

3.70 General

See also: 22,578; 22,597; 22,602; 22,616; 22,649

BELZER, JACK (Univ. Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa.); LANCASTER, F. W.; SWANSON, DON; BAXENDALE, PHYLLIS; AND HERNER, SAUL. 22,622

Can present methods for library and information retrieval service survive? (Panel)

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This paper presents the comments of five panelists (Jack Belzer, Chairman; F. W. Lancaster; Don Swanson; Phyllis Baxendale; and Saul Herner) on problems involved in the development of information storage, retrieval, and dissemination systems. In general, the papers are recommended for providing a summary of the issues facing the field.

Jack Belzer discusses the problem of machine searching of bibliographic records using Boolean search requests. He indicates system designers have found it difficult to develop systems which reduce the number of non-relevant document citations returned by a search, and he questions the fidelity of the process of translating what is in the user's brain (the information need) into a formal query. He advocates the design of adaptive retrieval systems able to generalize from previous user interactions to predict and improve search performance.

F. W. Lancaster's paper "Are we ready for on-line information retrieval?" suggests Boolean searching of bibliographic records is unsatisfactory and that new and more flexible search strategies are necessary. He also discusses the use of controlled vocabularies vs. free or uncontrolled vocabularies in indexing documents, and advocates that the vocabulary control issue be explored from a cost-effectiveness viewpoint. The need for more consideration of user requirements in designing retrieval systems is also stressed.

Don Swanson, in his paper "Should present methods for financing library and information services survive?" tackles the question of how to measure the effectiveness of a library, proposes several effectiveness measures, and raises the issue of how to assign a value to the information services provided by a library.

Phyllis Baxendale's presentation: "The need for consumer-mediation with information resources: the prospect for graphic display techniques" develops the idea that in order to increase the value of information to the user, improved techniques and devices such as display terminals need to be employed for user interaction with retrieval systems.

The final paper "Need, opportunity, tradition and fashion: evolutionary forces in information products and services" by Saul Herner discusses the need for marketing, user, and legal studies in determining what information products and methods should be developed. Herner assumes that the problem of retrieving large quantities of unwanted material from an information retrieval system in response to a query can be solved by the user rapidly reading all the material presented. Rather than this approach, the reviewer suggests the necessity for incorporating in retrieval systems better methods for predicting the relevance of the material to the user.

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