

What a mockery SR makes of the legitimate and very effective job that is being done by the information industry to provide scientists with access to information on an unprecedented scale. The problem of the modern scientist is not to find an automaton that will think for him, that will perceive relationships no one has perceived before, that will pose questions never posed before, that will, in other words, utilize buried or otherwise unobtainable information. Artificially intelligent machines may do some of these things some day but that is not the issue.

To add insult to injury, Kendig suggests that we train a new kind of scientist (what he calls a "synthesist"), as though the professions of information scientist and science-information specialist did not exist. It is this suggestion that reveals the whole absurdity of his position. As far as I can tell, the "synthesist" is some sort of super-scientist. He is *smarter*, and presumably able to use the information his colleagues don't, and able to see significances his colleagues can't. (He may also live in a world of 48-hour days.) But all this assumes that the information *is* available, and that *he* wouldn't drown in it.

Presumably, the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our information stores, but in ourselves. Hence the need for the synthesist. But you can't have it both ways.

Undoubtedly, the professional science writer, when he joins the ranks of science-information specialists, can make a much-needed contribution to this never-ending task, but I would hope that he will continue to perform the function of interpreting science for the layman. If Kendig's editorial is what can be expected from the science-writer, we shall never eliminate the sense of hopelessness, the Doomsday philosophy, that pervades so much writing today.⁴

1. Kendig, F. Drowning in data. *Saturday Review of the Sciences* 1(3):26, 24 March 1973.
2. Goudsmit, S.A. Is the literature worth retrieving? *Physics Today* 19(9):52-55, 1966.
3. Zirkle, C. The role of Liberty Hyde Bailey and Hugo de Vries in the rediscovery of Mendelism. *J. History Biol.* 1(2):205-18, 1968.
----- Some oddities in the delayed discovery of Mendelism. *J. Heredity* 55(2): 65-72, 1964. -- There is a mythology about Mendel's work which has been perpetuated. His work was not buried in the literature. It was seen and cited. Neither a *Science Citation Index* nor a *Chemical Abstracts*, nor a hypothetical *Synthesizer* would have changed the fact that Mendel's work was simply ahead of its time.
4. Readers will find a pleasant contrast to Kendig's pessimism in two recent books: John Maddox's *The Doomsday Syndrome* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), and Stephen Franklin's *Knowledge Park* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972).