

Preface

Why would an information scientist highlight an essay on ghostwriting when there are other essays covering topics of equal if not greater significance in this volume? Our two essays on the Holocaust helped in some small measure to keep alive the memory of those whom the Nazis tortured and killed. This effort serves as a reminder that we have human concerns far removed from celebrating the achievements and influence of extraordinary men and women in science and the arts. This volume does, however, contain essays on some of the 1983 and 1984 Nobel laureates, as well as on George Sarton and Derek de Solla Price, each a pioneering historian in his distinctive way. Serious environmental and health issues are examined as well: acid rain, chlorination, allergies, and child safety. Essays on shorthand, meditation states and learning, ape language, drycleaning, and celery express some of my personal and rather idiosyncratic interests. The volume contains, of course, a good many citation analyses, such as those on most cited 1981 and 1982 articles in chemistry, most cited 1983 articles in the life and physical sciences, and the sixth, seventh, and eighth installments in my series on the 1,000 most-cited articles in the *SCI*, 1961–82. Other essays cover Citation Classics and high-impact journals. A certain preoccupation with information science or with ISI's products is readily understandable. But, to repeat, why ghostwriting?

For me ghostwriting is analogous to the task of the information worker. A ghostwriter serves as messenger of another's thoughts, and thus facilitates communication. In today's information society, that facilitating role is also the one played by information workers of all kinds—indexers, reviewers, abstractors, librarians, and others. Their work provides a conduit through which scientists, particularly those in relative isolation, can communicate. In the Foreword to this volume, Estelle Brodman offers an enlightening historical review of those who have facilitated the exchange of biomedical information.

As I thought about information "ghosts," I recalled Arthur Koestler's *The Ghost in the Machine*. The ghost he has in mind is neither

helpful nor friendly; it is an inherent inclination towards self-destruction in the human species.

Since we cannot in the foreseeable future expect the necessary change in human beings to arise by way of spontaneous mutation, that is, by natural means, we must induce it by artificial means. We can only hope to survive as a species by developing techniques which supplant biological evolution. We must search for a cure for the schizophysiology inherent in man's nature, and the resulting split in our minds, which led to the situation in which we find ourselves.

It is my perhaps naive belief that the quest for information and knowledge is the artificial means we use to avoid destruction. Information workers serve a vital social, as well as intellectual, mission in the world today.

REFERENCES

1. Koestler A. *The ghost in the machine*. London: Hutchinson, 1967. p. 326-7.