vore *Protentomodon ursirivalis* is . . ." so that the species was set off by commas, as if it were the only known insectivore. In a more recent paper "now" was changed to "presently," which is not of Anglo-Saxon origin and so more "scientific," but which usually means "in the near future." Neither editor would reverse himself.

The main function of grammar is, after all, to reduce ambiguity. Wider use of such a criterion might help in communication.

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Information Distribution: A Plea for Efficiency

Harvey Brooks's comments ("Applied science and technological progress," 30 June, p. 1706) focus on many of the ramifications of basic-versus-applied science emphasis. In speaking of the transfer of federally-supported technology to private industry, he cites the encouragement provided by the Atomic Energy Act, and the desirability in government of a more hospitable attitude generally toward this objective.

It must also be remembered that the entire initial product of any research is information, and the dissemination of information generated at public expense has been of concern in many quarters. Often vast amounts of money and expertise have been expended in that research, but its product will not be utilized if there is no effort to make it available. The generating effort of the research is to a great extent wasted if the concluding step of efficient dissemination—good reporting and accessibility to the reports—is omitted.

Aside from some agencies (notably AEC and NASA), there has been lagging interest in such dissemination. Except for holders of defense contracts, it is a difficult and slow process for the general public to (i) learn what usable technology results from Department of Defense–sponsored research, and (ii) to examine or obtain copies of potentially interesting reports. Despite efforts to produce better announcement and indexing media, the jumbled jargon of identifying report numbers, the uncertainty of subject indication and long delays in obtaining copies are enough to discourage the belief that the govern-

ment is much interested in information transfer.

About 5 years ago, 12 organizations were asked to set up regional technical report centers, with some federal support. Located at eight universities and four public scientific library collections, these centers received from NASA, AEC, and DOD (through the Clearing House for Federal Scientific and Technical Information) copies of all unclassified reports resulting from government research. These reports were available for consultation, copies could be made on demand, and assistance given in unraveling the knots of literature and report citation. Despite withdrawal of support funds later, the host institutions felt sufficiently concerned with the basic need so as to continue these services at their own expense, while still receiving the reports (in microform).

Last fall, distribution of the DOD reports ceased (although AEC and NASA have continued). Now the public finds that cited reports are no longer to be had through local channels. One center alone has been handling over 2800 requests per year, at no cost to the government except the few cents per copy for microforms sent to the centers. In all centers, reference service comes to a standstill; reports are no longer available for consultation or loan; copies can no longer be had on a day-or-two notice. All in all, this modest program was a bargain to the government and especially to the taxpayer.

The State Technical Services Act of 1965 has as its goal "programs to place the findings of science usefully in the hands of American enterprise." Yet its benefits may be seriously undermined by discontinuance of the resources of the regional report centers. It is hoped that the Jennings Randolph Subcommittee on Science and Technology of the Senate Small Business Committee will note this gap in the transfer machinery, and that, as a result of its forthcoming hearings, will recommend restoration of this national network of information centers. To promote this service to public research interests, there has been formed a Council of Regional Technical Report Centers. Information users, too, of both basic and applied persuasions, can helpfully add their voices.

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