

DESIDOC – AN OVERVIEW

Beginning with this issue an overview of the constitution, components, achievements, activities and services provided by DESIDOC will be brought out for the benefit of our readers. Each subsequent issue of the Bulletin will carry a feature on one of the multifarious activities of DESIDOC, highlighting the achievements in particular area, the facilities available, the services provided to the users, etc.

DESIDOC - A Central Resource for Scientific Information

Information is a vital resource for research and development. For carrying out research in a subject area, information on the work being done, or that has already been done elsewhere is very important to avoid repetition of R&D work to the extent possible. A good deal of savings in resources and efforts can be achieved if such information is made available to scientists at the right time, in the right form.

Genesis

Realising the importance of information, the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) created a Scientific Information Bureau (SIB) in 1958, soon after the formation of the Organisation. The job of SIB was to collect and process scientific and technical information of Defence interest and disseminate it to the concerned R&D scientists and other agencies of the Ministry of Defence. In 1967, SIB was reorganised and renamed as Defence Scientific Information and Documentation Centre (DESIDOC) with wider scope and responsibilities. It became a self-accounting unit in 1970 to function as one of the DRDO establishments headed by a

Director. Today, DESIDOC has become one of the India's premier national information centres. Over the years, it has grown in terms of competence and services. Its functions can be broadly classified and described as follows:

Collection of Information

Scientific and technical information of Defence interest is collected from various published and unpublished sources. The Defence Science Library (DSL) functioning in DESIDOC acquires books, journals, reports, patents, etc., and this collection serves as a base for the manifold information services of DESIDOC. Information scientists of DESIDOC regularly scan selected documents as and when they are received in the library and collect information relating to various projects/activities of DRDO. Microfilms, microfiches and compact discs are some of the recent additions to this central resource for information on a wide range of topics related to Defence.

Processing of Information

The information collected from various sources is processed into various assimilable forms like abstracts, indexes, digests,

state-of-the-art reports, current awareness services, etc. Such compilations are regularly sent to various DRDO Labs/Estts and other users of DESIDOC services.

Dissemination of Information

The library and information scientists of DESIDOC provide information in anticipation as well as against specific requests from the users. As anticipatory information services, DESIDOC brings out abstracts/indexes bulletins, state-of-the-art reports, technical digests, etc. Literature searches are regularly conducted for providing information to the Scientific Adviser to Raksha Mantri, Chief Controllers of R&D, and other users in the DRDO HQrs and its laboratories. Modern information technologies have been inducted into the system for quick and effective dissemination of the processed information.

Online Searching of Information

DESIDOC has the facility to search online several international bibliographic databases through an arrangement with 'DIALOG Information Service, USA. Scientists from DRDO Labs/Estts have been utilizing this facility for comprehensive information searches related to their R&D work. The database searching is done over telephone lines. DESIDOC has started using the facility of gateway packet switched data service made available by Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, to Delhi users for searching bibliographic databases efficiently and at cheaper rates. Facilities of online searching of the catalogue of holdings of Defence science library, from the DRDO HQrs are also available.

Sharing the Resources

DESIDOC is attempting to establish an information network for sharing of scientific information resources among DRDO labs/estts. The need for creating an online bibliographic information network utilizing adequate computer and communication facilities under

the Ministry of Defence was mooted at the 'National Conference on Scientific Information for Defence' organised by DESIDOC in February 1986. The action plan for the implementation of this network was worked out at the national seminar on 'Defence Science Information Network' organised by DESIDOC in February 1987. DESIDOC organised an 'International Conference on Bibliographic Databases and Networks' during 22 - 25 Feb 1989 with objectives of obtaining technical inputs for the planning, design and implementation of computer-based bibliographic databases and networks.

Computerisation of Information Services

To cater to the ever-increasing scientific information requirements of DRDO, computerisation of the library operations like acquisition, circulation, etc is being done by DESIDOC. A database containing 12,000 records covering the collection of DSL from 1980 onwards has been developed and is available online as mentioned above. Necessary software for the creation of database and retrieval of information has been developed in-house. Using this software, bibliographic details of books, reports, patents and standards can be searched online through different access points, including author's name, subject keyword, class number, report number and accession number.

Communicating Defence Science

Apart from disseminating the information, published or unpublished, the results of R&D activities in Defence science and technology are communicated through regular and ad hoc DRDO publications brought out by DESIDOC. These publications are varied in their scope and presentation and cater to a diverse audience, including research scientists, decision makers, Defence Services personnel, students, and the general public. These publications help in creating an awareness about the applications of Defence science and

technology both in the Defence and the civil sector. The regular publications include (1) Defence Science Journal (Quarterly), (2) R&D Digest (Bi-monthly), DRDO Newsletter (Bi-monthly), (3) DRDO Samachar (Hindi, Quarterly), and (4) Popular Science & Technology (Half-Yearly). The ad hoc publications include conference proceedings, technical brochures, progress reports and monographs. The editorial and other publication facilities available at DESIDOC are utilized by DRDO labs/estts and the HQrs.

Translation Services

In-house facilities are available for translating research articles, patents, standards, manuals and books from Chinese, Japanese, French, German, and Russian into English. In addition, a panel of expert translators is also maintained to meet the demand for translations from various foreign languages. Abstracts of research articles appearing in foreign language journals are prepared and published in English as a quarterly publication titled, 'Science Abstracts from Foreign Language Journals.' The information on the S&T articles translated by DESIDOC and the translations procured through other translation agencies in India is also compiled and maintained in a computerised format.

Supporting Services

In its endeavour to disseminate up-to-date and comprehensive information to its users,

DESIDOC has established modern reprography and polygraphy facilities. DESIDOC produces high-quality audio-visual material such as colour slides and overhead projection transparencies. Audio and video recording and microfilming are done on demand for DRDO Labs/Estts for making technical presentations. With its modern, phototypesetter-based offset printing unit, duly supported by an automatic process camera and other accessories, DESIDOC provides facilities for printing the classified reports and other publications of DRDO. Efforts are on to make such printing facilities available near places where there is a conglomeration of DRDO Labs/Estts. One such phototypesetter-based printing unit is being established at Hyderabad. A technical information centre (TIC) is functioning at the DRDO HQrs as a branch of DESIDOC, for catering to the day-to-day information needs of the HQrs and the Dept of Defence Research & Development secretariat.

Other Activities

DESIDOC expertise is being used through consultancy work by other Government departments/organisations. A couple of consultancy projects are under way. Many of its staff members are on the expert committees of the national organisations/departments such as BIS, CSIR, ICMR, DBT, DST, DSIR and the Planning Commission.

"Books are good enough in their own way but they are a mighty bloodless substitute for life".

RL STEVENSON