

News from Information House

Aslib's consultancy, launched in November, is already working on several projects, including one for a major bank. In January, Dr Frank Ryan joined the consultancy team to complement and strengthen the expertise of the other three consultants, Sarah Cull, Anne Holdich Stodulski and Michael Laydon. Dr Ryan is well known in the database field and his appointment brings an even wider range of information management skills and capabilities to Aslib. The One-Stop Information Shop, of which the consultancy is an integral part, is now fully equipped to deal with any organization's information needs, from general enquiries to full-scale consultancy.

An important and innovative part of the consultancy is its range of ASSESS fixed-price consultancy services. ASSESS offers organizations an 'information management audit' to judge either the general fitness and efficiency of their library or information services, or the effectiveness of particular elements such as customer service and the use of information technology. Having initially evaluated the service by means of a detailed questionnaire, the consultants work on-site to produce independent, unbiased assessments of service quality, performance, effectiveness and value for money. Their final report evaluates strengths and weaknesses and makes suggestions for improvements.

'The Intelligent Enterprise'

The Intelligent Enterprise is a new journal from Aslib which replaces *Business Information Times*. It has been designed for everyone concerned with the strategic decision-making process and how it can be improved by the efficient management of information. The sheer volume of information pertinent to any business concern is massive and growing every day. *The Intelligent Enterprise* is about the process of refining the key strategic in-

telligence out of the welter of disparate internal and external information sources — essential for those who want to take the lead over their competitors.

New publications

Aslib's new series of 1991 Online Guides were published recently. Each one is devoted to a particular specialist area, with *Going Online* providing a general introduction to the field. The guides cover all the latest databases in detail, including hosts, producers, costs and full descriptions of the databases. Areas covered are *Management and marketing; Law; Business and company; Building, construction and planning; Medical; Environment*.

We all know that information is an asset and that the proper management of it is vital in a competitive industrial society. Vast sums are spent on information systems and information managers are appointed to handle information, and yet there have been spectacular failures to meet objectives and demands. The 12 papers in Aslib's new book *Great information disasters*, edited by Dr F.W. Horton and Dr D.A. Lewis, show clearly that the incorrect use and handling of information can lead to human misery, political misfortune and business failure, often on a monumental scale. Topics include: the West and the information productivity contest, Hitler's decision to attack the Soviet Union, Three Mile Island, the hurricane of 1987, the Tacoma Bridge disaster, the MRAIS story, and the US stock market crash of 1987.

It is ten years since the first edition of *The marketing of libraries and information services*, and the idea of applying marketing theory to non-profit organizations, in its infancy then, has now become universally accepted. The recently-published second edition is not intended to supersede the first edition but to act as a complement to and extension of it. It

comprises 35 papers on topics such as mainstream marketing, applying the principles of marketing, pricing and charging, the information industry, and market research. The book is indispensable for anyone attempting for the first time to market their information service.

Also now in its second edition, and completely revised and updated, Sylvia Webb's *Personal development in information work* deals with the development of information worker in the context of information work, discussing the qualities and skills required to manage a library or information unit. It is a practical guide to success, equally useful to the newly-qualified and the experienced manager. Case studies described in the first edition have been followed up, and help to show the reader that personal development is an ongoing process and that one's career can sometimes take surprising turns!

Information 90: Proceedings of the 3rd international conference and exhibition transcribes the papers given at this important conference. Co-sponsored by Aslib, the Library Association, the Institute of Information Scientists, the Society of Archivists and the Council of Polytechnic Librarians, sessions included technology and the information world, charging for services, ethics and responsibilities, use of new media, and innovation in library and information science education. The opening address was given by Andrew Neil, Editor of the *Sunday Times*.

During 1989, Professor Rui Guozhang from the China Society for Scientific and Technical Information in Beijing spent six months working at Aslib. He translated into English several previously untranslated articles from Chinese information science journals. These have now been collected in a new Aslib book, *Information science in China*. Their subjects represent the main fields of interest and expertise in China at this time — bibliometrics, scientometrics, information retrieval, automated sys-

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tems, expert systems and bibliography. China has advanced enormously in information science and information technology over the past decade, and is very keen to interact with professionals in the West. This collection of papers illustrates the progress made and the progress yet to come, but above all is an indication of what China has to offer the rest of us.

Hypermedia at Aslib

The exciting new technologies of hypertext and hypermedia were the subject of a new Aslib seminar in

March. This revolutionary means of information management is increasingly important at a time when computerized information systems for storing, retrieving and disseminating information are becoming all-pervasive in the many walks of life that maintain the information flow of a modern society. The user interface should be as friendly as possible for these systems, and hypertext and hypermedia facilitate this. Hypertext allows freedom of movement between texts throughout a database, making the flow of information a more natural process. Hypermedia extends this concept to cover sound, animation, video and CD-ROM. Delegates received a hands-on demonstration of systems

using *Guide* and *Hypercard*, two of the premier hypersystems.

Aslib's training programme

The Professional Development Group's Autumn season of training courses (September to December 1991) includes several brand new courses and seminars. For a brochure covering all Aslib's training events, please contact Barbara Hobbs at Aslib. If you are interested in membership of Aslib, please contact Carys Mitchell. Our address is: Information House, 20-24 Old Street, London EC1V 9AP (Tel: 071-253 4488; Fax: 071-430 0514; Tlx: 23667 ASLIB G).