The impact of the new technology on indexing began with the advent and spread of computers. Now non-print publishing, online data banks and CD-ROMs affect the indexer more than ever. Below we note some relevant recent events and developments in this field, beginning with a meditation from Information Media and Technology (Nov. 1987) on the term itself:

The term ‘electronic publishing’ is currently being used throughout the media with two different meanings. Used in one sense it refers to non-print publishing using on-line databases, videotex services and media such as CD-ROM—for example, a recent European Commission event was exclusively concerned with electronic publishing in the non-print meaning. In the second sense it is used for computerized methods of producing print publications and becomes a near synonym to desktop publishing referring as it does to the use of such things as electronic workstation-based page composition systems. (For example an organization called the Institute for International Research recently held a seminar entitled Electronic and Desktop Publishing solely concerned with print products.) Of the two, the use of the second meaning seems the less easy to sustain: firstly, because the end product is the familiar print on paper the reader will perceive little or no difference from the conventional product; and secondly, electronic publishing applied to print publications lacks any true distinction from mainstream printing. There must be fewer and fewer publications which do not use electronic systems to some degree or other. Let’s reserve electronic publishing for non-print publishing.

# The H. W. Wilson Company is to make the Modern Language Association’s MLA International Bibliography available on CD-ROM through WILSONDISC™. A single CD-ROM (Compact Disc-Read Only Memory) can hold up to 550 megabytes of data, or 150,000 pages of text. CD-ROM discs are read by a CD-ROM player (or drive) connected to a personal computer. The first WILSONDISC issue of the Bibliography will contain the 230,000 citations published in the 1981–86 volumes and will be updated on a quarterly basis.

A yearly subscription will provide the purchaser with the initial CD and quarterly updates of the product. Subscribers also receive unlimited online access to the MLA file through the WILSONLINE™ retrieval system for the nominal cost of telecommunications fees. WILSONDISC search protocol provides for switching from CD to Online modes with a single keystroke: a user can access the CD for historical material and go online with the same search for material already online but not yet represented in a quarterly update. Wilson has based its CD software on the premise that not all users will be experienced in online techniques, and the choice of searching strategies enhances novices’ use of the file. WILSONDISC offers four different search modes for retrieval of data, enabling users to select the one best suited to their level of expertise:

The Browse mode of retrieval allows the user to select a term and then browse through an alphabetical index of terms surrounding the selected term. A single keystroke can then call citations featuring the selected term.

The WILSEARCH™ mode of retrieval creates a search strategy for the user based on WILSONLINE search protocols. Following a simple menu, the user selects terms to be combined in a search, and WILSEARCH creates the strategy and runs the search based on the selected terms.

The WILSONLINE mode of retrieval offers the same search capabilities and uses the same search protocol as WILSONLINE. Full Boolean logic, truncation, Find, and Neighbor commands are all available in the WILSONLINE mode. Additional search qualifiers will allow the user to search the entire data base or to narrow a search to a single category, such as period, language, type of approach, influence, source, genre, or group.

The Expert mode of retrieval, for the experienced searcher, follows the same procedure as WILSONLINE but offers expanded screen handling and window functions. The use of a long screen permits a continuous view of search-strategy development.

Support services for the MLA Bibliography on WILSONDISC will include full documentation and training seminars.

A year’s subscription to the MLA-CD, including updates, is $1,495. The first MLA-CD will contain all the entries from the 1981–86 bibliographies; the quarterly updates will contain 1987 citations. Negotiations are also under way for Wilson to produce a second CD, which will hold all the historical data (1921–80).

# The British National Bibliography for 1981-1985 is available on microfiche. This cumulates the publications of those five years into one sequence of over 190,000 British book and serial titles by subject, author and title, and includes fiction and juvenile literature. The records of each item are compiled in accordance with international cataloguing standards. The bibliography supersedes previous printed and microfiche editions and is contained on 180 fiche at 48X reduction in a compact storage case. It costs £195 plus VAT or £225 overseas.
The book catalogue of the British Library Document Supply Centre is now available on line through the BL's BLAISE-LINE service. Users of the service will be able to verify whether the book they require is in stock and if so request the title through the service. The present stock totals 260,000 titles growing at the rate of 5,000 per month.

J. Whitaker & Sons Ltd are to launch Whitaker's Books in Print on CD-ROM at an annual subscription of £980, renamed Bookbank CD-ROM Service. The service will be monthly with updates of price and status plus 5,000 new titles per month, and will feature three levels of access: Novice, Experienced and Expert. The first two will be menu accessed and the final one command-driven.

R. R. Bowker plan to introduce their Bowker Plus on CD-ROM. The Plus service comprises Bowker Books in Print Plus and Ulrich's Plus. The Books in Print service provides on one CD-ROM Books in Print, Books in Print Supplement, Forthcoming Books and Subject Guide to Forthcoming Books; including quarterly updates, the service is priced at £695 per annum. Ulrich's Plus includes, again on one CD-ROM, the 68,000 titles in Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory, the 36,000 titles from Irregular Serials and Annuals, and the ISSN Index lists more than 75,000 international serial numbers. Including quarterly updates, the service is priced £375.

Pergamon Infoline has announced the availability online of a brand new database, Research Index. This is a listing of news items of financial interest appearing in one hundred periodicals and the UK national press. The database currently contains 24,000 items from the end of November 1985 to the present. The printed form of Research Index, produced by Business Surveys Ltd, is a well respected publication chiefly used for keeping up to date with news and current affairs. The new online file will maintain the currency of the printed index and also allow customers to maintain their own tailored automatic alerting service.

Adonis is an experimental weekly CD-ROM carrying the contents of some 300 to 350 biomedical journals' text, half-tones and drawings. The index will be extracted each week to produce a cumulated index. Requests for copy delivery will be produced on a laser printer and the printed copy sent by post. It is hoped to develop the experiment into other delivery modes.

Cimtech, Hatfield Polytechnic’s national centre for information media and technology, is to receive £500,000 from the Department of Trade and Industry to help develop a system for document imaging.

In Information processing and management 23 (3) 1987 H. D. White and C. G. Belver compare the indexing terms used in four online biomedical databases. (‘Quality of indexing in online databases’, pp. 211–24). They took articles known to be in more than one of these four—Medline, PsycInfo, BIOSIS and Excerpta Medica—and compared the indexing terms that were applied. One example showed that Medline indexed an article using GUILT, SEX BEHAVIOUR, ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE, AROUSAL, PERSONALITY, ADULT, ASSOCIATION and PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS, whereas PsycInfo indexed the same article EMOTIONS, PSYCHOSEXUAL BEHAVIOUR, SEX, WORD ASSOCIATIONS, GUILT, HUMAN SEX DIFFERENCES, PERSONALITY MEASURES and PSYCHOLOGICAL AROUSAL. The analysis of indexing philosophy goes into some depth. The paper concludes that BIOSIS indexing terms are less like natural language than Medline’s, but that Medline appears not to apply terms which would duplicate words in the title; Medline applies the most indexing terms and its indexing sets a consistently high standard. BIOSIS seems to apply terms indiscriminately—less helpful for searchers. Excerpta Medica applies fewer terms, but its indexing was highly expressive. PsycInfo applies the fewest terms.

SGML

An international copy-editing code for both computer-assisted publishing and electronic publishing has evolved from format-tagging for particular systems to generalized tagging that can be used with any document and any word-processing system. The code is embodied in equivalent international and British standards—ISO 8879–1987 (Geneva: ISO) and BS 6868: 1987: Specification for standard generalized markup language (SGML) for text and office systems (£25.04 for BSI subscribers).

Descriptive markup identifies the elements of a document for which specific processing is required, e.g., heading, subheading, paragraph, while document-type definitions specify the elements and attributes that can occur in a particular type of document, and in what order. The language is not dependent on a particular character set, or processing system, or national language. It is usable by both humans and programs.

We are grateful for the receipt of a bibliography on the SGML from Mrs Joan H. Smith, Senior Consultant, National Computing Centre. Included with the list of 22 items is a 31-page typescript paper by Mrs Smith entitled 'Starting to use the Generalized Markup Language (SGML)' and also some issues of the occasional Newsletter of the SGML Users' Group. The papers are in SI’s library.

BSI news (Dec. 1987, p. 15) announces that two SGML support standards are awaiting final approval by ISO. They are ISO 9069 on document interchange format (SDIF), and ISO 9070 on registration procedures for public text owner identifiers.
The CODUS online electronic component databank, designed and developed at the University of Sheffield and marketed in the UK and Europe by Technical Indexes, has been named runner-up for the Times 'Techmart' Innovator of the Year Award for 1987. The Techmart awards are made to new 'spin-out' companies with imaginative and original new ideas. The awards committee looked for exciting technological products backed with the right balance of technical, marketing and financial skills.

CODUS provides online access to detailed component characteristics via part numbers and specification numbers, plus search facilities allowing the selection of components that comply with specific criteria of function, size, ratings and operating conditions. It also provides direct access to the full-texts of specifications on Technical Indexes microfilm and microfiche files. Its services offer the choice of a rapid-response, user-friendly command language, or of menu-driven enquiries.

CODUS was created to provide data on BS9000-approved components with the support of the UK Ministry of Defence, and went 'live' in 1980. Since then, it has greatly expanded through an agreement with the CENELEC Electronic Components Committee (CECC), by which CODUS became the official database of the Western European CECC Assessment System, containing technical data on over four million components from all approved manufacturers within both the BS 9000 and CECC Quality Assurance schemes. More recently, agreement has been reached with British Telecom to include the information from its Handbook of Reliability Data, and with the International Electrotechnical Commission for the inclusion of full technical data on IECQ approved components. Thus CODUS now contains information on all approvals within the IECQ system, in which 24 member countries are involved, including the USA, USSR, China, Japan, Australia and many European nations. CODUS offers information on approved components on a national basis for the UK with BS 9000 system approvals, on a European basis with CECC approvals, and world-wide with the IECQ system.

Sheffield University made CODUS a commercial operation by establishing it as a limited company at the end of 1985. To make the CODUS facilities available to a wider market, a sales and marketing agreement was concluded with Technical Indexes. At the launch of the venture, Dr. Radley considered Technical Indexes 'the natural partner' with 23 years' experience in providing technical information services to the electronics industry and access to over 3,000 systems installed in specified locations throughout Europe. The company will also market CODUS in the USA through its sister company, Information Handling Services.

The British Council, in association with the Consortium of Information Communication Industries, has published a brief guide and directory to British information products on CD-ROM and online. Sectors covered include education, science, medical, business, finance and technical. Further information sources are provided. Details available from Brian Green, British Council, 65 Davies St, London W1.

EasyNet Knowledge Gateway service has been given the information product of the year award by the European Association of Information Service Providers (EUSIDIC) for its 'major impact on the European online information marketplace'. They claim that EasyNet has succeeded in removing the formidable barriers to accessing online information. Individuals and business people anywhere in Europe, without information science training, can now use almost a thousand of the world's most important databases, including major information sources.

EasyNet works from any personal computer, terminal, or telex machine with one uniform log-on procedure and set of menus, allowing anyone to access the world's information. Trained library researchers are available online to provide free assistance.

Founded in 1961, EUSIDIC is an international platform for information producers, hosts, online users and other groups interested in the handling, production, and dissemination of information in electronic form. Membership includes some 200 organizations from 18 European countries, with associate members from nine others.

Telebase is to be represented in Europe by the Oxford-based Information Gateways Ltd, which will assist in marketing EasyNet in Europe and in acquiring new European databases. They plan to expand the EasyNet service to include all major European information suppliers and to market it via 14 re-marketers in seven countries.

BIOSIS will index 520,000 references to the life sciences literature in 1988, an increase of 20,000 items over 1987 coverage. These references will be printed in Biological Abstracts and in Biological AbstractsRRM (Reports, Reviews, Meetings). All references will also be included in BIOSIS Previews, the online version of the BIOSIS database, now available worldwide through over 20 host centres.

Helpful differentiation from Computer Weekly (8 October 1987): 'Buying a CD-ROM is like buying a book; buying a WORM (Write Once Read Many Times optical disc) is like buying a blank sheet of paper'.