

policies are criticized more sharply, for long. And that has definitely not damaged 'Science' there. Not only that, it has helped in charting more rational and meaningful directions.

I congratulate *Current Science* for the courageous step taken. In my opinion

this should have happened at least a decade ago. The open expression of opinions and resentment has resulted in a very realistic understanding that 'All is not well with Science in India'. I think this better understanding of reality is worth the effort. In concluding I would

like to say, 'We want more of this liberalization, and definitely not less.'

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## Digital library services from public to private sector undertakings

People take special efforts to leave their work and walk to the library. Using a computer, books and periodicals can be brought to the place of work by converting them from print to digital version. Having a digital library at the place of work can increase productivity. CD-ROM technology had made data retrieval much easier. It is possible to isolate the precise information from these discs and transmit it through e-mail from the available networks.

National Informatics Centre (NIC), Delhi, offers a service of providing MEDLARS and patents data. For the past one year I have been interacting with people at NIC via e-mail. Recently, I have opened a deposit account with Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI), Lucknow, for a similar service through e-mail. CDRI offers EMBASE, BIOSIS, biotechnology, chemical and pharmaceutical abstracts.

To both these organizations I send a key word – at the generic level – search request via e-mail. For example, my e-mail message would typically request like 'Please send references on aspirin, human, English, from 1993 to 1996'. To the person who reads this at the other end, it would mean that I require all references on aspirin, on studies conducted on humans, published in English language, and between the period from 1993 to present date. The CD-ROM search is conducted and the results are e-mailed back to me in 48 hours. Thus I would get all published literature on aspirin for that period, which satisfies my quantitative dimension of information on aspirin. The objective is to create a comprehensive science & technology (S&T) information resource for my organization in terms of quantity, quality and time.

To meet the qualitative dimension, I add value to the whole data of that particular medicine by way of (a) highlighting, (b) provide codes to each reference – which will be easy for future retrieval, (c) create word index of the whole document, (d) print, bind, and stack the information by medicine- or productwise in the library as a reference volume. People – some elder professionals and managers – who are not very comfortable with the handling of personal computers find referring to these books familiar as any other book in the library. In my organization these bound books are popular as GIST volumes (GIST is a word coined by me to mean Global Information Science & Technology).

On the time dimension the whole process is relatively fast; it is standardized and takes 7 to 10 working days to produce a volume. The corresponding version of the GIST volume is available on the Local Area Network (LAN) environment in about three days at our corporate office. For those who prefer searching data on the computer, they use WordStar package available on LAN.

In addition to NIC & CDRI, people at National Centre for Software Technology (NCST) who have created Bombay Library NETWORK (BONET) and Education & Research NETWORK (ERNET) have been ready with advise, whenever I had impending data transmission problems.

Similar to NIC and CDRI, other government-aided bodies – where e-mail is readily available – could consider negotiating with other database producers in the basic subject areas like agriculture, electronics, engineering, physics, textile, etc.

More important, the initiative and

publicity taken by public sector undertakings can commence a chain of activity like (a) replenish information to S&T in their subject areas of specialization and its outcome when they absorb the new developments and implement in their work, (b) create new jobs to young graduates with their available skills and intelligence, to process the data, (c) information brokers, (d) translators, (e) consultant who can effectively act on it, (f) data base producer, (g) the general growth of S&T information industry at large. Like other commodities in the consumer market, there will be producers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers who can play their respective roles for the development of Indian S&T.

National Information System for Science and Technology (NISSAT)'s efforts in organizing information user-supplier meetings is laudable. These meetings facilitate better empathy and cooperation and promote flow of information between the information-rich and the information-undernourished organizations.

Information should be treated as an important factor for individual and organizational productivity. Till recently we did not have a viable and cost-effective system to regularly procure such desired S&T information at our work place.

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