"Information" to the UNISIST delegates meant scientific concepts and data associated with the publication of the results of research. "Information" for SIE is data about ongoing research projects. While generalizations are dangerous, the publication system, as John Ziman (*1*) has informed us, is the proving ground of science and scientists; project information, on the other hand, is of primary value to the managers of research, be they industrial corporations or federal agencies.

Incidentally, the Office of Science and Technology no longer coordinates federal science information; responsibility for the Committee on Scientific and Technical Information (COSATI) of the Federal Council for Science and Technology was transferred to the National Science Foundation a year ago.

Finally, "informatics" is not yet a generally accepted term in the United States. Not to be confused with the French "informatique" (computer science), "informatics" is a term used in the Soviet Union, where it is defined as "a discipline belonging to the social sciences, which studies the structure and general characteristics of scientific information, and also general laws governing all scientific communication processes" (*2*).

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References

1. J. Ziman, *Public Knowledge* (Cambridge Univ. Press, London, 1968).
2. *Information . . . Prepared for the Fifth Session of the Central Committee to Study the Feasibility of a World Science Information System* (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, Moscow, 1970).

I regret my incorrect assumption that "federal agency requests for information on research by investigators," in which there was a 91 percent decline, described the totality of SIE's activities. The GAO report states, however, that in all of the several categories of services studied, there was a decline in use which "ranged from 20 to 91 percent."—N.W.

Federal Statistics

Philip Abelson's editorial of 24 March (p. 1315) correctly points up important limitations of federal statistics. More accurate, more prompt, and more relevant data are needed for economic and social policy formulation, private decision-making, government program guidance, and internal government management.

A vigorous effort to modernize the federal statistical system was initiated 3 years ago. The general strategy was to increase the overall budget for statistics and improve the organization of federal statistical activities. We have also set new statistical standards for the guidance of federal statistical agencies, and we have established rules for safeguarding the credibility of federal statistics.

In each of the past 3 years, the President's budget for principal statistical programs has been increased substantially. Funds requested for fiscal year 1973 represent an increase of more than 18 percent over estimated obligations for 1972, which, in turn, are about 16 percent above actual obligations for 1971. Top priority is given to proposals (i) to extend and improve basic data for the System of National Accounts, (ii) to improve accuracy and timeliness of current economic indicators, (iii) to organize a set of social indicators, and (iv) to develop data for state and local areas.

In 1971, the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued guidelines for consolidating and streamlining statistical activities in four departments of government (Agriculture; Commerce; Health, Education, and Welfare; and Labor) that have major statistical components. The Department of Commerce has now completed its reorganization of statistical activities, and the Department of Labor is about to take final steps in their reorganization. Substantial progress has also been made in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and in the Department of Agriculture.

Measures to safeguard the credibility of federal statistics include the development of guidelines by OMB to improve the timeliness of economic indicators. As a result there has been a substantial speedup in the release of the indicators as well as other federal statistical reports. Guidelines have also been issued for striking a balance between accuracy and timeliness. Advance target dates for the release of about 120 principal indicators have now been published for almost 2 years. Also, in order to separate statistical reports from policy-oriented commentary, OMB has instituted a rule providing for a 1-hour separation between issuance of data by the statistical agencies in a written press release and release of commentary by Administration officials.

With respect to Abelson's suggestion that the government sponsor sample surveys of unemployment, the Current Population Survey, which is largely devoted to measuring employment and unemployment each month, is in fact a sample survey of more than 30 years standing. This survey covers, among others, scientists and engineers. On an annual average basis in 1971, an estimated 1,381,000 scientists and engineers were employed, while 41,000 or 2.9 percent were unemployed. For engineers alone, where we have quarterly data, the unemployment rate in the fourth quarter of 1971 was 2.7 percent, down from the high of 3.2 percent in the first quarter, but still relatively high compared with earlier levels. More detailed information from a special National Science Foundation survey of scientists and engineers in the National Register showed an unemployment rate of 2.6 percent for scientists and of 3.0 percent for engineers in the spring of 1971. A second round of this survey will be undertaken this summer.

OMB is charged with the responsibility for coordinating and improving the government's statistical system. We welcome statements of needs for data from prospective users and ideas for improved techniques and methodologies for collecting information and for preparing and disseminating estimates.

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Equal Opportunity at NIH

Gross's arguments (Letters, 19 May, p. 743) against affirmative recruitment of women to fill advisory jobs at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) would be persuasive if he were not starting from false premises. Although I know few of them personally, I would be surprised if senior staff members of NIH were any blinder to race, age, national origin, or sex than their contemporaries who are senior professors and department heads in major universities. Most of these gentlemen seem to be unaware of the insidious discrimination practiced against those who are less fortunate.

I share Gross's uneasiness about rigid quotas, but feel that without affirmative action those scientists who are outside of the mainstream because of race, na-