

PERSONAL DOCUMENTATION — A STUDY

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Defines and outlines the meaning of personal documentation. Utility and purposes are discussed. An experiment has been carried out to study the difference between the documentation carried out in information centre and in personal documentation. Explains how the special librarians and information scientists make use of personal documentation.

INTRODUCTION

The human brain and the memory are biological marvels that outcompute the computer in the realm of the generation and association of ideas but not in the realm of the storage and retrieval of information. A man becomes frustrated when he knows that somewhere he has seen a piece of now desirable information but he does not quite know, just where. In case of human memory, unfortunately, the storage system is usually poorly organized and the retrieval system is 'chancy', at best, and totally inadequate. Therefore, human memory needs a mechanical aid or crutch such as a filing system.

In India, as we know many professionals (i. e. physicians, engineers, scientists) mainly depend on their memory as far as their personal information storage is concerned. Only a few of them jot down the references in their notebooks according to some arrangement. But we, as information scientists, know the limitations of such notebooks as filing system. We have not come across anybody who stores his personal information in card form.

In fact, we feel that it is at these information centres and libraries that we have real opportunity to promote and popularise the discreet and fruitful use of documentation. This can be achieved in two ways: i) Firstly, by explaining to the user the method and use of our documentation system. ii) Secondly by encouraging the user in working out his own

methods of storage and retrieval of information. The second way, gives the user the insight into the documentation system and it helps him not merely to have his own ways of information storage and retrieval, but also to understand the judicious use of our documentation. The method adopted by an average user in scanning, storing and retrieving the information of published and unpublished material relevant to him, and recording it, and retrieving it in a way which seems fit and useful to him for his future personal use, may be called as "PERSONAL DOCUMENTATION".

All the information centres and libraries generally adopt the first, namely acquainting the user with their documentation system. But they rarely encourage the user to work out his own way of documentation, which to us seems very important and vital. Therefore, instead of merely stressing importance of the documentation work done already at the information centres, it is strongly desirable to make the user cultivate the habit of doing his personal storage and retrieval of information.

This can be achieved in the following ways:

1. Recently some journals have introduced clipping service, the system of giving the abstracts of the articles printed on one side of the paper. These abstracts can be cut and pasted on cards. They are also provided with different subject headings.
2. Individuals can prepare the summaries of the articles in which they are interested on cards. In these days many journals provide the summaries of the articles either at the beginning or at the end.
3. Libraries and information centres can take initiative and prepare the cards on request.

As most of the scientific journals used here are published in foreign countries, very few individuals in India can afford to get personal copies of the journals. Information scientists can help them by distributing the cards with abstracts to the individuals interested in their personal storage.

WHO IS IN NEED OF PERSONAL INFORMATION STORAGE?

The scientists, technologists and physicians working in research institutions are in touch with information centres, and have to hunt for latest information and almost all of them know the use of abstracting journals and library filing systems etc. But what about the professionals? Physicians, engineers, technologists working in some establishments or practising privately, really are in need of this type of personal information storage system. These people have few hours, even minutes to spare for scanning new information and very little time to spare for the storage of the information which they have read and feel would be useful some time in near future. These people can directly utilize this information in practical use. Physicians can try on patients, engineers can try new methods and materials etc.

At present there are some journals which give the abstracts of the articles published in them. We can divide them in the following divisions:

1. Abstracts either at the beginning of the article or at the end of the article.

Examples:

- 1) American Review of Respiratory Diseases.
- 2) Archives of Pathology.
- 3) Australian Journal of Experimental Biology and Medical Science.
- 4) Chemotherapy.

2. Abstracts given separately but not meant for cutting.

Examples:

- 1) Chemical Engineering Progress.
- 2) Chemical Engineering
- 3) Antibiotiki (Russian)

3. Abstracts specially meant for cutting and pasting on the cards.

Examples:

- 1) Annals of Internal Medicine.
- 2) Acta Pharmacologica et Toxicologica.

We do not know when the mechanical aids like computers will be in practical use in information centres. When they come into use they will perhaps be able to supply all the literature on a particular topic. But, even to select the pertinent information from the list supplied by the computer will be itself a difficult job. No doubt we are bound to take the help of such mechanical aids in the future. But we think that personal documentation will continue to be important.

EXPERIMENT

In our Information Centre, we attempt at exhaustive indexing and also storing of all the literature on 'ANTIBIOTICS'. We do not miss any literature on antibiotics. We cover books, annual reviews, yearbooks, periodicals, patents, standards, newspapers, theses and abstracting periodicals.

All the literature indexed is stored under suitable headings in card form. Any information relating to antibiotics, however old it may be, can be had immediately from our micro-index (guide to literature to antibiotics).

We mainly serve the scientists in our Research and Quality Control Laboratories which have the following sections:

- 1) Mycology;
- 2) Organic Chemistry;
- 3) Biochemistry;
- 4) Physical Chemistry;
- 5) Pharmacology; and
- 6) Microbiology.

We have tested this micro-index for many topics on antibiotics and we found it very accurate and exhaustive. Especially when a new project is being initiated, we prepare a bibliography on that topic. To test the exhaustiveness of our micro-index we checked the bibliographies with Chemical Abstracts, Biological Abstracts and Index Medicus. We found that our micro-index is more exhaustive than the above abstracting journals.

However, we found some of the scientists from our Research Laboratory jotting down the references and preparing the cards for

hem. Sometimes we feared that our indexing may not be a useful one. We studied this problem by approaching many scientists who regularly jot down the references. In fact all the scientists who regularly jot down the references are regular users of our documentation services. We studied their references and found that the subjects they cover are not exactly relating to antibiotics, and also we found that their abstracting method is slightly different from the one practised by information centre. For example the following subjects are covered in personal documentation of some of our scientists:

- 1) Chromatography;
- 2) Electron microscopy; and
- 3) Anesthesia.

Information Centre also covers the above subjects, but only if they are related with antibiotics. We have observed that it is not possible for us to cover all the original work on the above subjects. If we start covering them we have to cover all the branches of sciences. We think that detailed coverage of such subjects is neither advisable nor practicable.

Therefore, we decided to study the problem of personal documentation and to know the relation between personal documentation and the documentation carried out by libraries and information centres.

We have selected one of our scientists from our Research Laboratory for our experiment. He is one of the most regular user of the library and also documentation services rendered by our Information Centre. In addition to the use of index-lists and abstract-list issued by Information Centre, he regularly scans the current periodicals and jots down the references which he feels would be useful to him in the near future. For any of his project work, relating to antibiotics he takes the full help of the stored and as well as current information services of the Information Centre. But he feels that there are some topics not exactly relating to antibiotics but still they are the topics in which he has to keep himself abreast of the latest developments.

We requested him to give his notebook in which he has jotted down the references. It contained 654 references for the period July 1966 to December 1967. We prepared cards for all the references. Some of the references were with summaries. We gave them

the alternative subject headings. We gave him the complete freedom of arrangement of cards. Purposely we did not suggest him any type of classification schemes.

After carefully studying his notebook, we observed that:

1. Only 22% of the references dealt with antibiotics. (These references are also covered by our information centre and stored in micro-index).
2. 78% of the references dealt with methodology of pharmacological studies. (We do not consider such articles for indexing in our information centre).
3. Every week he finds 10-15 new references.
4. He has classified the cards prepared by us under following headings:

Toxicity

CVS - Cardio Vascular System

CNS - Central Nervous System

ANS - Autonomic Nervous System

Chemotherapy

Antibiotics

Biochemical Pharmacology

Clinical Pharmacology

Review Articles

We asked him some questions and their answers are given below:

- Q. 1 For how many years have you been jotting down such references in your notebook?
- A. 1 Shortly after I registered for post-graduate studies in 1961.
- Q. 2 How do you use your references?
- A. 2 They are written in a notebook randomly and searched for at the time of need.
- Q. 3 When do you use your references?
- A. 3 At the time of planning certain experiments and new research projects and writing review articles.
- Q. 4 Are you aware of the services rendered by our Information Centre in the following ways?

1. Recent Literature Bulletin. (a weekly index-list of important articles on all aspects of antibiotics).
2. Technical information Bulletin. (A weekly index-list of advance information of articles on antibiotics. This is issued at least one month earlier than the receipt of original journals. We take the references from 'Current Contents' which we receive by air-mail).
3. Patent Abstracts. (A monthly abstract list of patents on antibiotics).
4. Antibiotic literature Index. (Quarterly index-list of all the literature on antibiotics appearing in the Hindustan Antibiotics Bulletin).
5. Micro-Index to Antibiotics. (All the literature on antibiotics is indexed in card form. These cards are stored according to our own classification system. From 1949 onwards up-to-date).

A. 4 Yes, I know.

Q. 5 If you know (4) how and when you utilize them?

A. 5 While planning for new research projects.

Q. 6 What is the difference between your reference notebooks and index-lists issued by the library?

A. 6 Those supplied by the library are concerned with antibiotics only with little information on new methodology etc.

Q. 7 Do you feel any difficulty in searching your notebook for any required information?

A. 7 Yes. It takes quite some time.

Q. 8 What difference do you feel in card form index (which the library has prepared from your notebook) and your references in notebook?

A. 8 One gets the desired reference fairly quickly in card form

DISCUSSION

From the above answers, it may be noted that the personal documentation is supplementary to library documentation. Libra-

ries and information centres attached to Research Institutions have to restrict their coverage to the main subject of the Institution. For example we cannot cover the following topics exhaustively.

Pharmacology,

Engineering,

Quality Control

No doubt, we cover, pharmacology, engineering and quality control etc., relating to antibiotics.

Another difference between personal documentation and library documentation is that the articles indexed in personal documentation are read by that person and then indexed by him.

FREEDOM OF STORAGE

As the cards stored by an individual are mainly meant for one's personal use only, type of arrangement should be left to him. Persons not working in the library are not supposed to know the sophisticated classification schemes. Even the existing schemes of classification do not provide the schedules for such depth topics. Almost all the libraries use their own methods for indexing and storage of indexed materials. We hope in near future mechanical aids like computers will be available for personal documentation also. Till then it is advisable to give freedom for the individual to use his own scheme of classification for storing.

NATURE OF ABSTRACTING OF INFORMATION

Example-1

Original author's summary appeared in the journal.

The effects of the methoxydopamines on the response of the central nervous system to stimulants and to the depressant action of hexobarbital are reported. The 3-methoxy, 4-methoxy and 3,4-dimethoxy derivatives of dopamine caused augmentation of Metrazol and thiosemicarbazide induced seizures. Strychnine and electroshock seizures were not influenced by pretreatment of animals. The same dosage levels of the 4-

methoxy and 3,4-dimethoxy derivatives which augmented the response to the stimulants produced a potentiation of hexobarbital sleeping time in 30% of the animals studied. These data would imply that the effects of these compounds on the central nervous system are complex. The locus of action of these compounds in augmenting the stimulant actions appear to be supra-spinal.

Summary made by our scientist for his personal documentation.

Mice Metrozol 85 mg/kg I. P.
Thiosemi- 7.5 mg/kg I. P.
Strychnine- 0.65 mg/kg subcut.

Drug administered 15 min. prior to metrazol etc.

(Arch. int. Pharmacodyn. 1966. 164(2); 301-307)

Example 2.

Original author's summary appeared in the journal.

Some pharmacological properties of FC₃₇₉ are described. The depression of the C. N. S. has been compared with that produced by meprobamate. Potentiation of barbiturate narcosis, spontaneous mobility, reduction of the muscular tone and anticonvulsive activity and effects on smooth muscles have also been examined.

Potentiation of barbiturate narcosis., SMA, 'fall time' Anticonvulsant activity- Strychnine 2.5 mg/kg I. P. in mice., cardizol-100mg/kg. I. P. in rats.

Summary made by our scientist for his personal documentation.

Diuresis-water force fed to rats three times at one hour intervals 50 ml/kg of water. Test subst. given after third admin. of water, amount of urine was meas-

ured at 30 min. interval for 3 hours.

(Arch. int. Pharmacodyn. 1966. 164(2); 340-344).

From the two examples shown above we can make out that the general summary is not so useful to personal documentation. He will abstract only that portion, some times even in keywords in which he is interested. Even the abstracts prepared by information centres will have a slant to particular group of scientists. Therefore, abstracting in personal documentation cannot be replaced by the published abstracts or the abstracts prepared by the information centres. But many people doing personal documentation have no time to abstract. In these cases original summaries or the abstracts prepared by information centres will be useful to individuals doing personal documentation.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussions, we may arrive at the following conclusions.

1. Personal documentation is more comprehensive.
2. Personal documentation differs from person to person and therefore no existing classification schemes will be useful to the persons doing it.
3. Librarians should make use of such personal documentation work for making the library documentation comprehensive.

It will be of much use for the librarians and information scientists to know the exact requirements of the individuals if they study the personal documentation. And we think to know the exact requirement is the basis for personal service and also for Selective Dissemination of Information (S. D. I.).

Persons doing personal documentation will definitely appreciate the library documentation in a better way. Librarians and information scientists should promote, wherever possible, personal documentation among their clientele. For detailed study we are also planning to conduct such survey on a wider scale in our laboratory.

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