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A.E. Cawkell, Information Detective--
and ISI®'s Man in the U.K.

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One of the most powerful and characteristic faculties of the human intellect is the ability—indeed it seems almost a compulsion—to label, to classify, to categorize, to organize, to group—in other words, to distinguish within different things those aspects which make them similar, and at the same time to discard from consideration, at least temporarily, those aspects which make them different and individual. It would probably be impossible to think sanely at all without this faculty of dumping things into intellectual containers, but the process has its occasional disadvantages, especially if the things to be considered are people.

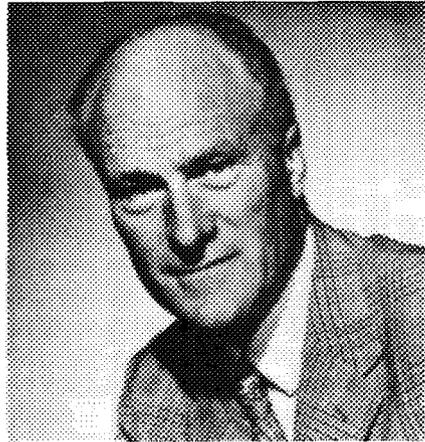
Thus we regrettably tend to think of governments, and companies and corporations and institutions in terms of their creeds, their buildings, their organization charts, even in terms of systems they employ or products they produce. Such things are simply easier to consider than the thousands, or hundreds, or even tens of people who are the reality of organizations, or the reality of their control. (Frequently, of course, it is *intended* that we forget the people involved; designations such as *Societe Anonyme*, *Naamloze Vennootschap*, and the like, are of great psychologic and sociologic interest in this respect.) That organizations are people is, therefore, not so obvious that the fact cannot bear illustration.

In this and future editorials I want to introduce readers of *Current Contents*®

to some of the people who are the Institute for Scientific Information. The first here is Anthony E. Cawkell, the head of ISI's European Branch. A good way of introducing Cawkell is to reprint an article about him that appeared in *New Scientist*, after he had spoken at a meeting of the Royal Institution in London¹.

Information detective

The Royal Institution has all kinds of meetings to keep its members in touch with the latest events and ideas in science. At one of its lunchtime sessions last week Mr Anthony Cawkell explained how to keep in touch through one particular publication—the Science Citation Index, prepared by the Institute for Scientific Information, of Philadelphia. Cawkell, a senior consultant in ISI's European branch, came into the subject of information handling and retrieval in a roundabout way.



A.E. Cawkell

Originally he had his own scientific instruments firm—Cawkell Research and Electronics Ltd—which among other jobs provided much of the equipment of this type for the nuclear fusion projects at Harwell. He used an edge-notched card system of his own design for the classification and retrieval of electronics information. Cawkell developed what he believes was the first instrument for storing television pictures, using a cathode ray storage tube, and became interested in the work on information theory done by Professor Colin Cherry and his team at Imperial College when he consulted Cherry about it.

Meanwhile he had sold his company to a large electronics group, and though he recommended to them that they should make practical use of these ideas by producing apparatus for "piped television", he soon realized that he was no longer his own boss, and the idea was rejected. What Cawkell was planning to do was to send television pictures over the public telephone network, using some of the results of Cherry's team, concentrating most of the expensive data-compressing equipment at the transmitting end and keeping the receiver extremely simple. He points out that this is just what Bell in the US and other companies have now done with their video-type telephones.

Finding himself increasingly out of tune with the feelings of the large group, and being a man oriented towards research and development,

he left and did some consultancy work on his own for a while, including some for ISI. He met Dr Eugene Garfield, ISI's president, and joined the firm in 1967.

In the course of his job he has carried out some delving into scientific history with the aid of the citation index. For example, by tracing back references to Gregor Mendel's experiments he has discovered references showing that Darwin must have known about Mendel's work through Professor H. Hoffman, professor of botany at Giessen. Darwin was a friend of Hoffman, who was no stranger to Mendel's work, and indeed in one paper cited it five times. Darwin also possessed W. O. Focke's famous book on heredity, of 1881, where Mendel was quoted 18 times. For some reason Darwin must have chosen to ignore it. Nor was Mendel's work altogether buried for 40 years: Cawkell finds that it was described in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for 1881-85—hardly an obscure journal—and other scientific articles about that time.

This was not the first time that Cawkell has spoken at the Royal Institution. Early in 1969 he gave a talk to Professor Porter and other eminent researchers on literature-searching on the subject of flash photolysis. The outcome was that ISI presented the Royal Institution with a complete set of the indexes, starting with the first one in 1961, which is kept up to date on a quarterly basis.

1. Anonymous. Information detective. *New Scientist* 45(687):274-5, February 5, 1970.