

From Ledberg

Re'd 11-11-67

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J. Ledberg

Gene:

I hope I can press you on the matter of issuing individual cards in ASCA. We have to think through the complete information system, and I am now remarking on the retrieval of information from the local file you are helping set up for an individual. With complete random access, the costs of re-interrogating the entire master file for trivial recall are prohibitive. So I am wondering how best to organize the sub-files each of the users will still be setting up. For the moment, cards are the most plausible answer; it would be best of all if the cards were machinable. This might be quite feasible soon with optical reading of the machine-pivots cards. Meanwhile I would at least use 11304--compatible card stock, so, for example, I could use some primitive punch codes to index and sort the cards.

Next step: get there sub-files into my computer. I suppose wire transmissions is already the answer. We will have to try a few experiments when we have our respective 360's working. Do you have teletypes on yours? Small, handy-mailing tapes might be another answer. Actually, just writing this I realize we have (2) two answers to this in being!

1. Digital Equipment Corp. "Microtopes" as on the LINC or PDP-8 computers. We have half a dozen of these creatures in the Medical School now. A 4" diam. tape holds about 10^5 words in digital format. But these does require special equipment at both ends (about \$30,000 worth of computer).

2. Believe it or not, analog tape. After all this would just be the equivalent of tape-recording a Data Phone transmission. A small tenorette style tape would hold about 20 mins x 1000 cps $\geq 10^5$ words. The only equipment needed here is AD/DA conversion units on both computers and even a home-quality tape recorder.

I might discount wire transmission costs compared to computation except for the time-showing system, which will set up a cost-accounting of the order 10^5 words \equiv 1 second computertive since the machine can multiprocess while it is listening to this low speed information carry in at no more than 1000 cps. (which is optimistist for wired data).

Ledberg

Several people have commented that the formats of ASCA are hard to read. The interleaving of citations and sources is irritating to me. Preferably, the citations should be sorted out, listed with code numbers first. Then these (non-distracting) codes could head the listing of the found sources. I realize the programming difficulty in this, so I would now suggest a layout like this: (attached)

A respondent-coded, reply-paid postcard to which the user had to copy the code numbers would, I think work about as well as an equivalent envelope. That a user must now give up a "usable copy" of his report is psychologically bad. I notice I use one set to file, one to scratch notes to other people on.

Cards would be the best answer. Again, take care on the format; I would put the citation in an inconspicuous corner, with a code (over preprinted key) for type, not the bulky statement "Item by"....

P. S. I have some more ideas on experiments for different kinds of profiles and will contact you shortly.

Is it buildt in that author profiles should be so expensive? Insteady why not charge in two parts: 1) for the alerting service and 2) for number of reports above a stated basic level. The latter has to be okayed against a deposit.

