

could be seconded to "non-teaching" hospitals for periods of about two weeks. This is already fairly general practice in obstetrics, but could be applied on a wider scale—in medicine, surgery and many of the specialities. This would also help to break down the barrier between teaching and non-teaching hospitals and would, the report suggests, be a stimulus to the staff in each. Ward rounds, it is emphasized, should be purely teaching rounds, and clinical "business" should not be carried on at the same time unless students are actively involved. Teaching in out-patient departments is also encouraged because it enables the student to see new patients, to take the original history and to observe the physical signs—an advantage not always possible with in-patients.

Concern is expressed about the extent to which pre-registration housemen are used merely as an extra pair of hands, with very little or no time or opportunity for study. The association believes that these posts should be regarded as a part of the basic medical education, and that the welfare of students filling them should be the responsibility of the parent medical school.

INFORMATION HANDLING

Keeping Chemists Informed

For the first time, all the principal societies and professional institutions for chemists in Britain are going to get together in a consortium to discuss the mutual problem of chemical information. The formation of the consortium has recently been announced by its sponsor, the Chemical Society. To begin with, the members will be the larger societies, the Royal Society, the Chemical Society, the Royal Institute of Chemistry and similar bodies, but smaller chemical organizations may join in later on. Aslib will be a member from the start, and the Office for Scientific and Technical Information (OSTI) will be represented by an observer. The objective is to provide a comprehensive information system in pure and applied chemistry and to collaborate with information services in other subjects and other countries. The chief advantage of the consortium may be that it will speak with one voice on information matters for all chemists in Britain—especially important with computerized information services coming into service.

The consortium does not, however, intend to stick to computer-based information services. The new arrangements will also make it possible to coordinate the development of journals and the training of chemists in the use of existing services, for example. Yet there seems very little doubt that the formation of the consortium has been inspired by the operation of the computer-based current awareness service which has been operating at Nottingham University for the past two years with the help of a large grant from the Office for Scientific and Technical Information. Initially that was operated for a selected group of chemists and users of chemical information in Great Britain. The runs were experimental and were provided free of charge. But since July of this year the unit has been running on a cost recovery basis for all comers. Profiles derived from the customer's statement of research interests are matched each fortnight against magnetic tape versions of the Chemical

Abstracts Service publications *Chemical Titles* and *Chemical Biological Activities*. The Nottingham unit has an edge over similar services in the United States, where the practice is for individual firms or other organizations to buy tapes from Chemical Abstracts Services and to operate internal services for their employees. In practice, however, the customers at Nottingham are mostly industrial chemists, presumably getting the service with their job. Academic chemists may find the cost of the service prohibitive—a profile at present costs about £40 a year—and may be left out in the cold if they have to continue to pay for this type of service out of their own pockets.

Dr A. K. Kent, director of the Nottingham unit, is pleased with the response since the service was open to the public. About half the profiles on the books (150) are for new customers, and he hopes that the service will be financially independent in 2–3 years. The service has been evaluated continually, and a report of the study is to be published soon by the Chemical Society. It is also hoped to extend the scope of the service being offered, possibly by including *Biological Abstracts* on the tapes. The unit is also investigating the potentialities of the new service now being produced by Chemical Abstracts Service under the name of *CA Condensates*. The hope is that the average of four indexing terms a citation will increase the accuracy of searching. Nottingham's customers should have a chance to find out when the first runs begin in the new year.

POPULAR SCIENCE

Dainton Defied

Science in Action, the first issue of which was launched last week, is intended for children between 14 and 18. Appearing fortnightly during the school term, its aim is to describe the applications of science and to link the school curriculum with the practical world. The magazine has been gestating for several years, but the publishers claim that its birth was hastened by the Dainton Report, which earlier this year announced a growing disenchantment with science among school-children. The percentage of children studying for science A-levels in the first year of sixth form has sagged from 41.5 per cent in 1962 to 31.4 per cent last year, and will reach a perturbing 23.5 per cent in 1971 if the trend is allowed to continue.

The high standard of the first issue encourages the hope that the magazine will do well by doing good. Subjects range from the running of a zoo to the ways of stabilizing ships in storms. Professor Thring hands down the first two laws of Robotics and there is an excellent short biography of Fritz Haber. Special features include a description of school science projects and a section on careers. The magazine also announces the activities of the British Association of Young Scientists (BAYS) with which it shares a common purpose. Like *Science in Action*, the BAYS has been in the offing for some years and was founded by the British Association at its annual meeting this year. It arranges lectures and meetings on science subjects throughout the country and for its current programme has enlisted Dr B. J. Mason to talk on weather forecasting, Sir Peter Medawar on organ grafting and Dr Maurice Burton on the Loch Ness Monster.