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Scientific Information Please!

An international conference on the problems of search and retrieval of scientific information will be held in Washington, D.C., in November 1958, under the sponsorship of the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council, the National Science Foundation, and the American Documentation Institute, and with the cooperation of the Royal Society, the International Council of Scientific Unions, UNESCO, the International Federation of Documentation, and other organizations.

The exponential rate of increase of our scientific knowledge, as measured by the amount recorded in published media, has given new significance to the old questions of how to store, classify, and index information so that reasonably complete retrospective search and retrieval may be made easily. Because of the urgency, in a technologic society, of putting new knowledge to work, industry and government as well as scientists are concerned with the acute problems of storage and retrieval.

The Royal Society's Scientific Information Conference, held in London in 1948, focused international attention on a wide range of problems of our scientific literature, including prominently those of storing and retrieving information. Since that time, some of the conclusions and recommendations of the conference have been put into effect, some are only now being implemented, and some have been put aside as impractical. Several discussions of the subject have been held since then, the most recent being those sponsored by the School of Library Science at Western Reserve University and a number of industrial, academic, and professional organizations. The need for another examination at an international level of the basic aspects of the search and retrieval problem has been increasingly apparent.

The 1958 Washington Conference will be devoted to critical analysis and discussion of recent or current research throughout the world on techniques, mechanisms, systems, organization, and theory for the storage of and retrospective search for information, and to the distribution of responsibility for further research and development in this field. Discussion will be based on papers dealing with either specific or general aspects prepared by users, scientists, and documentalists who have been concerned with the problems. Matters concerned with primary publication will be considered only incidentally.

Papers contributed for the conference will be selected by referee panels coordinated by a program committee. Accepted papers will be printed and distributed to the participants in advance; they will not be formally presented at the conference by their authors. Sessions will be used for discussion and analysis by panels of participants.

The Conference Committee is anxious to receive as soon as possible suggestions or outlines from individuals or groups who have studies in progress or definitely planned which may serve as a basis for a contribution to the program. Inquiries should be directed to Dr. Alberto Thompson, Executive Secretary, International Conference on Scientific Information, National Academy of Sciences, 2101 Constitution Avenue, Washington 25, D.C.

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