cannot be assumed and is not controlled the way it should.

Database producers need to work closely with users, have ongoing evaluation of the databases and delivery systems, and must have close ties to the data originator. The great diversity of database producers makes for coordination problems in the areas of data gathering activities, sponsoring organizations, user need identification and response, formats of database use and delivery, and the techniques of presenting the best data in the best ways to the greatest number of users possible.

More attention to evaluation of all stages of data gathering, presentation, and usage, compilation of data more uniformly, coordination of data gathering, and better graphics presentation capabilities

are the greatest needs in this market at the present time, according to Carter.

PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL DATA CHALLENGES

David R. Lide, Jr., a U.S. delegate to CODATA from the National Bureau of Standards, gave an example of the workings of physical and chemical data files in machine readable form.

In 1963 NBS started the National Standard Reference Data System - NSRDS - to report, uniformly and accurately, scientific data results. With the advent of computerized files, the premium on reliability of data will increase, according to Lide. "The printed page is still very versatile... computer formats are yet as flexible," he said. With improvements in systems as the user base of computerized analysis systems increases and makes the economics more favorable, great strides in physical and chemical data systems should occur.

NUMERICAL DB COPYRIGHT PROBLEMS

Viktor Hampel, of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, reminded the ASIDIC attendees that the actual number in numeric files are not copyrightable, but that the manner or method of presentation of the information or data is. CODATA recently recommended a \$36,000 study of the question of copyrighting numerical data to UNESCO.

CHEMICAL ABSTRACTS CHEMICAL REGISTRY DATABASE

Chemical Abstracts has a large scale problem of identifying and naming molecular structures. The Chem Abs computerized system helps to identify and name chemical structures at a rate of about 7,000 each week. The role of the CAS system and how it fits into the overall CAS functions were described briefly by David W. Weisgerber, of the CAS staff.

MAPS ARE DATABASES TOO - DIGITIZATION, ORGANIZATION EXPLORED

Gary W. North, of the U.S. Geological Survey, concluded the fall 1979 ASIDIC meeting speakers by describing the cartographic database of the U.S. Geological Survey. The modern maps, captured as photographs in space by planes or satellites, become a database with interesting structural and management challenges when they are stored in computers.

North briefly described how maps are classified and recalled for users in the systems used by his organization. The storage of digitized maps presents problems distinct from bibliographic databases. Taking parts or portions of a captured map as the "source document" for a user or management application is a challenge facing map database managers regularly. How the new computerized systems handle such challenges was discussed by North.

REUSE, REPACKAGING OF INFORMATION SERVICES TOPIC OF FALL ASIDIC MEETING IN ATLANTA

The premise, "Reuse or repackaging of information services by intermediate or end users be inhibited," causes strong reactions among all sectors of the information community. This premise, carries far reaching implications for database producers, information centers, and a wide range of end users. It will be explored in detail at the fall 1980 ASIDIC meeting, September 21-23, at the Marriott Hotel in downtown Atlanta, Georgia.

Herb Nobles, ASIDIC program chairman, has said that final details for a program insuring views from, "all parties to this key premise," are nearly complete. The full program will be announced in the early June issue of this newsletter.