

Some ABCs

By RON INOUE

in education

Editor's Note: The column for this and next week will continue the feature begun last week on the state's libraries. As students, educators, parents and private citizens we are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of information not only in school but also in our day-to-day personal decision-making.

Parents and educators in particular should provide their youngsters and students with the skills necessary to obtain information, a skill which will yield life-long skills.

Next week will feature a listing of all available library resources.

DATA BASE. A data base search results in a bibliography or list of citations which may include books, periodical articles, research reports, proceedings, patents, etc. Once identified, these materials can usually be borrowed through interlibrary loan services. The materials can be in a number of different formats, for example as a book, a photocopy, in micro-format (microfiche or microfilm), and can be delivered by mail or even facsimile transmission by telecommunications. The latter is relatively expensive as yet, but it is generally the loaning institution which bears the telephone charges.

As the current costs of collecting, storing, and disseminating information are expensive, the less expensive, if somewhat less convenient (for some to use), microforms and computer-assisted systems will predominate. As users of information and as teachers of students who will need to access information, we need to familiarize our students with these information systems.

ALASKA UNION LIST OF SERIALS and ALASKA LIBRARY NETWORK CATALOG. Two microfiche publications of particular importance to users of Alaskan libraries are the Alaska Union List of Serials and the Alaska Library Network Catalog. The union list is a composite listing of the periodicals available in public, academic, and special libraries throughout the state and in some school districts. This enables you and the library to know exactly where the periodical is located and speeds up the interlibrary loan process.

The Alaska Library Network Catalog is a composite listing of books in the major libraries in the state: that is, the University libraries in Anchorage and Fairbanks, the State Library in Juneau, and the Anchorage municipal libraries. Soon to be added will be the Fairbanks North Star Borough Library and the state law libraries. The microfiche catalog does not list all the library holdings, but thousands of titles are added annually.

It is anticipated that the film catalog from the Alaska State Film Library will be issued on microfiche. The computer output catalog is substantially less costly than the printed catalog, and updating by computer is extremely fast, efficient, and significantly less expensive.

Materials may be available in a variety of formats, including microform. If a microfiche or microfilm reader is not available locally, usually it is possible to request a "print out" of the item. The advantages of fiche are its miniaturization, ease and inexpensiveness of duplication, and its inexpensiveness to mail. A few offices in the state have telefacsimile equipment which can be used for RUSH interlibrary loan.

REQUESTING LIBRARY ASSISTANCE. This brings us to the most important part of requesting assistance from a library or any other source. CLEARLY state what information you are seeking. Only you know what your subject is, and what you plan to do with that information.

Consult Books In Print, a standard reference listing subjects and authors for books currently available. If you have difficulty identifying the materials you need, write a paragraph stating what you need. From that paragraph select key words and phrases. Use a thesaurus to find other terms or synonyms which may be more descriptive and succinct for use in your request for materials.

COMPUTER ASSISTANCE. As the availability of computer linkages to rural communities increases, make sure you are aware of how those linkages may be able to assist you and your students in obtaining information. If your community is already linked to the state or University computer systems, learn how to use them. Every REAA school district office in the state is linked through the state computer to the State Department of Education and to the Alaska State Film Library in Anchorage.

The University of Alaska Computer Network (UACN) links the campuses in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau, the State Library and many of the community colleges. As rapidly as possible all the community colleges will have terminals, as will the rural education extension centers. Library communications, such as interlibrary loan, reference question and data base searches can be accommodated in the UACN.