

IDENTIFYING ACADEMIC PHYSICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Alice Lefler Primack
Marston Science Library
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida 32611

For the scientist working on a research problem, books and journals serve mostly as archival records documenting what has been done and who did it. But the researcher usually has difficulty when he wants to determine what areas are currently being researched. Personal communication is a widely-used method of obtaining information, but one which is often inefficient and incomplete, especially as the number of colleagues working in a particular area of interest expands. Beyond this, current awareness of research in progress is available only by consulting an array of sources: preprints and lists or indexes of preprints, newsletters and annual reports, letters journals, reviews of research, directories of research grants, directories of graduate faculties or research facilities and their interests, indexes of theses and dissertations, indexes of progress reports, papers presented at conferences and lists and indexes of these papers, and lists of articles submitted or accepted for publication.

The challenge of research in progress is two-fold: identifying what research is being done, and identifying findings and results of the research. These two aspects are usually intertwined. The literature of this area is non-conventional, sometimes referred to as "grey" literature. It not only occurs outside the usual channels of production and distribution, but generally escapes bibliographic control. Because of problems, bibliographic control and provision of documents has tended to be done by only a few specialized organizations such as national or international organizations specializing in all literature of a certain subject field, or in grey literature. Academic libraries have not usually included this literature in their collections. The grey literature has not been acquired on a regular basis or formally cataloged. If academic libraries are to fully support research at their institutions, they will need to include grey literature. More information on this category of literature needs to be available to librarians.

I propose a new information system for current academic research in the physical sciences, worldwide. This system is based in academic libraries which agree to serve as "clearinghouse" for certain subject areas. Each obtains information from surveys, lists of research in progress, preprints, articles accepted for publication, internal or technical reports, newsletters, and other such sources. Emphasis will be placed on research not well covered by existing national and international indexes such as those done by National Technical Information Service. Items will be indexed so that names of people, centers of research, and subjects may be pulled out. The system will connect people to people as well as people to print information.

This poster paper presents an approach to providing information on current academic physical sciences research and results. An array of tools and methods available for finding out what research is being done and identifying findings of the research are listed and samples are provided. A worldwide information system to identify and disseminate needed information is proposed.