

Information Products

Information Products are prepared by selecting, acquiring, evaluating, analyzing, synthesizing, restructuring, packaging and repackaging information gathered carefully from various sources. These products provide information on various attributes of the product and also promote their use and sale. The information products are issued by industrial, commercial, public service, or similar organisations, as promotional material for the target audience. These products are newsletters, house journals, and trade and product bulletins. These publications inform the public about the performance of an organisation, its latest activities and its products and services. The basic purpose of these information products is to enhance the image of the organisation and promote its products and services. Newsletters communicate news of the latest activities of the organisation to the target audience in a timely and speedy manner. House journals inform the employees and customers about the performance and style of functioning of the organisation. Trade and product bulletins usually issued by manufacturers, distributors and commercial publishers, serve a dual function. These publications provide information on various attributes of the product, process, material or service and also promote their sale. Advances in computers and telecommunication technology have great impact on the communication patterns of industrial, commercial and public service organisations. They are promoting themselves through electronic information products like e-newsletters, business homepage on the Internet and e-commerce.

Newsletter

Newsletter can be defined as a serial consisting of one or a few pages in print, electronic or any other form, containing recent information or news which is of interest to a special or particular group of users and which is published periodically. Organisations often issue newsletters to members or subscribers.

History of Newsletter

Newsletters are forerunners of modern newspapers, current in use in 1600s and early 1700s, which presented news for general circulation. The earlier printed newsletters or news-sheets, which were often called corantos, courants, occurrents or intelligencers were published in Europe's commercial centres. These newsletters contained business news and news of other public events likely to interest bankers and merchants. Newsletters were then followed by news-sheets. Official news-sheets began to appear during 1500s. Notizie Scritte (written notices) were posted up in public places in Venice. They could be read on payment of a coin called a gazetta. The term gazette, a common name for early newspaper is derived from this practice. The first regularly published news-sheet seems to have been the Avis Relation oder Zeitung. From 1609, this news-sheet was published weekly in Strasbourg, then in Germany. In the U.S. the first newsletter to make its appearance in 1704 was Boston News-Letter, which eventually became a newspaper. In fact, in the 1700s, many newsletters flourished, and in the 1800s, most of them went the way of newspapers. By early 1900s, newsletters made a comeback, apparently, businesses and industries needed a

specialised information medium badly and newsletters filled up this void. The first one to appear in 1904 was 'Babson's Reports', an investment advisory newsletter. This was followed by Kiplinger Letter in 1923. This newsletter continues to be the most widely read business-forecasting periodical in the world. In the 1930s, corporate newsletters emerged rapidly. Telecommunications Reports (a telecommunication industry newsletter) took the lead in 1934, this was followed by a series of newsletters. All types of newsletters ranging from farming to fashion became a common place. In 1964, the first newsletter about newsletters, Newsletter on Newsletters came out.

Favourable Factors

The wide availability of typewriters, and offset printing equipment contributed to the rapid growth of newsletters in 20th century, especially in 1960s and 1970s. In mid-1980s, the advent of personal computers altered the concept of the workplace rapidly. It was during this time, that the desktop publishing - the use of PCs to produce print material- became the buzzword. The desktop publishing and electronic delivery further speeded up the production of newsletters. From 1990s, the newsletters have started appearing in another medium – online or web version – known as electronic newsletters. These e-newsletters are usually distributed by e-mail to people who voluntarily subscribe to them online. It is estimated that at present there are over a million newsletters published in the world. The circulation of these newsletters varies from free newsletters to thousands of subscription-based newsletters.

Types of Newsletters

Newsletters can be categorised into different types based on the publishing organisations, such as:

- R&D Organisations (National and International);
- Associations (National and International);
- Government Organisations;
- Public Sector Undertakings;
- Private Institutions; and
- Academic Institutions, etc.

Objectives

- To publicise and promote products and services of the publishing organisations and institutions;
- To announce current and forthcoming events like conferences, seminars, workshops etc.;
- To communicate information about social and cultural activities, appointments, promotions, transfers, retirements, obituaries etc. of the members of concerned organizations.;
- To publish timely and relevant activities of current interest.

Functions/Purpose

Newsletters are publications, which are simple in format and provide speedy information for a definite group of audience. The newsletters are relatively easy, fast and inexpensive to produce. Most of the organisations issue newsletters to communicate news of their activities to the target audience in a timely and speedy manner.

Contents

Contents of newsletters are based on the purpose of the newsletter. Different types of newsletters cover different category of information. For instance, newsletters issued by R&D organisations carry information about programmes of the organisation, grants and fellowships, awards and rewards, forthcoming conferences/seminars/workshops, etc., news from research institutions, reports on seminars conferences, etc. and technical / scientific articles e.g., IASLIC Newsletter published by Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres. Newsletters from industrial enterprises are of two types, one for internal circulation and the other for external circulation. The newsletter for external circulation covers information about new products and services, highlights the achievements of the organisation, announces discounts and benefits for the customers, etc. Whereas the one for internal circulation covers news of the employees such as promotion, transfer, wedding, etc. announcements of welfare measures for the employees, social and cultural activities of the employees including sports, etc. and sometimes popular articles, short stories, jokes, etc. by the employees.

Electronic Newsletters

Newsletters published and distributed electronically over the computer networks are known as electronic newsletters. E-Newsletters started appearing in 1990s and have proliferated since then. These are distributed by e-mail to people who voluntarily subscribe to them online. Initially, e-newsletters contained hyperlinks to web pages – a method employed by website operators to draw users to their sites. However various studies on usage of e-newsletters showed that users were more interested in getting information from their e-mail account than from websites. So e-newsletters became full-fledged and content-rich publications. More and more people in business and industry are advertising their products through e-newsletters, as they believe that, their advertisements are better targeted and more effective than banner advertisements. From 1991 to 2001, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) followed the growth of electronic publications through its annual “Directory of Electronic Journals, Newsletters and Academic Discussion Lists” (<http://www.arl.org/scomm/edir/archive.html>). This directory showed the amazing growth of e-serials in this ten-year period and predicted the continued prominence of Internet publishing scholarly as well as business communication.

Benefits of e-mail Newsletters

- E-mail newsletters are convenient and delivered straight to the user's information desk;
- E-mail newsletters have timely information and real-time delivery;
- E-mail newsletters are informative and keep users up-to-date; and
- Users have high emotional reaction to e-mail newsletters. As they arrive in users inbox, users have ongoing relation with them and at times, if found useful, users forward them to their colleagues or friends.

Bibliographical Control

Since, newsletters carry recent information and for immediate use, they lose currency very quickly and are normally not covered by indexing and abstracting services, which tend to cover material of permanent nature. This poses difficulty in identification and acquisition of newsletters. However, some database hosts, directories and websites serve as good guides for identification and acquisition of newsletters. Examples are "ARL Directory of Electronic Journals, Newsletters and Academic Discussion Lists", NEWJOUR (<http://www.gort.ucsd.edu/newjour>), The Scout Report (<http://www.scout.cs.wisc.edu/scout/report/index.html>), Newsletter Access (<http://www.newsletteraccess.com>) and DIALOG pts Newsletter database as file 636.

House Journals

A house journal is a serial publication issued by an industrial, commercial, public service or a similar organisation to inform the public of its performance and style of functioning. It also serves as a medium to know the reaction and opinion of the public about its performance. For an organisation, the public consists of its employees, customers, dealers, retailers of its products, its shareholders, and the government that have social control over it. The house journal is a form of promotional literature, since it seeks to project and enhance the image of the parent organisation to its customers or employees or to advertise and promote the products and services of the organisation.

Functions

- Improve business and industrial relations;
- Keep employees and customers in the picture;
- Serve as useful platform for communicating management's views;
- Promote and enhance the image of the management as well as of the organisation among its employees and customers; and
- Provide an objective news service.

History of House Journals

The origin of house journals can be traced back to Chinese Han Dynasty in 200 B.C.

These were internal communications issued to keep the court informed. They became official gazettes in the seventeenth century Tang Dynasty, and are the forerunners of today's house journals. John H Patterson, President of National Cash Register Co., is acknowledged for establishing the first company-sponsored internal publication in the United States, the NCR Factory News, in 1887. It is still being published under the title of NCR World. Patterson was the first one to use the term "house organ" for his publication. The first official external house journal was The Travelers Record, published in March 1, 1865 by Travelers Insurance Companies at Hartford, Connecticut. This publication is still continuing, though the name and contents have changed several times. This external house journal, now published under the name "Protection", celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1965. The United Planters Association of Southern India published the first house journal in India, the Planters Chronicle in 1905. The house journal field has been expanding in three ways simultaneously – building circulations, adding pages and bringing out new publications for special interest groups of the sponsoring organisation. Presently, the house journals represent business, industry, labour union, university, college or fraternity, clubs, associations, religious organisations or other special interest groups.

Categories of House Journals

There are three broad categories of house journals - internal, external and combinations of both. Internal house journal is published for employees or members of the organisation, whereas external house journal is brought out for customers or potential customers of the organisation. Combination publications try to do both.

Internal House Journal

Internal house journal is brought out for the employees of the organisation and is meant for internal circulation. Its prime aim is to keep the employees of the organisation informed of the welfare measures and the concern of the organisation for its employees. It also aims at providing a forum for the employees to express their views including their grievances. Therefore, it serves as a forum for a two-way communication, thereby promoting the healthy growth of an organisation. The organisation also uses the internal house journal to stress the fact that the management is genuinely interested in the welfare of its employees.

External House Journal

The external house journals are designed for customers or potential customers of an organisation and are meant for external circulation. Based upon their contents, they can further be broadly grouped into three categories:

- i) The first category is that of a scholarly journal and can be equated in almost every respect with a standard technical journal;
- ii) The second category is the magazine. This contains general non-technical information and information about products of the organisation, without technical details.
- iii) The third category is the periodical catalogue, which is similar to a trade catalogue.

The basic difference between this and the trade catalogue is, that the former is issued under the same title at regular intervals, just like a periodical publication.

Contents of a House Journal

The contents of the house journal vary with the type of house journal. For instance, the 'internal' house journal, which is produced for a company's personnel with the intention of creating a sense of community within its organisation, acts as a newspaper within the company. It carries news of social and sporting events, personnel changes, feature articles by employees, news of welfare measures, incentives, bonuses, etc. Internal house journals have little value as a source of technical information. The external house journals based on their information contents, can further be broadly divided into three categories. The first category is that of 'prestige' publication and can be equated in almost every respect with a standard technical journal. These journals contain technical articles giving an account of R&D work undertaken by company's employees. These journals promote the image of the company not by directly publicising its products and services but by associating the company with standards of excellence in frontiers of research related to its field. For example, IBM Journal of Research and Development and BHEL Journal of Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. published quarterly, BHEL Journal covers research articles, publishes news reports about company's innovations, gives an account of major achievements in company's various sectors of activities like power, industrial achievements, etc. and provides case history of successfully completed contracts or projects. The second category of external journal is like that of a magazine, which is meant for promoting the products of the company. This publication carries information about the products and services of the company without any technical details. The third category of external house journal is similar to a trade catalogue. This publication provides descriptive accounts of company's newly launched products, processes, materials or services.

Characteristics of House Journals

- They are produced by the sponsoring organisation for enhancing the image of the organisation and for promoting its products and services;
- They are usually distributed free to the employees and potential customers;
- Financial support is provided through budget allocation by the sponsoring organisation;
- They carry no advertisements except that of the sponsoring organisation; and
- They are printed on good quality art paper and are usually colourful and attractive.

Bibliographical Control

The house journals can be a useful source of technical information but their value is generally not appreciated. In a survey of house journal usage and storage made by Isabel I Harberer (1967), it was reported that 'overall there was found to be general neglect for acquiring and processing of even the most informative house journals.' The librarians very closely identify their image as a promotional material. The other problems associated with the bibliographical control of house journals are their lack of standardisation and irregularity in publication. However, many of the technical house journals reporting research work are covered by the major indexing and abstracting services.

Trade and Product Bulletins

Trade and product bulletins are information products brought out by the publishers, manufacturers and distributors of various types of materials, products or services. The trade and product bulletins virtually cover every kind of material, product or service ranging from books, drugs, chemicals, household goods to extremely complicated machinery and equipment used in research and industry. The basic purpose of this type of trade literature is to describe various attributes of the product, material or service and promote its sale to the potential customers. They are also known as trade catalogues.

History of Trade Catalogues

The earliest trade catalogues were book lists distributed by booksellers. A catalogue of books issued in 1564 by George Willer, an Ausburg bookseller is believed to be the first such catalogue. This was a subject list of 256 books. Following this, booksellers in England and other European countries also started issuing book catalogues. This was followed by drug catalogues issued by chemists and druggists. The first American drug catalogue was issued in 1760 by John Tweedy of Newport and second by John Day and Company in 1771. During the 1780s metal manufacturers of Birmingham and Sheffield published illustrated catalogues of their products and sent to the agents in France, Italy, America, and perhaps to India and Russia. In earlier British trade catalogues, the manufacturer's name was not provided, so that the customers were forced to purchase the items through agents. Whereas American trade catalogues provided the manufacturer's name to facilitate direct ordering of goods from the manufacturer. With the growth of industry the number and range of trade catalogues also increased tremendously. Lawrence B. Romaine's *A Guide to American Trade Catalogs, 1744- 1900*, is an annotated guide to early American trade catalogues.

Characteristics of Trade and Product Bulletins

There is a considerable variety in format, size, type and amount of information presented in trade and product bulletins. It may range from a small advertisement in a periodical or a leaflet announcing a single product to a multivolume publication describing thousands of products of a single manufacturer or a large number of manufacturers. Some product advertisements appear just like a magazine article and editors often label them as “Advertisement” to distinguish them from the feature articles. For example, some of the advertisements appearing in Reader’s Digest magazine.

General Characteristics:

- ✓ They generally contain application oriented descriptive information and do not provide theoretical details of the research leading to the development of the product with the exception of trade literature describing medicines and complex scientific equipment. A brief account of the relevant background research, supported by charts, diagrams, equations, and literature references is often provided in trade and product bulletins of medicinal products or scientific instruments.
- ✓ Trade bulletins are primary sources in which information about a product or process appears prior to its publication in any other form of literature. In fact, much of the information reported about specific commercial product is not likely to be published in any other form of literature.
- ✓ Much of the information presented in these bulletins lose currency very quickly, because new products and processes are constantly being developed and improvements are made to the existing ones.
- ✓ These publications are usually distributed free.
- ✓ Trade catalogues issued by manufacturers are undated.
- ✓ The amount of information provided for products or processes vary considerably ranging from mere announcement to detailed description of the product or process.

Content:

- ✓ historical overview of the company;
- ✓ background research leading to the development of the product;
- ✓ product description, application, operating characteristics, etc;
- ✓ installation, operation and maintenance details;
- ✓ illustrations, including photographs, layout plan, and circuit diagram, etc;
- ✓ names, addresses of the agents and distributors;
- ✓ letters of recommendations or testimonials from the satisfied customers; and
- ✓ price of the product is usually not included.

Functions:

- ✓ Trade and product bulletins are primarily published to promote sale but they serve as indispensable source of information for specialised group of users such as scientists, engineers, technologists, chemists, medical practitioners, etc.
- ✓ Provide latest information about industrial products and help the technologists to ascertain whether particular machinery or a component of a machine or a specific product is available in the market or not.
- ✓ Help the technologists to compare similar products available from various manufacturers and select the most appropriate one.
- ✓ Provide easy access to names and addresses of the manufacturers, distributors of industrial products.
- ✓ Serve as important communication channel between manufacturers, dealers and buyers.
- ✓ Articles published in these bulletins are broader in appeal with colourful illustrations, charts and diagrams.
- ✓ Back runs of these publications serve as an important source of information for the study of industrial archeology, business history, and history of technology.

Sources of Trade Literature

Trade literature is available in wide range of sources. The basic sources are as follows:

- 1) Advertisements and announcements in technical journals and trade magazines.
- 2) Special issues and supplements of journals.
- 3) Manufacturers' catalogues, house journals and newsletters.
- 4) Product descriptions supplied at trade exhibitions.
- 5) Directories of industries, products and companies.
- 6) Companies' websites and trade portals on the Internet.

Advertisements and Announcements in Technical Journals and Trade Magazines

Most fields of industry and technology are covered by at least one commercial technical or trade journal. These publications aim to cater for information needs of industry for repackaging information gleaned from other primary sources, in an easily digestible form for the management and practitioners alike. The journal's main functions are to report new techniques and products within the industry and report on new techniques developed outside the industry, which are of potential interest to the readerships. Most of these journals carry product advertisements. The major portion of the financial income of these journals is not derived from subscription but from the revenue from the manufacturers whose products and services are advertised in the journal. Almost each issue has an advertisers' index. Some of the trade journals are totally devoted to products' advertisements. Their main function is to advertise new industrial product, process or material. For example, journals like Chemical Product Finder, Industrial Product Finder, and Industrial Equipment News, etc. Chemical Product Finder, published monthly by Jasubhai Media Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai, is a journal of materials and equipment for chemical process and allied industries. It

carries profiles of latest products; plant and equipment; process; material and services launched by chemical process and allied industries in India and abroad.

Industrial Equipment News, published monthly by Sri Balaji Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd. Mumbai, is an industrial product news magazine. It brings out special issues on particular type of industry and covers write up on all products of that industry with illustrations. Each issue contains a section on 'Company Profile'. Industrial Product Finder, published monthly by Business Press, Mumbai, is an industrial product news magazine. It carries profiles of new industrial products, devices or services manufactured in India. The publication also carries information about the new industrial products developed abroad and available for Indian market. Products are listed trade and utility wise. From May 1997, the publishers have launched trade portal for the industrial products on the website (<http://www.industrialproductfinder.com>).

Special Issues and Supplements of Journals

Many technical journals publish an annual issue or a supplement, usually called 'Buyer's guide' or 'Directory Issue'. Annual buyer's guide issued by a) Chemical Engineering, b) Electronics For You, c) Chemical Week, d) Machinery, e) Nuclear News are typical examples.

Manufactures' Catalogues

Catalogues, published by manufacturers, contain substantial technical data on company's products and their applications. These catalogues range from a single sheet of paper with technical description of one product to a bound volume containing detailed description and technical data of all the products of a company. These catalogues are supplied directly to the prospective customers by the manufacturers, their representatives or agents.

Product Descriptions Supplied at Trade Fairs, Conventions, Exhibitions, etc.

Manufacturers exhibit their products and distribute catalogue at conferences and conventions organised by professional societies. Trade catalogues are also issued at international trade fairs and exhibitions in the form of bulletins or brochures.

Directories of Products and Companies

These are independent publications containing data on a number of companies and their products in any one branch of science, engineering or technology. World Aviation Directory, published semiannually by Ziff-Davis publishing Company, New York, is an international directory of air carriers, manufacturers of aircrafts and related equipment, government agencies and other organisations concerned with aviation in over 160 countries. Books and other publications on aviation and aerospace technology are also listed. The 'Buyers' Guide section has a company index, a product crossindex and a trade name index. Other such directories are Kompass International

Register Editions and Thomas Global Register. Thomas Global Register is a directory of 600,000 manufactures and distributors from 28 countries. Manufacturers are classified under 11,000 products and service categories in 11 languages. Thomas Register of Indian Manufactures is a directory listing 42,000 Indian manufacturers and industrial service providers, classified by 10,000 products and services categories. The directory is available in print and on CD-ROM as an annual publication.

Companies' Websites and Trade Portals on the Internet

Most of the medium to large-scale Indian industries have their websites on the Internet, as web presence on the Internet, provide them cost effective opportunity to reach their customers world wide. These companies have their products catalogue online, providing latest information on their products and services. The web presence has many other advantages too, like it serves as virtual office open 24 hours of the day, buyers can see product images and their descriptions and can send business queries online through 'online query form' directly to the manufacturers. Presently, Internet has become an important medium of trade, for trading all range of products including industrial products, equipment and materials. A large number of business to business portals, commonly known as B2B portals, offering trade related information to the business community and general customers in India and abroad, have sprung up. For example, TradePortalofIndia.Com (<http://www.tradeportalofindia.com>), IndiaTrade.com (<http://www.indiatrader.com>), SeekandSource.com (<http://www.seekandsource.com>), etc.

These trade portals offer wide range of business promotion services to the manufacturers, such as building business homepage for the company, supporting business homepage on their server, promoting company's website on the industry specific search engines, advertising company's products and services through ecatalogues, supporting Business to Business auctions, etc.

<http://www.tradeportalofindia.com>: This is a trade portal of India, setup by Business Information Centre of India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO). The website provides products/suppliers profiles from India. It has a global importers directory with over 40,000 importers profiles, overseas market analysis, trade and investment regulations and listing of major trade fairs of the world. The site provides links to other trade related sites such as Export Promotion Council, Chamber of Commerce, Industry Associations, International Trade and Trade Related Organisations, etc.

<http://www.indiamart.com>: Operational since 1996, India mart is a B2B online trade portal with 5000+ clients and 25 nation wide hubs. It has a database with 60,000 companies under 450 products and services categories. IndiaMART provides online business solutions through its network of online directories, marketplaces (Trade offers, B2B auctions, industry portals) and other B2B services (Newsletters, Discussion Boards, Building Business homepage, etc.). The product category ranges from household goods to industrial products from agro, auto, jute, pharmaceutical and other industries.

Bibliographical Control

Most of the trade literature, such as trade catalogues, trade journals, etc. is considered ephemeral material that become obsolete very quickly and therefore, is not covered by the indexing and abstracting services. These publications are also not systematically acquired and organised by libraries. Many trade catalogues are routinely mailed by the manufacturers free to technical libraries. These are usually filed in vertical files or pamphlet boxes, alphabetically by manufacturer's name in the libraries. However, constant weeding out is required to keep the collection current. Most of the librarians prefer to maintain a collection of trade and business directories for reference purposes than trade and product catalogues.

References and Further Reading

- Albert, Walker (1974). House Journals. In: Kent, A.(et.al.) (eds.). Encyclopaedia of Library and Information Science. New York: Marcel Dekker.Vol. 11, pp.61-4.
- Beach, Mark (1995). Editing Your Newsletter: How to Produce an Effective Publication Using Traditional Tools and Computers. 4th ed. Cincinnati: F&W Publications.
- Fjallbrant, Nancy (1997). Scholarly Communication: Historical Development and New Possibilities. IATUL Conference on 'Scholarly Communications in Focus',Tradheim, Norway. 1997. (<http://www.iatul.org/conferenceproceedings/>).295 Information Products - Part-I
- Houghton, Bernard (1975). Scientific Periodicals-Their Historical Development, Characteristics and Control. London: Clive Bingley.
- Marks, John and Jacob, Nielson (1998).Writing for the Web. Jan 6, 1998. (<http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting>).
- Naidu, Guruswamy N. (1994). Information Newsletters, House Bulletins, In-House Communications.Revised by Kanungo, Neena Talwar. In: MLIS-04, Block-03,Unit 9.New Delhi:IGNOU.
- Nielson, Jacob (2004). Targeted E-mail Newsletters Showed Continued Strength.Feb 17, 2004 (<http://www.useit.com/alertbox>).
- Reddy, Subhasini (1994).Trade and Product Bulletins. In: MLIS-04, Block-03,Unit 10.New Delhi: IGNOU.
- Subramanyam, K.(1980). Trade Catalogues: Technical Literature. In: Kent, A. (et.al.) (eds.). Encyclopaedia of Library and Information Science. New York: Marcel.Dekker.Vol. 30, pp.190-98.
- IGNOU COURSE MATERIAL

Technical Digests

The latest scientific and technical information, marketing and commercial information is essential for the growth of any industry. The people in industry require information on new products, machinery, manufacturing processes, management techniques, etc. to keep themselves abreast of the latest development as well as to solve technical problems associated with running and management of an industrial enterprise. But, the growth and proliferation of S&T literature in a wide range of sources, makes it difficult for technical workers and executives in industry to keep track of latest developments in product designs, manufacture processes and management techniques, etc. in their area of interest. To meet their information requirement, technical digest service is provided. Technical digest, is an information service, which analyses, evaluates, consolidates and disseminates latest technical information to managerial, technical and operator level personnel in the industry.

Definitions

According to Webster's Dictionary a digest is defined as "to compress a piece of literature or a body of information into a short summary form, containing essential core of the matter."

According to Guha "digest is actually a fuller representation of a document, rewritten for a purpose or to suit the requirements of different group of people, but intended to serve as a complete substitute for the original document."

Features

- A digest is a systematic condensation of a written work, often prepared by someone other than the author of the original. It is generally larger than the synopsis and sometimes with headings and subheadings to facilitate quick reference.
- Digests are generally periodical publications containing condensation of works, gathered from many sources and arranged in a systematic order.
- A digest may be prepared ad hoc on request on a particular subject, or it may be issued frequently at regular intervals or in anticipation of demand.
- The term 'digest' is synonymously used with compendium and/or epitome. The digest, therefore can be defined as "Body of information or written matter, involving information consolidation by condensation. It is a compendium of information gathered from various sources, systematically and methodologically arranged, classified under headings and subheadings.
- It is prepared either on demand or in anticipation for quick and ready reference, with subject scope spanning from literary to science and technology."
- Technical digest is not so distinct from a digest, except the subject scope. Subject scope of technical digests is mainly science, technology and management aspects.
- According to Guha, "Technical digest is a product of condensation process. It performs an accretion function. It may be directed or oriented to various groups of user viz., managers, technicians, operators etc."

Need and Functions

Technical digests are useful sources of information for managerial and technical workers in the industry. Through technical digests the managers and technical workers in industries obtain information on technical know-how and other technical data helpful in their work. Different categories of workers in industry require different types of information. Managerial personnel require product-oriented information such as technical, commercial and marketing information. An effective technical digest not only saves the time of the manager but also helps him/her in decision-making. Technical workers/operators require information on solving technical problems, new ideas and processes, which can help them in day-to-day working. Technical digests serve following functions:

- Keep different levels of workers in the industry abreast of latest developments in their respective fields;
- Provide timely dependable information to keep them equipped with new developments taking place in their areas of specialisation;
- Disseminate latest technical know-how; and
- Serve as an effective channel between research and production centres.

Categories

Different types of digests are prepared keeping in view the following levels of workers in the industry:

- Top Management
- Middle/Supervisory Management
- Operator Level Personnel

The digest for top management should cover information on the following topics:

- Corporate Management/Planning
- Finance
- Production
- Research and Development
- Personnel
- Sales
- Public Relations
- External Regulations

Digests for middle/supervisory management should contain information, which can help them in:

- i) enhancing utilisation of installed capacity;
- ii) new production processes/techniques which can result in increase in use of labour
- iii) force and production facilities to maximise production; and
- iv) problem solving and decision making.

Digests for workers/operators should contain information, which they can easily understand and put to use. Digests for workers/operators should help them in:

- ✓ solving day-to-day technical problems;
- ✓ simulating the modernisation of existing production methods and techniques;
- ✓ small improvements in manufacturing/ process techniques which lead to major
- ✓ saving in an industry; and
- ✓ mechanisation of existing work.

Planning and Preparation

Systematic planning is the foremost step in the preparation of any information service. Same holds true for the preparation of a technical digest. The planning and preparation of a technical digest involves the following steps:

- Identification of users and their information requirements;
- Sources of information and its collection;
- Information Analysis and Consolidation;
- Evaluation;
- Presentation and Layout; and
- Dissemination

The following guidelines should be kept in mind for an effective presentation:

- ✓ The writing should be easy to understand;
- ✓ Use of simple and short sentences;
- ✓ Brevity and accuracy of data and facts;
- ✓ The use of technical terms to be restricted, particularly if digests are prepared for a commoner;
- ✓ The technical terms to be preferred if digests are prepared for a specialist;
- ✓ Tables, graphs, etc. must be added wherever necessary. This will increase the value and usefulness of the digest.

The contents of technical digest must specifically include:

- How new product or process is better than the existing one?
- Whether the material used is new or it is used in a new way?
- If new material is used, then its availability for commercial use.
- The benefits of using the new technology in terms of man, material and money.
- Does the new technology involve new equipment, if so, then its availability?
- The other factors to be kept in mind while preparing technical digests are:
- The digest should be designed to appeal to the initiator of action i.e. the manager;
- It must cover ideas which will initiate action;

- The digest should show how the idea presented will benefit the organisation;
- The presentation should pin-point the idea and draw manager's attention to refer to it;
- The digest should be short without compromising the essential details, as short digest is more likely to be looked up.

Apart from the contents, the layout of a technical digest is equally important. The following points should be kept in mind for the layout of the technical digest:

- It should have appropriate eye-catching heading;
- It should be short within 200-400 words and must not exceed 3 to 4 typed pages;
- The sources of information with full bibliographical details should be mentioned at the end of a digest to enable the user to refer to the original documents, if required.

Examples

- ✓ Management Digest: Published bimonthly by SENDOC (Small Enterprises National Documentation Centre), provides digests of journal articles on human resource employment potential, entrepreneurial skills and managerial issues.
- ✓ Innovative Technology: Published bimonthly by SENDOC, provides digests of new processes and products, and new equipment using local resources aiming at cost reduction, import substitution, and export promotion.
- ✓ Techman: Published bimonthly by SENDOC, provides digests of processes and products, and equipment covering wide spectrum of technologies and abstracts of technical articles.
- ✓ TERI Information Digest on Energy and Environment: Published quarterly by TERI (Tata Energy Research Institute), incorporates: a) TIDE – TERI Information Digest on Energy, b) TIMES – TERI Information Monitor on Environmental Science, and c) GER- Global Environmental Review.

REFERENCES

1. Atherton, P. Hand Book of Information Systems and Services. Paris: UNESCO,1977.
2. Guha, B. Documentation and Information Services, Techniques and Systems. 2nd rev. Ed. Calcutta: World Press, 1983. Reprinted 1999.
3. Saracevic, T. Processes and Problems in Information Consolidation. Information Processing and Management, Vol.22(1) 1986:45-60
4. Stharama, S. Information Consolidation and Repackaging: Framework, Methodology, Planning. New Delhi: Ess Ess Publication, 1997.
5. Singh, Sewa. Information Analysis, Consolidation and Repackaging. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2014.
6. IGNOU Course Material MLII-101 Block3.