Computers used to render information more accessible

In any given week of the year, about 10 million letters are published in fields of science and technology. If you read eight hours a day, you could not read that many letters in a lifetime.

This deluge of print, plus the fact that this amount is doubling about every ten years, causes the information explosion that threatens to swamp modern technology in an endless sea of paper.

Services being set up

But under the leadership of the President's Office of Science and Technology, many government agencies have set up computerized, interconnected information retrieval systems. The National Science Foundation, and professional organizations such as the American Chemical Society, the American Institute of Physics, and the Society of Automotive Engineers are all doing research and setting up services to help process and file information, and convey it to its user in the shortest possible time.

Although some fear that computerized filing and abstracting may put scholarly journals out of business, this is not stopping constructive action and planning.

Several areas of work show promise. Computers have shown that they can free librarians from routine but essential chores. The machine can, once instructed to do so, order a book, and then automatically check its receipt, list it in the catalogue, and keep track of borrowings and returns.

Engineering rivalry to be settled

Compact methods of storage are also coming into use. The Defense Documentation Center, NASA, and the ABC are all converting their files and libraries to microfiche and the smaller "microform." MTV is planning to "microform" the entire engineering library.

The adoption of computers as the tool of information retrieval and presentation is growing. Projects are underway which use computers to present information in forms other than language, to store information in a form that can quickly be transmitted over communication systems, and can present data on varied facets of a subject to the recipient simultaneously.

The Felt Annual Folklore Center will present Tom Paxton at Jordan Hall this Saturday, Feb. 12 at 8:30 pm.

A singer with a rich, melodic voice, Tom has an effective style in the tradition of his Oklahoma background. He is a writer with great lyrical talent and his songs, "Last Thing on My Mind," "What Did You Learn in School Today," and "I Can't Help But Wonder Where I'm Bound," for example, have been widely recorded by many of the major folk music artists.

Tickets are available at Jordan Hall.

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