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Why is Information Science Engineering More than Publishing?

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Recently I heard ISI described as a "data-base publisher". The description seemed to me somewhat contradictory, for there is an important distinction between the traditional publishing industry and the information industry, of which ISI is a member. Not only is the information industry a new creature of the information explosion--it is, in terms of a "publishing" activity, one that makes use of that term meaningless. Whereas the traditional publisher deals generally with the printing and distribution of hundreds, thousands, or even millions of copies of individual books, magazines, or newspapers, the information industry is concerned even with the "micropublishing", or microstorage, of one or more documents needed by only one or a few users. In this connection it is important to remember that the average scientific

paper is read by about 25 people. Instead of a data-base publisher, I tend to think it more descriptive to have ISI regarded as a group of information scientists, or perhaps information engineers, working in the new and exciting information industry.

A data-base is constructed. It is then used in a variety of ways by one or more users. Whenever one of the "products" of data-base use or manipulation is repeated, one appears to be "publishing" in the traditional sense, but that is precisely the reason we need to change obsolete terms in the language which do not properly express the new qualities involved. In the information industry the printing press, the computer, microfilm, etc. are all different technologies one can use to disseminate, retrieve, store and manipulate information of all kinds for all kinds of users.