

Send to John Lebecking (9) 11/24/70

isi[®]

INSTITUTE FOR SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION 325 Chestnut St Philadelphia Pa 19106 USA

October 22, 1970

Mr. W. Holst
Managing Director
Sudieselskapet for Norsk Industri
Forskningsveien 1
Oslo 3
Norway

Dear Mr. Holst:

Certainly individual attitudes and mental factors play an important role in research and the related problem of communication of information. Your letter of February 17, which did not reach me until recently for a reason I cannot explain, really involves a number of interrelated but complex issues. On the one hand, there is the problem of whether or not the availability of pertinent literature tends to inhibit creative research and on the other hand whether or not the actual use and manipulation of printed indexes or computer retrieval systems has a similar effect.

In my experience, no creative scientist who was worthy of that description will be significantly hampered in doing creative work through the ready availability of published information. It is true that from time to time one may draw a hasty or false conclusion based upon someone else's work. Generally, I find that the creative scientist is able to perceive that which is reliable data and that which is not.

On the other hand, it may very well be true that the thought of spending hours in a library performing what may be pure drudgery for some people in going through endless indexes could be a deterrent, and given a choice the laboratory oriented scientist prefers to take the chance of repeating work done by others.

Nevertheless, there are many individuals who find the actual process of sifting through the literature an interesting game and in that process are so stimulated that the overall process can truly be described as creative.

I doubt that any serious study, however, would support the thesis that the hard and earnest personal effort required either in a laboratory or a library is the only way to stimulate an individual in creative work. This philosophy is probably a glaring example of the protestant ethic which is, "One can only enjoy or use profitably that which one has paid for in toil, sweat and pain." Everything in our modern hedonistic society seems to indicate that is by no means the case.

Sincerely yours,

Eugene Garfield, Ph. D.
President