

Scientific Help to the Third World

Literature

A major preoccupation of the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste is the transfer of scientific information into third world countries and for many years now they have been acting as a go-between for institutions and individuals wishing to donate collections of scientific material. But the flow, however important, is irregular and takes a lot of effort to manage. Also the material is, in general, archival and what is urgently needed in third world countries is a regular source of current literature.

Many funding agencies across the world are also concerned with providing help and have built up a considerable experience in dealing with the complexities of the problem. It is not infrequent that institutions receiving *ad hoc* gifts of literature have no-one to take care of it, perhaps no shelves to put it on and no mechanism for cataloguing or recording. Books and journals remain unopened and only the termites benefit from all the effort and the goodwill that has gone into the gesture. Another problem is the more reputed institutions receiving the same material from different sources, each in ignorance of the others. This is not a complete waste necessarily as it is not unknown for the professor in charge of a department to take into his own hands the first copy of anything that comes in and to keep it locked away for his private use.

It was against this background that ICTP in cooperation with the Third World Academy of Sciences, ICSU and AGID invited representatives of funding organisations, publishers and information specialists to come together in Trieste at the end of last year to see what improvements could be made.

Discussions covered also copy rights and reprinting rights and the pirating that is a problem for the literature sources, for whom the economics of production become ever more finely balanced.

At the end of 2 1/2 days of frank exchanges and hard realism, mixed nevertheless with quite a lot of idealism, one resolution and one proposal had been agreed. The resolution read:

Recognizing the fundamental importance of science and technology to social, economic and cultural development and to the well-being of the Earth, and that the availability of scientific information is essential to any scientific and technological activity, the participants in the Workshop on Increasing the Flow of Scientific Literature to Third World Institutions meeting today in Trieste emphasize that it is crucial to ensure that in each developing country at least one library accessible to all scientists working in that country be kept up-to-date through the acquisition of relevant journals and books in science and technology.

Not just fine words. The immediate effect of the resolution was to strengthen the efforts of those inside third world countries trying to arrive at the same goals. Nevertheless, in the last analysis (as we know all too often in EPS) at the end of the line is the funding necessary. Now ICTP announces that a sizeable grant for building up libraries in developing countries is expected as a result of the resolution and they have received numerous offers from institutions, publishers and individuals. By the end of the year therefore the resolution should have been turned into a reality for some 40 countries.

The proposal which emerged from the Trieste meeting was to set up a network between the funding agencies so

that they could exchange experiences and information on what was already being done. Not easy, but with modern methods of communication, the technology of setting up data banks is well known and ICTP together with the TWAS, of which Abdus Salam is the President are keen to act as coordinator. Progress is being made and should steadily gather momentum.

Projects

Through funds largely donated by the Italian Government, the International Atomic Energy Agency and UNESCO are able to offer support to research groups and institutions to organize training activities of various sorts including meetings, visits of scholars and consultants from other countries, forming centres and networks. Administration is handled by ICTP.

Deadline for receiving requests for help for activities taking place from 1 July 1990 - 31 March 1991 is 1 November 1989. Application should be made to:

The International Centre for Theoretical Physics
Office of External Activities, POB 586
I - 34100 Trieste

Scholarships

The World Laboratory, founded by Antonino Zichichi, which again through the generosity of the Italian Government has become a major instrument of scientific culture across the world has announced a new and highly ambitious project to bring 1000 young students from third world countries into close contact with outstanding personalities of the scientific and technological community of the industrialised countries. Scholarships are being offered for study and research under the direct supervision of an eminent scientist who acts as Instructor. Travelling and living expenses (including pocket money) are provided for 12 months after which time the scholar is expected to return home unless the Instructor requests an extension. At the end of the scholarship, the Instructor will issue a report on his experience.

Applications, stating name, age, nationality, field of interest and details on the Instructor with whom the candidate wishes to work should be sent to:

Professor A. Zichichi
President of the World Laboratory
Palais de Rumine, Place de la Riponne 6
CH - 1005 Lausanne - Switzerland

Hipparcos Not a Write-Off

It would have been cruel for ESA when celebrating 25 years of successful European Space Technology (see *ESA BR-55*, June 1989) if they had to report that the Hipparcos star mapper was a write-off — particularly at the moment when Voyager-II was deservedly winning global applause for its dramatic Neptune flypast.

Hipparcos was safely launched from Kourou on 9 August 1989 and placed in its transfer orbit with an apogee altitude of 36000 km and a perigee altitude of 210 km. Repeated attempts to fire the apogee boost motor to put it into synchronous orbit have not been successful. Nevertheless the scientific pro-

gramme will go on so long as the solar cells and the 290 mm Schmidt telescope survive the repeated traverses of the van Allen belts. It should still be possible to produce a catalogue of 120000 stars as originally planned and although the accuracy will not be as good as hoped, it will still be some 15 times better than can be obtained from Earth. The aim had been an accuracy of 0.002 arcsec for each parallax and for each positional component and the same value per year for each proper-motion component. We might have to be satisfied with a factor 10 worse because of the reduced number of times each star will be observed.