NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH INFORMATION SERVICES NETWORK

During 1972 and 1973 the Transportation Research Information System Committee studied the possibilities for a national network of transportation research information services. The goal for the network is to provide improved access to all transportation information throughout the research community. At the 1974 Annual Meeting of the Highway Research Board, 5 panelists discussed the following aspects of the evolving network: user requirements, access to project resumes and document abstracts, access to full-text documents, network coordination, and network support. This is a report of those discussions.

Herman W. Miles, U.S. Department of Defense

Information networks have always existed; they are slow, cumbersome, and generally their existence is unknown. The utility of information transfer systems is rapidly increasing. In his book, The Age of Discontinuity, Peter Drucker stated that the advent of Sputnik in 1957 made it clear that building and maintaining the right knowledge base for intellectual, economic, social, and military performance are essential for national survival. Advanced information technology concepts enable persons to have access to vast amounts of information and to communicate more effectively with one another. The day is approaching when an effective discourse between a person and an information system can be accomplished by the latter acting as a knowledgeable and skillful assistant.

The number of information sources is increasing as the nation faces new problems that require technology for solution: pollution, conservation, transportation, energy, housing, and a variety of other social, political, and economic problems. The tendency is to add new information systems to cope with these problems.

Organizational responsibilities are now mission oriented. Organizations have a hierarchical structure, and as a result the information systems support organizations oriented toward vertical communications in a specialized area of interest. Science is interdisciplinary. New discoveries in one area may be applicable in others. The communication and coordination of information must be horizontal.

Networks of information transfer systems appear to be the answer to the communication of information. The rapid advances in computer technology in the sixties appear to be dissipating. Advanced communication techniques that should come into fruition in the seventies will permit the use of a computer facility in a decentralized mode easily and economically. Technology is emerging that will permit the building of information systems that transcend the present compartmentalized structure. One of these systems is the Transportation Research Information Services Network.

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In this overview of TRISNET, I will give a few possible indicators affecting transportation information generation, summarize the TRIS committee's work, and conclude