

GENERAL SCIENCE

Free Source Materials

► **FEDERAL SUBSIDIES** for free dissemination of source materials to the scientific world are proposed by Dr. Watson Davis, director, **SCIENCE SERVICE**.

In a paper before the National Microfilm Association, Dr. Davis, who introduced microfilm for scientific purposes, said that distribution, without charge, of knowledge "for scholarly, scientific, engineering and industrial utilization" would be just as useful "as new laboratory buildings and equipment."

Dr. Davis said that "one of the great dreams of mankind has been an intellectual world in which everyone can have the opportunity of knowing everything past and present in order to plan and predict for the future."

He maintained that existing mechanisms permit the compilation and distribution of data to all seekers.

"Microfilm is one of the greatest of these mechanisms. The electronic computer, in all of its many ramifications, is another prime mechanism. Link these devices or methods together and feed them into print-out devices and it is quite possible to visualize the kind of service to the intellectual, scientific and scholarly world that past generations have envisioned."

Dr. Davis sees the distribution of scientific material through what he termed the "big library" concept. The proposal is not aimed at consolidation of physical properties but rather the development of close cooperation and instant interchange of documents through facsimile or microfilm.

METEOROLOGY

Environmental Agency

► **THE MILLIONS** upon millions of persons who check the weather forecasts every day will soon be getting their daily predictions from a new agency.

President Lyndon B. Johnson has submitted to Congress a reorganization plan calling for a merger of the U.S. Weather Bureau and the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, both part of the Department of Commerce. The Survey, formed in 1807, is the oldest scientific agency of the Government.

The new agency is to be called the "Environmental Science Services Agency," which will, of course, be shortened to ESSA.

There are two basic reasons for merging the Weather Bureau and the Survey, as well as the division of the National Bureau of Standards known as the Central Radio Propagation Laboratory. One reason is to combine the facilities used for day-to-day gathering and dissemination of information on such life-threatening hazards of nature as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes and tidal waves.

The other reason is to consolidate expensive instruments and research facilities,

The big library concept was one of four central ideas advanced in the paper. Dr. Davis said his impatience made him wonder why it had taken so long for them to materialize.

The others were:

1. Auxiliary or demand publication could "save millions" if expanded, promoted and explained. This means that a document has been deposited in a library and is available "on demand" for the researcher. Regular journals would carry notices of the existence of the documents so placed.

2. "One big journal" to take the place of the "admittedly too many journals."

Urging "birth control of journals," Dr. Davis called for a large weekly publication that could carry the original publication of a "considerable volume of the scientific and technical research reports of the nation."

He maintained that "published in large editions on newspaper rotary presses, it would probably be possible to replace many individual journals and the cost of this publication would undoubtedly represent a considerable saving."

3. A "world brain" should be created to fuse applicable knowledge of the past with the current output of science research. Probably, he said, "the magnitude of the world brain creation can be kept within comprehensible limits by handling the current output of publication and working backward as far as found necessary."

Dr. Davis called for international cooperation to reach the goal of blending and spreading scientific data.

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such as satellites, computers, aircraft and ships. For instance, instead of launching two satellites, one for weather and one for geodetic surveying, the required instruments could be combined in one earth-circling probe.

Significant savings are expected to result from the merger of the three groups. The plan goes into effect automatically in July unless disapproved by Congress. This is not expected except, perhaps, with respect to the name.

The new agency will "better enable us to look at man's physical environment as a scientific whole and to seek to understand the interactions among air, sea and earth, and between the upper and lower atmosphere," President Johnson said.

Approximately one-third of the 30,000 employees of the Department of Commerce will be under the new agency.

Likely choice for the head of ESSA is Dr. Robert M. White, chief of the Weather Bureau. Rear Adm. H. Arnold Karo, director of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, is expected to be Deputy Administrator.

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