

BOOK REVIEW

RADHAKRISHNA (S) AND IYENGAR (T. K. S.); Ed. "Technical Information Services for Developing Countries" Pp. 344: Proceedings of a Conference organised by the Committee on Science and Technology in Developing Countries, ICSO/COSTED, c/o Library, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore 12, 1977, Price: Rs. 3 (\$ 7/-). A Review.

The theme topic chosen for the international conference organised by COSTED—Committee on Science and Technology in Developing Countries, March, 1977, is particularly timely since concern about the role of science and technology in the development is growing rapidly in many developing countries. In a world of seemingly unlimited resources, the optimum utilization of available resources requires the identification of areas of vital importance for the developing countries, as also the best methods of disseminating information in those areas and to the right people. The methods of information dissemination will have to be geared to the national problems, because the progress of any country depends on the application of science and technology for the solution of their vital problems. To survey the available information services and the hurdles in the way of disseminating information services, it was appropriate that at this conference, librarians have joined hands with information scientists, science policy makers, management people, computer technologists and science writers to explore the areas where the application of "Appropriate Technology" is needed. These aspects as also the information needs in the fields of agriculture, health and environment, industrial technology, materials and resources are discussed in the various papers presented at this conference.

In the very first paper by Prof. T. K. S. Iyengar and V. Srinivasan, a survey of the available information services both conventional and mechanised is made. It is stressed that these information systems do not provide information about appropriate technology for the socio-economic development of the developing countries. Several impediments in communicating available information are highlighted in the next paper. There should be awareness between the service centres and users of information in developing countries. The developing countries should develop their own software technology and information services suiting their needs. A well defined science policy and a wide national network of information services should be

developed. Prof. A. Neelameghan has gone a long way to bring home the U.N. Information System and Technology information exchange network. He has advocated the establishment of a global network as contained in the U.N. Secretary General's Report of 14th June 1976 and speedy implementation of the UNESCO-UNISIST Regional Seminar.

Invoking the ideas contained in the Weinberg Report Mr. A. K. Das Gupta has described the need for alternative system for the existing scientific and technological information services. Professor Sampath has suggested computerised information services to meet the explosion of knowledge. The programme of NTIS in providing information for developing countries is described by William T. Knox, the Director of the National Technical Information Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce, in his paper. While providing developing countries access to the large body of U.S. technical literature and data, NTIS also offers computerised, on-line retrieval services. Dr. Mahabala by giving the example of the non-organised sector like the leather industry in India has stressed that it helps to earn valuable foreign exchange. But industries like these need sophisticated SDI services and current awareness services in a simple language. The computer-based retrieval system, many times is difficult for the entrepreneur to swallow. Dr. B. S. Kesavan is right in saying that they need specialized field advisory service.

Talking about the information services for agriculture Prof. Kalpage says that the information services have to suit the ever-changing environment in which each agriculturist operates. Dr. Radhakrishnan, Scientific Secretary, COSTED, while discussing the burning problems of poverty, ill-health, illiteracy, shortage of natural resources, food, housing, etc., has suggested the use of appropriate technology. Mr. Seshamani has given a plan for Rural Information System, but how far it can be implemented? Mr. T. S. Rajagopalan has given in detail the need and purpose of NISSAT. Coordinating information sources, systems and services into an effective network is its goal and the D.S.T. has to take initiative to achieve this goal. There are several other papers which deal with plans for computerised information systems for industrial development and the role of information services for industrial development.

The gist of the Seminar is that libraries and librarians should develop effective information systems to facilitate research in science and technology for the development of rural areas in developing countries.

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