

The challenges facing the information manager

Andrew McGregor, McGregors

The meeting was addressed by Andrew McGregor, co-founder of McGregors' which is an enterprise dealing with on-line services for the commercial world since 1987. The title of the talk was *The Challenges Facing the Information Manager*

The information manager can be seen as a primary information provider. The librarian or information professional is viewed as an information broker. The information process is divided into 3 aspects:

- sourcing information,
- packaging information ,and
- distributing information.

McGregors' is viewed as a primary provider which uses information as raw material. The role of the librarian/information professional is to meet the needs of demanding clients. Therefore, the concept of packaging and distribution can be applied since they deliver information to the users. Packaging will focus on photocopies - spreadsheets and exports. Distribution focuses on sending the information to the clients.

McGregors deals with business information in Africa. Mainly, they supply wholesale information to overseas companies and use the data for repackaging. Only 25% of that information is sold to companies in Africa. McGregors accesses its resources from printed books, CD-ROM and the Internet which is seen as a future platform. They foresee that there will always be a market for books. CD-ROM allows one to have a resident database which is easy to maintain and fairly practical. They see CD-ROMs as major growth products.

Presently the Internet is slow and difficult to access but its growth is phenomenal. In July 1994 there were 38 million Internet users, as of January 1996 there were 62.5 million. There is an explosion of social change because of the number of Internet sites available. Drawbacks to the Internet include the slowness, restrictions due to the HTML protocol and there is no specific billing structure. The US government, Microsoft and Netscape are presently working on a billing system. The Internet is seen as a future functional market place since world traffic will travel through this marketplace.

The talk was concluded by stating that the Internet is a primary source of information products. The information manager needs to be able to market and to package this product.