

Scientific Advisory Board
Chemical Information System

Summary of Meeting - April 24, 1980

The following members attended the first meeting of the CIS Scientific Advisory Board: E. L. Eliel, R. F. Finnigan, J. G. Grasselli, D. T. Hawkins, G. A. Jeffrey, and R. E. Maizell. R. E. Dessy and J. Lederberg have agreed to serve on the Board but were unable to attend the first meeting. The meeting, which was held at the National Bureau of Standards, was also attended by G. W. A. Milne (NIH), E. D. Becker (NIH), S. R. Heller (EPA), D. R. Lide (NBS), and L. H. Gevantman (NBS).

The current status of the CIS was reviewed by G. W. A. Milne. Usage of the CIS is growing rapidly; the number of subscribing organizations has increased at a rate of about 14 per month over the last year, and the number of on-line sessions has reached 2,400 per month. Nine data bases are now operational, two are under test, and eight more are under development.

D. R. Lide explained that the driving force behind the development of the CIS has come from government agencies which require an effective on-line dissemination channel to serve their own laboratories, their contractors and grantees, and the industries that they regulate. On the other hand, much of the information in the CIS is also of interest to a broader segment of the scientific public. There is already significant use by the academic sector and by private industry. As other data bases are added, the utility of the CIS to the scientific and technical community is expected to grow. Broader usage of the CIS is desirable, in order to spread the fixed operational costs over a larger number of users and to show greater public benefits from the Government investment.

The Scientific Advisory Board has been established to bring a broader perspective to the planning and evaluation of the CIS. It is hoped that the Board will provide a sounding board for the CIS managers in regard to all technical aspects of the system. The precise mode of operation of the Board will be developed through mutual interactions. However, the types of questions on which the Board's advice will be sought include:

- (1) Questions regarding improvements in the utility and convenience of the CIS and in the quality of its present data bases.
- (2) Suggestions for addition of new data bases of interest to the scientific community.
- (3) Advice on means of bringing in a larger base of users from the academic and industrial sectors.

There was a consensus that the Scientific Advisory Board should meet with the CIS Steering Committee (which comprises representatives of the government agencies supporting the CIS) once a year. In addition, it would be useful for the Board to meet on other occasions when travel costs can be minimized, e.g., at appropriate scientific meetings and conferences. Efforts will be made to schedule such a meeting in the fall of 1980.

Following its own meeting, the Scientific Advisory Board joined the CIS Steering Committee Meeting. Members of the Board made very useful input to the discussion of questions before the Steering Committee, in particular, the proposal to eliminate the subscription fee for educational institutions. There was also a discussion of the overall design philosophy of the CIS (i.e., should the CIS continue as a collection of linked search systems or should it be converted into a single multipurpose system) and a general discussion of new data bases which might be added to the CIS. Details of these discussions are given in the Minutes of the Steering Committee.