# REPORT ON THE SEMINAR ON TOWARDS THE EVOLUTION OF INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, New Delhi, 8-9 December 1975

The Seminar was organized by INSDOC on behalf of the National Committee for FID to mark the 80th Anniversary of the FID. As is well known the FID considers 1895 as the official year of its foundation although work started earlier. For an international organisation which thrives on voluntary cooperation of members representing heterogenous political and economic groups and communities, continued existence for eighty years is itself a commendable work. Moreover, the FID completes its eighty years at a time when the need for effective documentation and information facilities has been felt and appreciated by everybody. There was a time when documentation services were aimed at the scholars only. But today such services are meant not only for scientists and engineers, but entrepreneurs, managers, administrators, policy makers, planners, in fact for everybody who has to take a rational decision. It has been the policy and endevour also of the FID, for the last few years, to help in the organisation of documentation for such wider purpose and bring it in 'contact with reality'.

It is quite appropriate that the Indian National Committee for FID should think of organising the Seminar to mark an important year of the history of the FID. So far as the national scene is concerned the Seminar was significant on more than one counts. It was attended by a large number of scientists, engineers, consultants, administrators, planners from various organisations and sectors apart from information workers. Thus, the Seminar provided a common platform and an occasion for exchange of views regarding nature of information requirements of scientists, engineers, planners, etc. and what facilities the information workers could provide to meet the requirements. The Seminar also provided in unmistakable terms an evidence of the widespread awareness of the importance of information in the country.

The Seminar was inaugurated by Shri P. N. Haksar, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission and Vice-President of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. In his speech, Shri Haksar observed that there were vast gaps in information relating to even our natural resources. Again, he was interested in getting precise

statistical information on the nature of poverty prevailing in the country. This was necessary for planning work but he was not able to get it. Very often work had to be carried on with guess work only. This situation had to be changed. Shri Haksar exorted the information workers in India to plan for an information system that would eliminate the vast information gaps and help our planners in thier activities. He reminded that they have to do it under many constraints, especially the financial constraint.

At the inaugural function the other speakers were Shri S. Parthasarathy, Scientist-in-Charge, Insdoc. Shri B.S. Kesavan, former Director of Insdoc, Dr. Peter Lazar, Director of the Hungarian Central Technical Library and Documentation Centre, Dr. H.C. Visvesvaraya, Director of Cement Research Institute, and Shri Y.R. Chadha, Chief Editor of the Publications and Information Directorate.

Shri Parthasarathy mentioned in brief the activities of the FID highlighting the work and enthusiasm of the founding fathers. He also outlined India's participation in FID's activities and recalled that two distinguished Indians had served as Vice-President of this international body, namely, late Dr. S.R. Ranganathan and Shri B.S. Kesavan, who was present on the occasion.

Shri Kesavan wished for the success of the Seminar. Dr. Lazar, speaking next, conveyed the best wishes of the Hungarian information scientists to their Indian counterparts. He mentioned about the present activities of the FID in general and the work of the Study Committee FID/DC (Developing countries) in particular, with which he was associated. Dr. Lazar assured that the FID would continue to support documentation activities in the developing countries. Apart from Dr. Lazar, the Seminar was also attended and addressed by two more foreign participants, namely, Professor Jean Perreault of the Alabama University and Dr. V.I. Ramanov, Director of the Computer Centre, GOST, Moscow.

Dr. Visvesvaraya dwelt at some length on the current information scene in India and felt that information facilities were yet to be organised on a national level. Very often the national point of view was lost sight of. To correct the situation a proper systems approach was necessary. He also mentioned about the nature of service that he expected from an information worker. He thought it was much more than providing the documents, bibliographies, references and all that. He should be able to provide the exact information, when specified, or even reliable and objective view of the progress of subjects.

Apart from the Inaugural Session, the Seminar had four Technical Sessions devoted to the elements of the national information system, industrial information, agricultural and medical and other sectoral information, and computer-based information services and manpower development. The Sessions were chaired, respectively, by Dr. H.C. Visvesvaraya, Dr. V.A. Kamath, Shri Y.R. Chadha, and Brigadier V.M. Sundaram. Twenty five papers were presented and discussed at these sessions. Out of these only twelve papers are being reproduced in this issue of the Annals. These are on the national information system and on industrial information. The first paper gives a historical perspective of FID's development and India's participation in its activities. Shri S. Parthasarathy briefly outlines the NISSAT plan and the activities of the various components, in his paper. Shri Vedaraman's paper deals with the implications of the new patent law of the country and need for a well organised patent information system. The six papers on industrial information provide a comprehensive view of the different aspects of such information and also give an idea as to what need to be done

in this sector. One paper, by Shri B. S. Krishnamachar, brings out the importance of standards in the industrial context. The remaining papers will appear in the next issue of the Annals.

At the Concluding Session a set of resolutions were adopted isolating the areas for immediate action. The resolutions are reproduced below:-

During the Seminar on Information System for National Development twenty-five papers were presented. These papers were discussed in four technical sessions devoted to: (1) National Information System, (2) Industrial Information, (3) Sectoral/ Mission Oriented Systems, and (4) Computer-based Information Systems and Manpower Development. The discussions brought out a number of issues which are relevant and important for developing a national information system. While examining the present information scene in India, it is pointed out that there exists a variety of information centres, with different functions, scope and efficiency, distributed over a large number of science agencies, research laboratories, universities, institutes of higher learning, professional colleges, professional associations, government departments, public and private sector industries, and R&D organisations. There is also a great variation in the level of development and the standard of services provided by these centres. It should therefore be the main objective of a national information system to interlink and coordinate the various information centres and their services into an effective national information network.

The Seminar, taking into consideration the suggestions made in a number of papers for developing information facilities and services in various sectors of science and technology and the number of clarifications sought during the discussions, makes the following recommendations:

1. Recognising the value of scientific and technical information as an important resource for accelerating national development in all sectors and at all levels, the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India, should launch the National Information System for Science and Technology (NISSAT) immediately and on a priority basis.

2. Sectoral/Mission-oriented information systems, pooling the existing resources available in the country and covering areas of national importance such as Food, Agriculture, Public Health and Family Planning, Human Settlements, Environment, Natural Resources, and Energy which are essential for improving the quality of life of a large majority of our population, should be developed on a priority basis by the Government.

3. Considerable attention should be given to building up expeditiously a strong data base for supporting national planning process and for Government decision-making. This would require a massive concentrated effort for bringing out statistical information generated especially in the government departments, current and meaningful.

4. The Government Departments responsible for generating socio-economic and techno-economic data and reports should evolve suitable mechanisms for making available this information among themselves and to the public expeditiously and efficiently. From the users point of view, timelines of the information supplied is an esss ntial criterion.

5. Attention should also be paid to building up diversified industrial information services for meeting the requirements of various sectors of industry. Industrial information services, especially for the small scale sector, should be stepped up.

6. Government should build up a strong patent information system. This would contribute to the effective transfer of technology as well as support innovation. This is a large gap in our information system, which should be filled up soon for supporting our industrial development.

7. While developing our national information system, considerable attention should be paid to the application of modern information technology and formulation and adoption of uniform standards for improving our facilities and services. Extensive provision of reprographic equipment should be made in our information centres. Computer facilities should be made available for information processing and for utilising computer-produced data bases. Telelink facilities should be created for quick data transmission and for establishing information network within the country. This would also facilitate our access to international information networks.

8. Adequate facilities should be provided for advanced training for specialised manpower. This would create the necessary expertise for operating our national information system.

9. Government should have adequate provision for supporting projects and programmes in information field for accelerating the development of national information system.