""""""current comments"

A New ISI® Grant Program Attempts to Strike a Balance between User Needs and the Cost of Information Services

January 28, 1970

For producers and users alike, the new information technologies have aggravated old problems and created new ones. None, however, remains so perplexing as that of establishing equitable rates for service. There has always been some inequity in the pricing of books, for example. Is it "fair" to charge an individual the same fee charged a library or some other user group? But what else could be done as long as libraries and individuals bought books from the same dealers? In recent years, we have seen the introduction of a two-price system for subscriptions to many scientific journals-one price for libraries, and a lower rate for individuals. Whether or not the system is legally tenable makes little difference; the problem faced by the journal publisher is very real. When planning a new journal, he forecasts a significant percentage of income from sales to libraries. Without that nucleus, many journals would not survive unless otherwise subsidized.

ISI has tried to handle the problem, in selling Current Contents[®], with group rates. We sell Current Contents to libraries and to individuals at the same price, but once a library-large or small-has subscribed to an ISI service, additional subscriptions for any of its users can be obtained at significantly lower group rates. On the other hand, the relatively high initial cost, as compared to that of Current

Contents, of such services as Current Abstracts of Chemistry and Index Chemicus T.M. and the Science Citation Index, has meant that only one copy of these more expensive publications has been received by even some larger libraries, while smaller ones have been unable to afford a base subscription. (If a library does have a copy, it is frequently, as a practical matter, inaccessible to faculty members. The use of many libraries is inversely proportional to the square of their distance from the user.)

In 1970, ISI is tackling this fundamental problem in two ways; perhaps we will establish a precedent that other publishers can follow. In 1970, every subscriber to Current Abstracts of Chemistry and Index Chemicus will receive at least two copies of each issue. The first copy will be a master library copy. The second will be a circulating copy for the use of interested faculty members. We expect that this two-copy policy will increase the value of Current Abstracts of Chemistry as a current awareness publication.

While the problem of multiple copies in larger libraries is a serious one, that of financing the use of expensive information services at smaller libraries is even more serious, and much less susceptible to solution. Many years ago we tried to establish a second-copy price for the Science Cita-

tion Index, but it proved impossible to administer. Further, it didn't help the small undergraduate college that wanted the SCP but simply couldn't afford it. (There does seem to be some inequity in our charging Baldwin-Wallace College the same price as we charge Harvard University--to us and Baldwin-Wallace if perhaps not to Harvard!) However, until such large scale information services as SCI are tied into international computer utilities, and charges are made strictly on the basis of use, there appears to be no fully acceptable solution of the problem. Unfortunately, our efforts to obtain the advice and participation of professional societies in study of these matters have been unsuccessful.

But to do something now about the problem faced by smaller institutions, ISI has recently inaugurated a grant program. through which colleges, university departments, hospitals, and small research institutes can acquire the Science Citation

Index and other ISI services. Each grant application will be reviewed quickly by a committee of representatives of the academic world, professional societies, and ISI. Eventually we hope to work out a formula which will take into account faculty size or number of staff, number of students, amount of research, etc. Initially, most of the grants will be on a matching dollar basis. For every dollar spent by the institution, ISI will provide a dollar in grant funds.

To insure the success of the program, we hope to keep paperwork to an absolute minimum. If you have any questions about the program, please contact Dr. M.V. Malin, who is ISI's Vice President of Corporate Planning and International Relations. Dr. Malin was formerly an NSF grants administrator, and he helped develop this new grant program. The program is described in more detail in an announcement reproduced elsewhere in this issue.