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Secondary distribution of information is surely a relative if not an ambiguous term. The variety of topics covered in Theme Session #7 accentuates the recurring difficulty in trying to assign inflexible classifications to any information processing activities. Classically secondary distribution (publication) of information concerns those activities which follow primary publication (distribution) of documents. Thus, the conventional abstracting publications like *Chemical Abstracts* and *Biological Abstracts* are secondary publications. That these are arbitrary descriptions is indicated in relating the role of the newer depository systems to the established systems of distribution. Indeed, the announcement of government research reports, through abstracting publications, reverses the usual publication sequence as far as the consumer is concerned. Primary journals are usually received in libraries many months before abstracting journals appear. Reports, on the other hand, are ordered after their announcement, through abstracts, in various announcement media such as USGRR, STAR, etc. This same reversal of timing occurs in *Current Contents* for a large percentage of foreign journals.

The various systems of so-called Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) are usually considered a form of secondary distribution. However, this is also arbitrary as the primary-secondary relationship is clearly one of timing. Which comes first—the title, the abstract, or the full report? Like the humans who write them, all possible combinations are possible. Many authors wait until a report is completed before writing an abstract. Others write abstracts of papers that never get presented or written. With the newer automatic methods of dissemination, titles, abstracts, or full papers, or a combination thereof, may be the grist for a selective dissemination or alerting system.

*Index Medicus* and the *Science Citation Index* illustrate the interesting overlap between a conventional index form, the printed index, and means for automatic alerting an/or current or retrospective searching. The same information (index assignments) is used to produce periodic large published indexes. The index entries are also used for up-to-date matching with customer profiles. In one case, *Index Medicus*, subject headings are the basis of choice. In the other, *Science Citation Index*, the bibliographic citation is the main search or alerting parameter. In both, authors can also be used.

Many of the papers included in this theme session concern the mechanical functions involved in preparing secondary publications. As such, they might easily have been subtended by other sessions. Edmundson's "Com-

puter Abstracting of Russian Text" could obviously fall under translation of scientific information, while Reisner's "Machine Stored Citation Index" paper could come under document storage and display. And surely the same is true of papers in other sessions. Freeman's "Automatic Retrieval from Chemical Titles" could easily have been included in this session.

It is important to note the appearance of citation and KWIC indexes in Part II of the conference proceedings. This is certainly a new and interesting facet of the entire experiment in prompt publication of conference proceedings. Surely Parts I and II, the short papers, represent a limbo between primary and secondary publication in the conventional sense as the material is a necessary combination of rehash of the past, experiments in progress, and future prospects. All of this would seem to indicate that information science needs a relativistic theory to better describe the inseparable dimensions of time and space in information processing. Perhaps the "fifth" dimension for information, in addition to time and space, is the omnipresent human factor which some might call semantic, others sociological, others psychological, others anthropological, and yet others metaphysical. For the time being I propose the following relativistic definition. Any information distribution activity is "secondary" when the activity immediately involved is chronologically later than the predecessor form. By this definition a title, abstract, full paper or even an idea may be considered primary or secondary according to the timing of these respective events. When one considers that all forms can in fact appear simultaneously then the ideal state is truly an equilibrium condition where all forms of information are simultaneously accessible. In another context I called this condition Research Nirvana. (1)

- (1) Garfield, E., "Research Nirvana—Total Dissemination and Retrieval of Bio-Medical Information?" Paper presented to the Sixth Annual Session, Medical Writers' Institute, New York City, October 5, 1963.