

Session 2:

Summary of the discussion

John Alvey addressed a question to Andy Large and Forbes Gibb about copyright. We were told that the position regarding copyright depends on the individual database producer and vendor. Some do not encourage downloading, but others provide a special command or format to allow users to tag fields for this purpose. It may be permissible to sideload information but not to resell it. Database producers have no control over CD-ROM. Mr Gibb cited the example of a Scottish company which now uses CD-ROM. There is an initial charge for 1,000 records then an additional charge for further use. This is the principle of paying upfront and then as you go.

Pamela Mayorcas suggested to Andy Large that the audience might like to obtain the full text of a document once they have found a suitable reference. She also asked him to mention library networks and specialist libraries. Dr Large referred to the British Library Automated Lending Department which can provide copies of full documents. However, it can take three weeks to obtain a photocopy. It is now possible through some organisations to order some documents online or by using facsimile.

Ed Davis from the United States asked whether computer viruses might cause a threat. Mr Gibb replied that this became a particular problem as the size of computer systems increased. This would be of concern, for example, in a system with 40 to 50 terminals. He referred to an article in the *Financial Times* Technology Page (10 November 1988) which dealt with this very subject. Many viruses come from shareware products. There are now programs which can detect files likely to carry viruses, such as operating system files. These programs check the file

length in case a virus may be present. Messages to bulletin boards are now filtered for viruses. The necessity of adding further security measures tends to defeat the objective of creating networks which was to increase access to computers. Mr Gibb cited the case of hackers who were known to have used the computer network at Strathclyde University as a means of infiltrating other networks because it was an open network used as a gateway to other computer systems. Finally he mentioned the likelihood of vaccines being available for viruses in the future (as they are in the biological field).

RAPPORTEUR

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