BASIC INDUSTRIAL INFORMATION SOURCES—AN OVERVIEW

In this paper the basic industrial information sources are divided into two broad groups, viz. (i) Published sources, and (ii) Organisational sources. In the first group, i.e. the published sources attempt has been made to provide state-of-the-art report of all major types of published sources. In the second group, all institutions involved in or related to industrial development are identified and divided into suitable groups. In both the cases their general limitations have also been pointed out.

The types of basic industrial information often sought after vary from a very simple piece of information such as the address of a well established supplier of machinery and equipment to information on such complex problems as market potential, alternative technology available, types of products, industrial raw materials, manufacturing processes, uses of a product or the latest data on capacity, production and demand for a particular product, etc.

However, all the above mentioned information is not available in published form, specially the up-to-date information on any topic. One has to fill up the information and data gap from various unpublished sources. Unpublished information comes in various shapes like mimeographed reports, unpublished papers read in seminars, reports of meetings, official records, experts advice, and even as written and verbal communication. But the generators and holders of this type of information are so many that locating them often becomes a difficult task. Various government offices, export councils, research establishments and associations, trade associations and manufacturing units, etc. are


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PUBLISHED INFORMATION SOURCES

The information pertaining to general aspects, e.g. historical development, definition of the subject dealt with, classification of the products, etc., of any industry is generally available from standard books and encyclopaedias. As such, procurement of such information is not a big problem. The real problem starts with the information about the method of manufacture used, raw materials and their availability, capacity, production, prices, demand and supply, etc. of a particular product in the Indian context. Published sources of such information are diverse and scattered. The stratification of the Indian industry into large, small and cottage sectors makes it difficult to collect and compile complete and up-to-date information on any particular product. Moreover, the fast changing pattern of the Indian industry with respect of expansion, diversification, changing policy, trade practices and fluctuating manu-
facturing capacities makes the task of present-
ing an accurate picture of the industrial scene all the more difficult. These changes make the information obsolete quickly. As a result, to give a correct and comprehensive presentation of the status of an industry in a recorded form becomes difficult, specially when the bulk of the production of any particular industrial product is in the small and cottage scale. Moreover, the information is often broad-based and, hence, difficult to organise. All these factors are perhaps responsible for a scarce or, at best, scattered published sources of such information.

For the convenience of discussion all the available published sources can be divided under the broad groups: (i) Encyclopaedias, (ii) Directories, (iii) Handbooks and Manuals, (iv) Databooks, (v) Yearbooks, Annuals and Special Issues, (vi) Reports, (vii) Journals, and (viii) Dailies. Patents, standards and trade literature do not fall under the purview of this paper.

Apart from serving as a ready reference tool, an industrial encyclopaedia constitutes a depository of knowledge and a more or less official record of the industrial development of a country up to a particular time. In the Indian context only 'The Wealth of India' (CSIR, New Delhi), comes under this category. As the industrial information becomes outdated very soon, the entire series of 'The Wealth of India - Industrial Products' has become almost obsolete, therefore, it warrants a revision. However, 'The Wealth of India - Raw Materials', which deals with a less dynamic field, contains more relevant information. Moreover, its revision is in progress.

The industrial directories give the list of manufacturers, organisations, materials, products, equipment and other similar data. In spite of the fact that the information contained in the directories is very dynamic which necessitates the frequent revision of such publications, at present, barring a few, all directories are very much back dated.

Some important general directories are: (i) 'A.I.M.O. Directory of Indian Manufacturers' (All India Manufacturers' Organisation, Bombay), (ii) 'Directory of Industrial Units (1974)' (DGTD, New Delhi), (iii) 'Handbook and Directory of Industry' (Giriraj Kumar, Agrawal, Bombay), (iv) 'SIRI Directory - Industries in India 1977-1978' (Small Industry Research Institute, Delhi) (v) 'Thapar's Indian Industrial Directory and Export & Import Directory of the World' (Indian Industrial Directory, Bombay), and (vi) 'The Times of India Directory & Yearbook including Who's Who 1980-81' (Times of India Press, Bombay). Of these, only last two are up-to-date.

The state of handbooks and manuals is worse than the directories. A few important handbooks are not revised for years, e.g. 'Build Machine - Build India' (DGTD, New Delhi), which gives important information on machinery industry, has not been revised since 1972. 'The Handbook of Industrial Data (1975)' is the other example of this category of publication brought out by the same organisation. Similarly, 'India - Handbook of Commercial Information' (Department of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, Calcutta), has not appeared in any form after 1963. The 'Guidelines for Industries 1979-80 Part II - Scope and Prospects' (Dept. of Industrial development, New Delhi) carries information up to 1978.

The present status of the major industrial databooks, which are out-dated and some are having a backlog of as many as 5 years, is a sad reflection on the data generating agencies. The 'Annual Survey of Industries' (CSO, Calcutta) is the best example in support of this statement. The Guidelines for Industries have already been covered in previous paragraph. There is a backlog of about 2 years in the 'Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade of India' (Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, Calcutta). In case of 'Monthly Statistics of the Production of Selected Industries of India' (CSO, Calcutta), December 1979 is the latest issue in the series. The information contained in 'Small Scale Industries in India - Handbook of Statistics' (Development Commissioner, Small Scale Industries, New Delhi) is up to March 1977. The latest 'Statistical Abstract, India' (CSO, Calcutta) relates to 1978 and the information covered under it is up to 1977.

Among the well known databooks only the 'Statistical Outline of India' (Tata Services Ltd, Bombay) is up-to-date.

In the field of yearbooks and annuals only 'The Times of India Directory and Yearbook' (Times of India Press, Bombay) deserves a mention. However, there are a number of private publishers who from time to time bring out annual numbers of their publications devoted to different themes. Such publications are generally informative and up-to-date. The 'Chemical Weekly Annual Number 1980' (Sevak Publications, Bombay), 'Commerce Yearbook of Public Sector 1980-81' (Commerce Publications Ltd., Bombay), 'The Hindu Survey of Industry 1980'
Economic Scene, Bombay; Eastern Economist, New Delhi and Economic Trends, New Delhi, are a few examples of this category of publications.

Report of any kind issued by organisations associated with industrial development may serve as an important source of industrial information. However, under this paragraph only the present status of the annual reports of the Directorate General of Technical Development, Ministry of Industry; Ministry of Petroleum, Chemicals & Fertilizers; Ministry of Steel and Mines and Small Industries Development Organisations (SIDO) are discussed. These reports are very good sources of information. Since 1975-76 the DGTD has not issued any report. After 1979 SIDO has also not brought out any annual report. Other ministries, mentioned above, have been regularly bringing out their annual reports.

Though there has been an exponential increase in the rate of dissemination of knowledge in various disciplines of science and technology, and more and more primary and secondary journals and other publications have come into existence, there is still a dearth of standard industrial periodicals. In the present context, only periodicals general in scope are taken into consideration.

Generally, much sought after information like future scope of the industry, market potential of various products or their price, latest techno-economic data, industrial management etc. is missing or at best finds scanty coverage in these publications.

All these journals can be classified into following groups: (i) Business, finance and trade journals, e.g., Capital, Calcutta; Commerce, Bombay; Indian Trade Journal, Calcutta etc., (ii) Techno-economic journals, e.g., Economic Scene, Bombay; Eastern Economist, New Delhi and Economic Trends, New Delhi; (iii) News journals e.g. Chemical Industry News, Bombay; Chemical Times, Bombay; Economic and Commercial News, New Delhi; Engineering Times, Calcutta; and Industrial News Digest, New Delhi; and (iv) Technology journals, e.g. Research and Industry, New Delhi; and Chemical Age of India, Bombay. However, this grouping is not a water-tight compartmentalisation. This is, in fact, not possible due to overlapping scope of these publications.

Ephemeral publications like commercial and economic newspapers play a vital role in the dissemination of industrial information. In fact, these are the only sources which present the status of the Indian industries frequently. Papers falling in this category of publications are 'Business Standard', Calcutta; 'The Economic Times', New Delhi; and 'The Financial Express', New Delhi.

Guide to Published Sources - As mentioned earlier, the published industrial information sources are scarce and scattered. In these circumstances unless knowledge of the varieties of information sources, their scope and limitations, reference characteristics, ease of use, etc. is available, selection of a right information source becomes difficult. In such a situation, a sourcebook or a guide to these scattered sources may prove useful. It is needless to say that such guide should be well indexed keeping in view all sorts of queries. There is no such publication available in the country at present.

Limitations - In the process of this introductory survey of the published sources of industrial information some drawbacks and limitations have emerged. Most of the useful publications are backdated by 3-5 years. Moreover, information on a particular item reported in two different publications often do not tally, thus adding to confusion.

Organisational Sources
A variety of organisations are involved in or related to the development of industries in India. They are actively generating/collecting/disseminating or distributing industrial information and thus serve as important sources of information.

There are a large number of organisations which are directly or indirectly related to industrial development. To discuss all these diverse organisations with sweeping scope in a limited space would be a difficult task. In this paper only selected and important organisations are discussed.

In the absence of any standard classification practice for this type of work the evolution of some suitable classification or grouping for these organisations is necessary for the convenience of discussion. Besides national organisations, some international and regional organisations are involved in the industrial development of a country. It, therefore, proved handy to divide all the organisations into two broad groups: (i) International Organisations, and (ii) National Organisations. Further subdivisions within these groups can be done on the basis of the scope and functions of the organisations (most of the organisations serve more than one purpose, therefore, a water-tight compartmentalisation is not possible).
Thus, the 'International Organisations' can be divided into: (i) UN Agencies, e.g. UNCTAD, UNDEP, UNIDO, etc., (ii) Organisations for Economic Development, e.g. ESCAP, CcLD and World Bank Group, (iii) R&D Organisations, e.g. Intermediate Technology Development Group Ltd., International Tin Research Council, International Wool Secretariat and Tropical Products Institute, (iv) Information Services/Centres, e.g. INDIS, INTIB, ISOMET, FID Committee on Information for Industries, and World Federation of Engineering Information/Committee on Engineering Information, (v) Organisations for Standards and Patents, e.g. ISO, INPADOC, International Patent Institute, and WIPO, (vi) Trade Centres, e.g. International Trade Centre and World Trade Centre, (vii) Chambers of Commerce and Trade Associations, e.g. International Chambers of Commerce.


Because of the overlapping, or dual functions of the organisations falling under it, the first chapter, viz. 'Planning, Policy-making and Executive Bodies' is made a very broad one. It will cover all the ministries and their departments and organisations, including promotional, regulatory and advisory offices, concerning with industries, besides, Ministry of Finance, Planning Commission, etc.

Under the 'Quality Control Organisations' apart from ISI, organisations like the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation, Directorate of Marketing and Inspection, Research, Designs and Standard Organisation, etc. can come.

A variety of organisations can be put under the 'Export Promotion Organisations'. Important among them are: export promotion councils, Export Inspection Council of India, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, Indian Institute of Packaging, MMTC, STC, Trade Development Authority, and Trade Fair Authority of India.

Apart from covering all the institutions (e.g. C.S.O., Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics) involved purely in statistical or data work, the 'Statistical Organisations' may cover DGTD, State Directorates of Industries, SIDO, export promotion organisations, manufacturers' associations, etc.

Research Organisations can further be subdivided into a number of groups such as Central government organisations, State government organisations, Private organisations, R&D centres of industries, etc.

Training institutions and technological institutions can come under one group. However, it is more appropriate to deal with academic institutions separately. Other groups are self-explanatory.

Guide to Organisational Information

Information regarding above mentioned organisations is not only widely scattered but in many cases awfully inadequate. In view of the importance of these organisations as sources of information, there is a crying need for a directory which could provide the particulars of these organisations. At present, no such directory is available in the country which covers all these organisations.

At the end, it will be pertinent to draw attention to the 'generation gap' that we face in the Indian Industrial information scene. Though a number of organisations are involved in generating, gathering and disseminating such information, almost all of them issue only printed products. Most of the published sources discussed in the first part of this paper are brought out by one or the other organisation falling under the scope of the second part of the paper. As discussed earlier, by the time they are available in print, most of the information contained in them becomes back-dated. With the growing demand for industrial information and increase in the information that need to be gathered, sifted, and communicated to the right users, it becomes necessary that we in India adopt the latest information technologies, such as computerized information storage, online interactive search techniques, etc. No doubt, we have the expertise both in computer technology and in communication technology. In fact, in the fields like agriculture and nuclear science, we have already made a beginning in this direction. A little effort can also bring the expertise available to work on a national programme for modernizing the industrial information activities of all the major organisations involved in the industrial development.