

An Introduction to Consolidation and Analysis of Information

N. U. Yapa

Librarian, National Science Council

Information scientists are mainly concerned with the provision of appropriate information rapidly, economically and authoritatively to the users.

A document (or pre-packaged information) usually aims at a certain user or a group of users and hence it would not satisfy the needs of another user or group having different interests. The information acquired by a library or an information centre would not be appropriate to all categories of users. It is considered that supplying irrelevant information to a user is an uneconomic and undesirable exercise. This means that information generated from a certain source cannot be transferred, as it is, to the user.

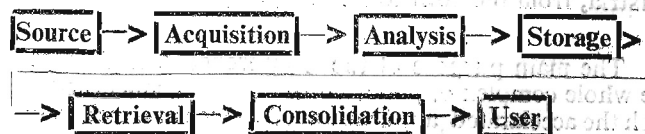
Available pre-prepared information has to be converted to a new product in view of satisfying different categories of users. Preparation of documents (or information packages) has to be done taking into consideration the user needs and aiming at saving the time of the users. This is done by extracting, condensing, digesting and evaluating the already available information. This technique is called 'information consolidation'. To accomplish this, obviously, the information scientist should have a background knowledge of the subject concerned.

Consolidation is not merely gathering the relevant information and forwarding it to the users. The information scientist goes a step further by evaluating and condensing this information and creating a usable information product. In doing so, he should ensure that the reader does not receive invalid and unappropriate information. Digests, the state-of-the art reports, surveys, compendia, are some of the information products prepared by consolidation.

Consolidation cannot be done straight away from an information resource. To facilitate consolidation the resource has to be systematically organized. The documents in the resource have to be analysed to disclose the hidden information. A document such as a book, report, periodical etc. would contain information outside the envisaged subject field. This information would not be revealed unless the document is analysed. Indexing, classification, cataloguing and abstracting are some techniques used in information analysis.

The analysed information is then stored in a retrievable manner.

Acquisition, analysis, storage, retrieval, consolidation and dissemination are different stages of the information transfer. Analysis is done at the input stage and consolidation at the out-put stage.



These two techniques are usually done by an Information Analysis Center (IAC). Scope of IAC is usually confined to a special subject field. The IAC's are manned by information scientists having a thorough knowledge in the subject field. Their duty is to gather appropriate information on the subject by extracting hidden information from documents on broader and allied subjects, to evaluate the information in order to filter off unwanted and undesirable information, to store such information in a retrievable manner and finally to consolidate information in view of satisfying the particular need of a user.

The new trend in the information field is concerned with the establishment of IAC's on various special subjects with a view to supplying the scientists and research workers, who cannot afford wasting their valuable time in searching for information, with most appropriate and condensed or summarised information.

Unesco definitions:

Consolidation: The merging and synthesis of scientific information or data on a given subject in the form of compendia, surveys, state-of-the-art reports, etc. 'Evaluation' and 'Compression' are implied in the process.

Analysis: (a) in general the expression of document of contents in a form different from the original through operations such as abstracting, indexing, translation reviewing, evaluation, etc.

(b) more specifically, in 'information analysis' the combined use of these operations to provide definite user groups with evaluated bodies of knowledge; **information analysis centres**, the organizations responsible for this function.