

CURRENT COMMENTS

IIA Hall of Fame Award Helps Make 1977 a Good Year

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As with wines, some years in our lives are better than others. To borrow from a song made popular by Frank Sinatra, 1977 was "a very good year" for me in many ways.

ISI® continued to be intellectually and financially healthy. We made the decision to launch a major tool for the literature of the arts and humanities.¹ This made ISI the only private information company involved in a large-scale way in the three major areas of scholarship—science, social science, and arts/humanities. And that ever-worrisome bottom line totalled up to what our board of directors thought it should.

Considering the difficulties faced by many universities, ISI's success may seem contradictory. But much of our new business has come from greater use of our services in budget-pinched universities all over the world—especially those in developing countries. Increasing numbers of such institutions now realize that

investing in information services is not nearly as costly and frequently pays larger dividends than spending money on ever more sophisticated laboratory equipment and other types of hardware.

Much of my insight into changing budgetary priorities comes from the nearly six months I spent travelling during 1977. Besides criss-crossing North America, I travelled to Japan, Norway, Iceland, Italy, France, Lithuania, and other countries.

One trip included a lecture tour of Siberia at the invitation of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. This was preceded by a visit to the Moscow Book Fair which convinced me that there are many opportunities for publishing interesting Soviet works in English. I also presented a paper at the International Conference of Scientific and Technical Editors and Publishers in Jerusalem.² Subsequently, I attended the annual meeting of the International Association of Scientific, Technical, and Medical

Publishers in Frankfurt, where ISI also participated in the annual book fair.

Perhaps the most important news in 1977 for *Current Contents*® (*CC*®) readers was the ISI victory in the federal courts over the US Postal Service.³ For the past five years we have waged a costly battle to maintain our second-class mailing privilege for *CC*. This postal class, which has substantially lower rates, is reserved for publications classified as periodicals. The post office argued that *Current Contents* is not a periodical because it does not contain primarily original material. Our attorneys convinced the court that *CC* meets so many other requirements of a periodical publication that it should be classified as one. (I will elaborate on this landmark decision in the future.) Each subscriber to *CC* can think of this victory as a New Year's present for 1978 worth \$25. That is the amount we would have had to add to the cost of a subscription if we had lost. And that increase would apply to subsequent years, too.

After many delays, ISI managed to publish my first book—a two-volume compilation of these essays.⁴ I am gratified not only by the steady flow of orders, but also by the friendly reviews.⁵

In October I was presented with the Information Industry Association (IIA) Hall of Fame Award.

Although I've mentioned the IIA before, many readers of these essays are probably unfamiliar with it.⁶

IIA was formed in 1967 by a half-dozen charter members; since then it has grown to over 100 corporate members. It is a trade association of for-profit organizations and individuals engaged in either the development or the application of advanced technology to meet the information demands of particular markets. The overall purpose of IIA is to promote the development of private enterprise in the information industry. IIA provides its members with a unified voice in determining national and international information policies. It also provides a necessary balance to the less market-oriented outlook of such professional societies as the American Society for Information Science.

My IIA award was presented by Herbert Brinberg, Chairman of the Board of Aspen Systems Corporation, an information subsidiary of American Can Company. Previous winners were Eugene Power, founder of University Microfilms, and Mortimer Taube, a pioneer in the field of information science.

In my acceptance speech I was asked to examine the future of the information industry. Since scholarly information plays a large role in the present and future of the information industry, I thought it

would be useful to publish my talk in *Current Contents*. It appears on pages 8-11 of this issue. For those who would like to know more about IIA and its views of the future, the *Publishers Weekly* summary of the IIA's 10th annual meeting provides an excellent starting point.⁷

While there were many other pleasant events which capped off 1977, I was saddened by the deaths of my friends Robert L. Hayne, ISI's

Chief Editor,⁸ and Kenneth O. May, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Toronto.

Admitting to good fortune, as I have done above, seems to be tempting the fates to reverse those happy circumstances. Not being very superstitious, let me simply knock on wood, cross my fingers, and hope we can all be so fortunate during 1978.

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