DOCUMENTATION

Unpublished Manuscript To Be Accessible to Scholars

Microfilm Seen as an Aid to International Exchange Of Scientific Information; Rare Books Can Be Filmed

ANY BOOK in the world, any unpublished manuscript in the world, and eventually complete lists of all scientific and other literature, can be made available to any research worker in the world, at low cost and in form for his own permanent possession. This is practicable through the use of microfilm, declared Watson Davis, president of the American Documentation Institute and director of Science Service, at the World Congress of Universal Documentation. Mr. Davis is chairman of the American delegation to this meeting.

Microfilms are copies of book pages, manuscript sheets, illustrations, etc., as separate "frames" on a continuous strip of film the size of standard movie film or smaller. A complete copy of a large book made in this way can be carried in the corner of a pocket, and mailed anywhere in the world for a few cents. They can be read with the aid of small hand-size lens-holders, or more easily through the use of special projection machines about the size of standard typewriters.

Library In Small Space

Thus a scholar can have a permanent library covering his whole subject and comprising the rarest works in the world, even though he does all his work in a single small room.

Auxiliary publication of long works, and other specialized material too expensive to print for the limited circulation they would receive, is also possible through microfilm. Mr. Davis pointed out some of its advantages:

"It will supplement other forms of publication and make accessible material of all sorts that can not now be printed because of economic factors. It will make available valuable research data that now go unrecorded. It will make available out-of-print and rare books. It is adapted to the publication of photographs and other illustrations. Auxiliary publication service (which might be named Docufilm Service) should be auxiliary to established channels of scholarly publication and it should aid and not hinder journals. Editors of journals and institutions should act as intermediaries between the authors of papers and the 'Docufilm Service.'

"This idea has been given an experimental demonstration in America in connection principally with scientific papers. There a journal editor can publish as much or as little of a technical paper as he wishes. In the case of a very specialized paper it may be only an abstract or summary. He appends to the notice or article a note saying that the full article with diagrams, pictures, etc., can be obtained by remitting a certain price and specifying the document number under which this full article has been deposited at the central agency operating the auxiliary publication service. Orders are sent by readers directly to this central agency, which is the American Documentation Institute at Washington, D. C. Microfilms of the document are made only if and when ordered.

"In this way the document is perpetually 'in print' but no extensive, space-consuming stocks need be stored, only the document itself and the microfilm negative from which positives are made for distribution. The operation of the plan is simple and uncomplicated and editors may use it when, how and if they find it helpful. No financial participation or guarantees on the part of the editor or author are required.

"It is believed that this or analogous techniques can be adopted in other countries, preferably with central agencies serving those countries. If this is done there can be effective exchange of negatives between 'Docufilm centers'."

For News Files

Newspaper files, that now take up costly space by the cubic yard in newspaper offices and public libraries, can be squeezed down until a single filing case will hold the issues of many years, through the use of microfilm.

The proposal to save space, and at the same time make the records safe against the inevitable crumbling of wood-pulp print paper, was put forth by Mr. Davis, speaking before the World Congress. Mr. Davis said, in part:

"The volume of the daily production of newspapers of the world is stupendous. In one sense, the daily newspaper is a very ephemeral product. Nothing is staler than yesterday's issue. In another sense, the daily newspaper is a fundamental historical document. Often no other written record is closer to an event. Each issue is a complex installment of the world's continued story, which is never finished.

"The mere physical volume of files of newspapers prevents them from being maintained and stored as they should be. Only a fraction of the newspapers of America, for example, are filed in the libraries of the cities in which they are issued. The wood-pulp paper on which they are printed is perishable and some of it disintegrates after two or three decades.

"Here is a major job for microfilm. Only through the medium of microfilming does there seem to be any hope of preserving the daily newspaper record of the world.

"Happily for all documentation, and especially for newspaper preservation, research has shown that microfilm that is cellulose acetate, or 'safety' film, is chemically more stable than good rag record paper, which means it should last at least 100 to 200 years. Thus, microfilming is an act of preservation."

Science News Letter, August 21, 1937

GEOLOGY

Arctic Canada Had Gold Rush in 16th Century

GOLD rushes renewing themselves in the Arctic, scientists flying to the Pole and announcing that they intend to stay there for a year, give timely point to an old story revived by a new scientific publication of the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, written by Sharat K. Roy, curator of geology.

It is about the first stuff pertaining to be gold ore brought back from the American Arctic. It launched the first gold rush and the first gold mining boom. It cost many nervy men their lives, and many "suckers" their money. And now, after more than three centuries, Mr. Roy finds out that the "gold" was not even fools' gold or pyrites, but brassy yellow mica, veined in some black rocks.

In 1576, Capt. Martin Frobisher, after a successful career in piracy (broadly