It might, therefore, be desirable to place these references close together on the tape, rather than widely separated as they would be in an alphabetical ordering. This is, in effect the equivalent of producing a Thesaurus.

(*d*) A point in relation to what might be called the relevancy factor of words used in the search: clearly a word which only occurs once in a body of text will have, in one sense at least, a high relevancy factor. In the same way words which occur many times but in only few documents will be similarly placed. On the other hand a word which occurs both often and in many documents is likely to have a low relevancy factor.

(*e*) It seems likely that one might be able to produce a condensed vocabulary list and concordance which could find say 80% of the desired information but very much more quickly (say 10% of the time required for a full search); users might thus be able to request FAST or FULL depending on their precise requirements.

Computer requirements

The system as currently envisaged requires the following minimum computer configuration:

Random-access store (core store) of 16K words.
Paper tape reader.
High-speed line-printer.
A minimum of 5 magnetic tape decks
and, optionally—a disc store.

In this sort of operation the speed of the peripherals is very much the limiting factor; actual computing speed is rather unimportant.

C. Conclusion

There is a sound *prima facie* case for further research into the subject dealt with in this paper. No insuperable problems have been encountered so far and the cost involved does not seem prohibitive, so far as it can be estimated in advance, when related to the possible advantages which computers have to offer. This is especially so since the techniques have application to information retrieval generally, not only to law. For the lawyer, it is not difficult to imagine that his office or library of the future will contain as an essential item a link with a regional computing centre which, with its comprehensive tape library, will provide him with valuable retrieval and duplication services.

Reference

KEHL, W. B., HORTY, J. F., BACON, C. R. T., and MITCHELL, D. S. (1961). "An Information Retrieval Language for Legal Studies", *Comm. ACM*, Vol. 4, p. 380.

Book Review

Specialized Information Centers, by Allen Kent, 1965; 290 pages. (London: *Macmillan*, 70s.)

The setting up of large-scale specialized information centres, which store information rather than documents and retrieve that information mechanically, is more a part of the American than the British scene. To judge by the preface to Kent's book there have been mixed results with "new centers cropping up, some disappearing from the scene, and others merely limping along in desultory fashion". In an attempt to "discern the anatomy of this field" the author surveyed a large sample of American specialized information centres and analysed the different unit operations carried out in them. The resulting data is presented under topics such as acquisition, analysis (*i.e.* indexing and classification), control of terminology, storage, question analysis, search strategy, delivery of search results, organization, and costs and evaluation.

The material for this book has been used twice for a course on specialized information centres in the *Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences* at the *University of Pittsburgh*. It is possible that the presentation might be satisfactory under the conditions of classroom instruction, with a lecturer available to supplement, comment and explain, but it does not come across too clearly in book form. The problems which have to be solved in setting up and operating an information centre are stated, but merely quoting the widely-varying practices found in existing centres brings the reader no nearer to their solution. Kent withholds the names of the organizations associated with the various philosophies, opinions and operational decisions quoted, because he feels that most have not yet fixed their procedures sufficiently to be willing to endorse what they do. Indeed this seems to sum up quite well the message of the book, which is that a large number of people are still groping towards the ideal way of dealing with a rapidly-increasing body of knowledge and information. Their different approaches as librarians, systems analysts, engineers or scientists have led to their use of quite different techniques, and a good deal of obscuring jargon has crept in. Nor has it always been a good thing that large sums of money have been available in America as grants to study particular aspects of the problem. It is shown in the chapter on costs that, in many centres, the economics of their systems have been regarded as unimportant.

Nevertheless a great deal of useful matter has been put together in this book which will be of value to specialists in information retrieval to stimulate their thought, and to give some idea of what is happening in America. It has the faults of all such surveys: it is largely inconclusive, good and bad practice are presented with equal weight, and what is reported depends in each case on the reaction of the organizations covered to having to answer questionnaires—some take a good deal of trouble and return a full reply, others do not bother very much.

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