

## Creating Literature Chemists

W. H. WALDO

Monosanto Chemical Company, St. Louis 66, Missouri

Received June 6, 1962

Seven speakers with diverse experience have expressed their concern with the chemical literature explosion and have suggested ways to supply the manpower to handle it. One said it should continue to be the problem of the Technical Librarian. One said the study of storage and retrieval of information is largely a craft and not yet a science. Some said training on-the-job will be the major source of manpower for years to come. Others said the best answer today is an academic short-course. These statements from thoughtful people with studied and respected opinions show grave concern for the lack of trained people to be Literature Chemists. They also demonstrate that little more has been done toward educating these people since this problem was reviewed last in a similar symposium in 1956.\*

What are the consequences if the chemical profession fails to take this problem more seriously? The consequences are obvious and appalling. What if we relegate the solution of the chemical literature problem to chemical "weak sisters?" No responsible chemist advocates this move. On the other hand, only isolated steps are being taken to make literature chemistry respectable. An occasional school here and abroad is experimenting with formal training. Few young people aspire to success in the field even through the graduate library schools. Many of those in charge of staffing industrial research libraries do

not know where to find likely prospects to employ as Literature Chemists and have little basis for evaluating one if they were to find one.

We find the government to be the most enlightened. The Patent Office, Bureau of Standards, Department of Defense, Atomic Energy Commission, Central Intelligence Agency, Library of Congress, the Congress itself, the National Research Council-National Academy of Science, and many others often with the help of the National Science Foundation have taken much bolder steps than the so-called private sector.

This unusual leadership stems, I believe, from the one unusual feature of information that was not mentioned during the symposium. Aside from patents, retrieved information is not recognized as having much commercial value.

We are engulfed with technical information; we are like one afloat in the ocean. Recognition of thirst occurs only when we are without fresh water. Then we will pay any price for relief and curse others for lack of an extraction process.

As soon a private capital or the Federal Government is more willing to invest in long-term research in information retrieval and in large-scale systems for the storage and retrieval of information, we will find schools willing to teach, students willing to train, prestige at an all time high, all chemists speaking the information retrieval vernacular, the craft evolving into a science, and Literature Chemists will have been created.

\* ACS Monograph 17 titled "Training of Literature Chemists," Washington, D. C., 1956.