Information Science and Technology
Have Come of Age—
Organizational Names Should Show It

The National Science Foundation (NSF) organized a task force in 1976 to recommend the roles and responsibilities of NSF for science information in the 1980's. The task force report, released last year, recommended (among other things) the abolition of NSF's Division of Science Information and the creation of a Division of Information Science with a research program equal to those of the established scientific disciplines.[1] Recently NSF carried out this recommendation by setting up a new Division of Information Science & Technology. They are now looking for a person to head the division.

The distinction between science information and information science is not trivial. The change at NSF can one day mean significant funding for basic and applied research in information science. More important, the new division certifies to the public, the government, and the scientific community that the field of information science has come of age.

Names *are*, indeed, very important. Many people do not seem to grasp this fact. What a group is called affects the way outsiders and its members respond to it.

That is one reason I worked in the fifties and sixties to change the name of the American Documentation Institute to the American Society for Information Science. To someone outside the field, this effort may not mean much, but to those involved it was an important alteration.

Back in the 1930's when ADI began, "documentation" was an avant-garde term in library and archival circles. Microfilm was seen as the wave of the future. Watson Davis, the founder of *Science News*, helped establish the American Documentation Institute mainly to promote this medium. By the late 1950's, however, "documentation" had out-moded connotations. Computers, far more than microfilm, were revolutionizing scientific information processing and retrieval. Members of the American Documentation Institute were already creating computer programs and mathematical models for information systems. But the

name of the organization did not suggest the nature of their endeavors. Worse, the old name failed to indicate that ADI was a vital professional organization. Many of us foresaw an explosive expansion of information science in the decades ahead. We realized that the use of the term "information science" in the title of our professional society would convey an image of an organization in tune with the times.

Eventually the effort to change the name proved successful. But the exertion required was enervating to say the least. I was subjected to considerable abuse by members of the old guard, many of whom seemed to have a vested interest in the word "documentation." In 1968 ADI was finally changed to American Society for Information Science (ASIS). But by that time it was already apparent that this change was not enough. While there has been considerable theoretical work in information science, much more growth has taken place in the area of information technology.

By omitting any mention of information technology from its title, ASIS seems to discourage membership by an essential and growing segment of its constituency that needs and wants a forum for airing their interests and problems. So in 1972 I began to suggest that ASIS change its name to American Society for Information Science & Technology (ASIST). Although the then president of ASIS told me that many other information scientists had shown considerable interest in this change,[2] no action has been taken.

My concern with organizational names developed from some early personal experiences.

In 1954 I set up practice as a documentation consultant. By 1956 I had incorporated the company as DocuMation, Inc. This caused some consternation to Mortimer Taube who had formed Documentation, Inc. in 1953. Later on, at the urging of a public relations person, I changed this to Eugene Garfield Associates—Information Engineers. Shortly thereafter, I received a letter from the Pennsylvania Society of Professional Engineers informing me that it was illegal to call myself an engineer. Apparently in Pennsylvania any idiot can call himself a scientist but only a select group are entitled to be called engineers.

The issue became moot when, in 1960, I decided to change the name of the company to the Institute for Scientific Information® . Undoubtedly we were inspired by establishment in the USSR of the All Union Institute for Scientific & Technical Information. Furthermore, for many people the word "institute" connoted a non-profit organization. In those days many of my colleagues and customers had antipathetic feelings about for-profit organizations in the information field. Probably some still do.

Strangely enough this was most often the case among people in private industry. They worshipped as sacred cows the non-profit organizations which produced *Chemical Abstracts, Biological Abstracts, Index Medicus,* etc. And, in fact, at one time I really considered establishing ISI® as a non-profit organization. In 1961 the infamous Fountain Committee, which was investigating NIH's procurement policies, caused NIH to terminate research grants to all commercial firms. By converting to non-profit status, we would have remained eligible for NIH grants. But my experience with NSF, NIH, and other government agencies convinced me that I did not want to make the switch. As it turned out, we were eventually able to continue research through an NSF *contract.*

My continuing interest in names of organizations related to the information field leads me to mention that I have recently assumed the chairmanship of Section T of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which is concerned with information science, communications, and computing. The variety of organizations affiliated with Section T are shown in Figure 1.

The organizations concerned

with information are, of course, not limited to these groups. However, the diversity of their titles indicates why there may be an identity crisis for many information people whose professional activities span the boundaries of several groups.

Members of Section T will be getting together early in May to discuss its *raison d'etre* and perhaps the necessity of finding a new name which better identifies our interests. We hope to use the public broadcasting system to conduct a multi-city teleconference experiment so that members of Section T and all concerned can contribute to a discussion of "Whither Information Science?"

Although the typical layman still responds with a blank expression when you identify yourself as an information scientist, I think the average scientist today does recognize the term. And as society's preoccupation with computers and electronic communications grows, so will its need for and awareness of information scientists. Information science and technology have indeed come of age!

REFERENCES

1. A report to the Director of the National Science Foundation. Science Information Activities Task Force, NSF. Washington, D.C.: National Science Foundation, 1977. 18p.
2. Kyle R J. Private communication. 22 August 1972.