August 28, 1991
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Subcommittee on Information Dissemination

I. Disclaimers

The following discussion outline is derived from discussions I had with the two other subcommittee members, Alain Seznec and Steve Barley, during the summer. Neither of them has signed off on this document and both have every right to disown it at the upcoming meeting -- Sept. 11.

II. Scope of Subcommittee's Domain?

There is a high degree of potential overlap between the topics of "information dissemination", "electronic publication", and "communication." The following definition of "information dissemination" patently reaches into electronic publication as conceived by that subcommittee so that some sorting out in terms of ultimate report preparation may be called for; but at the deliberation stage overlap is the best insurance against having important topics fall through a gap.

What activities and institutional structures fall most importantly with in the scope of this subcommittee?

1. University, faculty, and students acquiring information:

*through individual purchase (purchase of texts and other course materials by students and faculty)

*through the collective purchase, maintenance and distribution via the library system and other units (? - census data, geological data, federal court data)

*through charged access to on-line or other non-print information services

The important entities and actors include:

At Cornell:

*the library system

*faculty members, departments, colleges

*students

*CIT

External to Cornell:

*publishers and other information vendors

2. University, faculty and staff (and students?) disseminating information (publication?/communication?):

*through journals, monographs, databases

*through university, college, department sponsored organs

*from its information collection (the library and others?)

The important entities and actors include:

> At Cornell:
>
> > *the library system
> >
> > *faculty, members, departments, journals, colleges
> >
> > *CIT
> >
> > *the Cornell University Press
>
> External to Cornell:
>
> *publishers, journals, the organized disciplines and other information vendors

III. What Large Issues Lie Within This Domain?

Are there steps that Cornell should take, given its stake as an information purchaser and redistributer, to realize the economies and enhanced capabilities of new information technologies and distribution paths? What are they?

At what decision points within the university (individual, department, college, university-wide) must steps be taken to realize these possibilities?

Are new organizational entities or restructuring of old entities called for?

Are there opportunities open to Cornell as an information source?

At what decision points within the university must steps be taken to realize these possibilities?

Are new organizational entities or restructuring of old entities called for?

IV. Some More Specific Questions of Fact and Policy?

*How far are we from the point at which every faculty member at Cornell has a work station at his or her office/lab and has as well the support, software, network access, and skills to access information relevant to his or her teaching and research? Not only has those resources but uses them? The technology exists. For substantial segments of the faculty (how large?) this describes present reality. What are the principal institutional, fiscal, cultural or other factors that must be contended with before such access is universally available? What resources should be devoted to bringing that about?

*To what extent does electronically distributed information move outside the budget and administration of the library? To the extent that the library system is involved in the distribution path to what extent and at what compromise of long-held policies?

The acquisition of material by the library for storage and distribution by it carries policies of responsibility for the material and universal no-fee access that electronically distributed information from outside on the one hand or the maintenance of information by an individual faculty member or unit (with the library perhaps as clearinghouse) may violate.

How are trade-offs between centrally acquired information (library acquisitions) and information delivered and billed more directly to individual faculty members or units to be made?

Are there important central tasks -- e.g., site license negotiation for the university -- which fall outside the historical responsibilities of the library? Should they be assumed by the library or some other entity (CIT, campus store)?

*Are there important initiatives that Cornell University or any of its identifiable units ought to take, either alone or together with similar institutions, that would generate substantial economies or efficiencies in the acquisition or distribution of information by its faculty and students? The questions here are not: What is likely to happen at Cornell? but rather: Are there changes that the university as distinct from individuals at Cornell and external agents should try to bring about and, if so, how?

Should Cornell work to bring about on-demand publication of course materials? (The question of whether the campus store is an important player?)

Should Cornell work to bring about electronic distribution of particular materials currently acquired in print -- e.g.,

scholarly journals?

Are there opportunities to distribute information out from Cornell that the new technology makes possible (an electronic university press, if you will)?

Are there copyright licensing arrangements that Cornell should seek to put in place?