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## Who? What? Where?

If those agencies—either public or private—that make grants and contracts for research are to allocate their grants wisely and without duplication, they need to know about each other's activities. They need to know who is getting grants for what projects and where the work is being done.

Recognition of the need for this kind of information by the Government agencies granting aid for medical research led to the setting up of several information exchanges following the dissolution of the Office of Scientific Research and Development in 1946. The largest of these was the Office of Exchange of Information in the Public Health Service. As the number of grants and the amounts granted by Government and cooperating non-government agencies increased (from \$4.3 million in 1946 to \$33 million in 1949) the separate exchanges were consolidated, and the service was shifted to the National Research Council to simplify interagency support and was given a name that more clearly expressed its function; the Medical Sciences Information Exchange.

By 1953, the exchange was assembling information about awards that totaled \$56 million and had expanded into the fields of biology and psychology. For administrative reasons, the service was shifted again, this time to the Smithsonian Institution, and its name was changed to the Bio-Sciences Information Exchange to reflect its larger scope. The expansion of the exchange has continued: it now has registered with it some 17,000 active research projects; new grants for fiscal 1958 totaled 11,897, of which 9706 were made by Government agencies and 2191 by non-Government agencies; the grants totaled \$164 million, of which \$134 million was granted by Government and \$30 million by non-Government agencies.

The information offered by the exchange is obtained from an elaborate index—there are more than 6000 subject categories—based upon the reports of research projects prepared by investigators who apply for grants either to Government or the major non-Government agencies. The data so supplied are transferred to punch cards, and the information can be rapidly assembled according to whatever criteria are selected. Cooperating agencies, committees, and properly qualified individuals can obtain information from the exchange at no cost. Thus, before it expanded its activities into support of research in rheumatoid arthritis and congenital malformations the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis could have obtained information about the total money currently granted for research in these fields.

Not the least interesting of the exchange's services is that available to the individual investigator. Every scientist has heard at least one sad tale about one of his fellows who was just about to ship off a manuscript only to discover that someone else had done his work for him. This is more than a source of distress for the individual scientist: it is a wasteful duplication of effort. A scientist interested in a particular subject may, even though he has no grant, register his project with the exchange. (About 3000 have done so this year.) He may also ask the exchange to give him the names and project descriptions of others working in the same specific field. The first step may lead others—granting agencies or individuals—to get in touch with him; the second gives him a chance to find out what others in his field are interested in and thus reduces his chances of duplicating work being done elsewhere.

The exchange invites cooperation. Inquiries should be addressed to Dr. Stella Leche Deignan, Director, Bio-Sciences Information Exchange, Room 1113, Dupont Circle Building, 1346 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington 6, D.C.—G.DuS.