

be reduced to a small, politically single-minded group. This group will then have succeeded, intentionally or not, in suppressing all political thought except its own.

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Computers in Printing and Indexing

Salton's excellent article "Automatic text analysis" (17 Apr., p. 335) stresses the technical feasibility of using computers to index and classify documents and indicates that computers do as good a job as manual indexers (which does not inspire confidence in the present systems used for manual indexing). However, there is no reference to the economic feasibility of automatic indexing and no mention of current or eventual cost.

Also omitted was a discussion of scale-up problems and lengthy computer runs to be expected when expanding from a small trial system with a limited number of terms and synonyms to the relatively huge thesauri needed to cover broader fields [13,535 main terms in the NASA Thesaurus; 17,810 main terms in the 1967 DOD Thesaurus of Engineering and Scientific Terms (TEST or LEX Thesaurus); 7590 main terms in the National Library of Medicine Thesaurus of Medical Subject Headings (MESH), and so forth]. It may be that consideration of these factors would have some bearing on Salton's qualified conclusion that "... there are no obvious technical reasons why manual document analysis methods should not be replaced by automatic ones."

JOHN H. SCHNEIDER

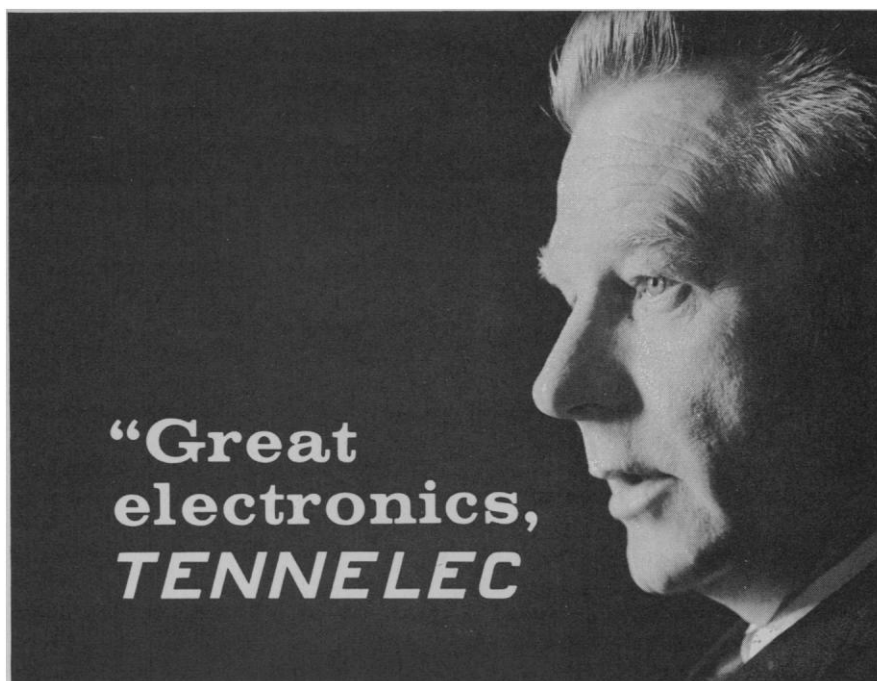
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... The significance of this work will become more evident as more text is on computer base. The British publication *Physics Abstracts* is now composed by photocomposition, and in this country both the American Chemical Society and American Institute of Physics plan to photocompose their journals. The availability of these on computer base amenable for searching offers rich fields for further automatic indexing studies. ...

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17 JULY 1970



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