



The National Federation of Science Abstracting and Indexing Services*

ALTHOUGH THE National Federation of Science Abstracting and Indexing Services (NFSAIS) has been decreasingly active in the past two years, it has provided since 1958 a focal point for abstracting and indexing interests.

One of the founders was Miles Conrad of *Biological Abstracts*, who reported soon after its founding:

The possibilities of cooperating with one another and coordinating our respective activities [have] for years seemed very attractive to many of us whose responsibility it is to abstract and index the literature of science and technology. However, it took the advent of the sputniks to provide the dramatic impetus required to take real and tangible action that might lead to such coordination. At a meeting on December 9, 1957 the representatives of a number of abstracting and indexing services in different fields of science and technology agreed to hold a conference to consider common operating problems and the possibilities of cooperation and coordination.

Through the good offices of the National Science Foundation funds were provided *Biological Abstracts* with which to organize and call together representatives of the major abstracting and indexing services of the United States for a conference on January 29, 30 and 31, 1958 in Philadelphia. These services, listed below, serve virtually all of the major sciences and technologies:

Aeronautical Reviews
Applied Mechanics Reviews
Bibliography of Agriculture
Biological Abstracts
Chemical Abstracts
Current List of Medical Literature
Engineering Index

* Compiled by Foster E. Mohrhardt from various publications of the National Federation of Science Abstracting and Indexing Services and other sources.

Mathematical Reviews
Meteorological Abstracts
Nuclear Science Abstracts
Psychological Abstracts
Review of Metal Literature
Technical Abstract Bulletin (ASTIA)
*United States Government Research Reports (OTS)*¹

Other services that have been associated with the Federation include:

Bibliography & Abstracts on Electrical Contacts
Corrosion Abstracts
Environmental Effects on Materials and Equipment Abstracts
Fire Research Abstracts & Reviews
GeoScience Abstracts
Index Medicus
International Aerospace Abstracts
Scientific and Technical Aerospace Reports
Tobacco Abstracts
U.S. Government Research and Development Reports
Wheat Abstracts
Sociological Abstracts

It is an association of autonomous and independently managed corporate and government bodies. In joining together in a Federation the organizations have signified their willingness to *cooperate* with one another in order to further the interest of science and technology without sacrificing their prerogative of independence.

Headquarters were originally in Washington, D.C., but the Secretariat is now handled by *Biological Abstracts* in Philadelphia. It has functioned through working groups specializing in such problems as:

1. Unification of abstracting methods within the Federation.
2. Reduction of duplication.
3. Terminology in the field of scientific and technical information (this work is carried on jointly with the ASA).
4. Financing of information services.
5. Unification of entry forms for journals.
6. Centralized subscription to periodicals (special attention is paid to publications of the socialist countries) and exchange of publications between members of the Federation.

National Federation of Science Abstracting and Indexing Services

7. General questions of mechanization of information work.
8. Raising of qualifications of information workers.
9. New technology in the preparation of abstract journals, shortening of time of their issuance, etc.

A forum. The Federation by means of its annual, special working group, and committee meetings has enabled the directors and the professional staff of member and nonmember abstracting and/or indexing services to meet and establish a working relationship with their counterparts. New methods, techniques, and processes are discussed along with preliminary research results. These forums have also enabled Federation members to benefit from the advice of professional science information experts from industrial, governmental, and educational institutions.

A unique opportunity is provided for both government and non-government personnel at the management and working levels to sit down together and focus their attention on mutual problems and the methodology of information processing.

A central office for conducting surveys and research projects. Through the Secretariat, the Federation conducts central projects that could not be carried out by any individual service. The Federation has been involved in projects including the following:

1. Cooperation with the Science Division of the Library of Congress in the compilation and publication of the *Guide to U.S. Indexing and Abstracting Services in Science and Technology* and a *Guide to the World's Abstracting and Indexing Services*.
2. The compilation and publication of a *Federated List of Serials Covered by the Members of the Federation*. This contains the titles of 17,000 serials with annotations indicating the degrees of coverage provided by each member service.
3. A proposed inventory of the world's scientific and technical periodicals.
4. A proposed unique journal article coding system.
5. A proposed design of a study of the utility of different kinds of published indexes under various conditions of usage.

A standards producing and publishing group. The Federation has produced bibliographic standards for the abstracting and indexing community. A standard for modern Russian to English transliteration

has been published. A draft standard for the definition of an abstract has been evaluated, as has a standard for bibliographic citation. Another effort involves discussion for compatibility of systems used by member services publishing permuted-title indexes of the keyword-in-context type. The Federation is also represented on the USASI Z-39 Committee and many of its sub-committees.

A national spokesman for the industry. The Federation through its Secretariat obtains a consensus of the views of the members of the abstracting and indexing community and states these views to government and non-government planners, administrators, and legislators.

A negotiating and surveying agency. The Federation has sent survey teams to the USSR, Poland, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Japan to appraise portions of their secondary information systems and has reported upon them. It has enabled the "decentralized" U.S. services to talk at the same table with the generally more "centralized" foreign secondary information organizations.

An educational and public relations office for the abstracting and indexing industry. The Federation has planned a program by means of which colleges and universities will be encouraged to teach the use of secondary services to all their science and technology undergraduates.

A secondary-service information center. The Federation has served as an information center for all persons wishing to obtain knowledge about secondary information services in science and technology.

An organization for encouraging and engendering interservice cooperation. The Geological Society of America reported:

Through the Federation, the American Meteorological Society obtained the cooperation of the American Chemical Society in developing its work in permuted title indexing. The American Meteorological Society in turn has cooperated with the American Geological Institute in developing its permuted title indexes and also in its use of the Universal Decimal Classification. The American Society for Metals/the Engineers Joint Council-Engineering Index cooperation was also engendered by participation in NFSAIS activities. The need should be stressed for close cooperation among those working in

National Federation of Science Abstracting and Indexing Services

the rapidly developing field of scientific and technical information communication.²

A statistics collecting and disseminating agency. The Federation collects and makes available statistics from its member services.

It also distributes and publishes coverage and cost data to the industry and to those interested in initiating new services.

A centralized acquisition unit. One of the principal advantages observed by the Federation team of 1959 which visited the Soviet VINITI was the efficiency inherent in a centralized acquisition system. The desirability of forming such a system in the U.S. under Federation aegis has been debated many times by the membership without fruitful results. A program was initiated to test in a small way the utility of such an enterprise. The Federation has conducted for its membership an airmail exchange with mainland China and is receiving about fifty-two generally high-quality primary journals. These journals are redistributed by photocopy to the membership. The Federation published a tables-of-contents journal which will enable its members and others to order photocopies of Chinese articles from the Federation as they need them.

Proposed areas of Federation activities. In addition to the items mentioned above, the following topics have been suggested for Federation attention:

1. Creation of groups for establishing standards for: (a) abstracts, (b) journal titles, (c) transliteration, (d) citation style.
2. Conduct of training programs (such as short courses and summer institutes) *in the effective use of available abstracting and indexing services* for scientists, science administrators, documentalists, information officers, librarians, and for teachers in library schools and the newly developing curricula in science documentation.
3. a. Research on user requirements, which continues to be a major need. There is an inadequate measure available to us, at present, of the differences in individual requirements for information and the manner in which these individual differences may be translated into a working information system.
b. Provision of overall information on coverage by primary source and subject so that the NFSAIS could tell an inquirer which member service covers any given field.

- c. Development as a reference and statistical center; maintenance of census-type data on the growth and distribution of literature, costs, personnel, etc.
 - d. Conduct or sponsorship of user studies based on existing products of a wide range of services, or based on needs without reference to existing services and tools.
4. Study of the relationship between abstracting and indexing services and specialized information centers, and recommendations as to how these two types of information retrieval organizations can best integrate their functions and supplement each other.

In conclusion, the comment of Raymond E. Jensen, executive secretary of the Federation, may be cited:

The Federation has in recent years tended to represent the private sector rather than the federal sector. The impact of this change has as yet not been fully recorded. The Federation has functioned as a viable and productive organization in the past, but its future is in doubt, if participation in its affairs is not expanded by increased membership.

References

1. Conrad, G. Miles. [Preface.] In *Proceedings. Conference of American Scientific and Technical Abstracting and Indexing Services*. (Sheraton Hotel, Philadelphia, January 29-31, 1958.) N.p., 1958.
2. Information provided by Raymond Jensen, Executive Secretary of NFSAIS.