

Symposium on Administration of Technical Information Groups. Introductory Remarks*

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The administration of technical information groups is a large and complex subject which we could not hope to cover in its entirety in a single half-day symposium. Therefore, we attempted to focus our attention upon selected aspects in order to identify some of the problems involved and, hopefully, to establish some guidelines for dealing with them.

The management techniques used in the administration of technical information groups are basically the same as those used in administering other groups. It is chiefly in the details that the unique aspects of technical information group administration come forth. Some of the problems that the administrator faces include: (1) the establishment of policy and a philosophy of operation, (2) the choice of specific areas of activity, (3) the establishment and efficient maintenance of services, (4) the acquisition and training of personnel, (5) the choice of systems and equipment, (6) budget planning and control, (7) salary administration, and (8) relations with other departments and services. To be able to deal effectively with these problems the administrator needs a sound background of experience, a good deal of insight, and, most of all, a great deal of plain common sense.

When a technical information group operates within a chemical company, its primary purpose, reduced to simple terms, is to help chemists, chemical engineers, and other scientists to work and to solve their problems as quickly and as inexpensively as possible with the aid of available data and scientific literature. To do this requires the use of information and services from many sources, both from within the company and from outside. The task of the technical information group administrator is to select judiciously the proper blend of services from internal and external sources to provide the required information services with maximum speed and minimum

cost. This may sound simple, but it is a complex problem and a fluid one, for internal needs change, external services change, and new ones spring up. These problems are discussed by Dr. Carleton C. Conrad in his paper entitled "Coordination and Integration of Technical Information Services."

A related problem which affects the technical information group is the technical obsolescence of scientific personnel. Obsolescence may affect the staff served by the information group but it may also occur within the technical information group itself. In either case, much can be done by the technical information group to provide opportunities for continuing education. These are discussed by Dr. Robert E. Maizell in his paper, "Continuing Education in Technical Information Services."

Salary administration is a matter of continuing concern to the administrator. In chemical companies, chemists working in the information sector are usually paid on the same scale as chemists working in the laboratory, sales service, marketing, etc. The American Chemical Society's periodic surveys of chemists' salaries, relating salaries to degree level, years of experience, proficiency, sex, and geographic location are very informative and useful. It should be kept in mind that top-notch information service is of crucial importance in the highly competitive chemical industry. This requires that information groups be staffed with top-notch personnel in key positions, with correspondingly high salary levels. Salary statistics comparable to the ACS surveys are difficult to obtain for other kinds of specialized personnel, such as librarians, information scientists, translators, etc. Consequently, considerable judgment, skill, and extrapolation are needed to establish an equitable salary scale for the people of diversified talents needed to operate an information group. The paper entitled "Salaries and Academic Training Programs for Information Scientists" by Prof. Theodore C. Hines probes the dilemma facing those who prepare for scientific information work by obtaining academic training in information science.

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