Clusterings

10th Online Meeting and Exhibition
Novotel, Hammersmith, December 1987

For several years there have been indications that this event is running out of space. Formerly a buffet was provided down in the regions of the project reviews, but this year the space had been taken over by the exhibition, and those wishing to have lunch nearby had to become extra exhibits, sitting on a ledge above it. Several exhibitors had been forced into a sort of marquee, cantilevered out from the rest of the exhibition. Crowds milled everywhere, and there were indications that some exhibitors were scarcely ready when the doors opened, slightly late. Clearly, it is essential that a larger and more appropriate venue should be found, with sufficient air and space.

Business information services appear to be burgeoning, and City types were highly evident. Thus the Financial Times had a vast stand to advertise its wide range of services, and copies of the pink daily were one of the most popular of the limited range of freebies available.

The Online exhibition grew up as an adjunct to the conference, but has grown to dwarf the meeting. The meeting still exists, with its vast range of alternative papers and project reviews, and is no doubt profitable to its organizers, but one must question whether the industry would not be better served by making the project reviews open to a wider audience. Obviously there would need to be a fee, but this could be met by exhibitors if it was thought of value: Datacentralcn took the first step in this direction by holding an open meeting within the project review framework.

Unfortunately, it is necessary to stress that it is now virtually impossible to get any real feel for most of the systems being exhibited, as demand for demonstrations greatly exceeds the number of terminals or staff on duty on most of the stands. Thus, many exhibitors appear content to limit their response to hardcopy literature. This is absurd. An online exhibition should be just that: in the past, when hardware was far more expensive and telecommunications questionable, it was possible to get a far better impression of the products being ‘exhibited’. Clearly, it is essential for this event to escape from the dreary confines of Hammersmith.

Lastly, the event now has a major impact on the information profession: the November/December issue of Aslib Information was devoted to this theme, and the Institute of Information Scientists produced an excellent ‘alternative’ guide to it, including guidance on less costly sources of sustenance in the Hammersmith area.

K.P.J.

Conferences to come

The third International Expert Systems conference and exhibition will be held 2-4 June 1987 at Novotel London. Details from the Organizing Secretary, Expert Systems Conference, Learned Information Ltd, Woodside, Hincksey Hill, Oxford OX1 5AU.

The Society of Indexers will hold its sixth residential conference Friday–Sunday 10–12 July 1987, at Chester College, entitled ‘Indexing for the future’. At this conference the inaugural Norman Knight Memorial Lecture will be delivered, by Alexander Macmillan, second Earl of Stockton, the Chairman of Macmillan Publishers Ltd. Other speakers will be: Alex Wilson, 1986 President of the Library Association; Alan Peacock, of Cheshire Libraries and Museums; Lawrence Rawsthorne, of Clwyd Library and Museum Service; and Norman Nunn-Price, of CONTEXT Legal Systems. There will also be demonstrations of computer indexing programs, and discussion of indexing, registration for indexers, and SI business. Details and application forms from the Conference Secretary, Mrs C. Tyler, Hillcroft, Kettle Lane, Kinsey Heath, Audlem CW3 0DR.

Bizarre index

The index to Bizarre books by Russell Ash and Brian Lake (Macmillan, 1985), a compilation of peculiar book titles, is headed ‘Bizarre index’, and lives up to its name indeed with such entries as:

Ants, Psychic Power of
Ear Rims, Hairy
Earthworm, Harnessed
Elastic Webbing Since the Dawn of Time, The History and Romance of
Embroidery, Who’s Who in Australian
God, Cooking With
Goldfish, Eighteenth-century Chinese
Hipbones, Self-Revolving
Holes in Bread, The Romance of House, Eat Your Peanut, How to Eat a Suet Pudding, The Fangs of Telephone-answering Fish Walk, How to

—oh, to deal always with such headings!