

To: Dr. R.R. Baker

From: V.J. Rice

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Database access - Canada

Further to our conversation yesterday, I thought it was worth formulating some thoughts on the adverse implications of supplying tapes of databases to Imperial:

1. Confidentiality

If we were to supply the full REPORTS database as it stands in tape form, would undermine our undertaking to assign appropriate security codes to reports according to their distribution lists. This ensures that only companies who are entitled to see a report can do so when accessing the database. Unless the data was run on exactly the same system as our own, these security codes would not operate.

2. Copyright

If we were to supply copies of STAB or SMISSUE databases (as was asked), we would, undoubtedly, be breaking all kinds of copyright laws, especially sending the data to another country. At present we pay a fee to Chemical Abstracts to download data to STAB. There is no way that this extends to passing the data on to a third party. We also have no permission to pass TAC data on.

3. Legal implications

Should we pass on data to other companies on a wholesale basis, we may run into trouble should the company be involved in litigation. Imperial's involvement in court proceedings would immediately implicate us, should the lawyers discover that computer tapes had been received. At present, where only access to our computer is concerned, we at least have the option to refuse them access (as happened with B&W at one time).

4. Our Group role

Finally (and I think this is no small point), should we set a precedent of supplying data in this way, our role as a Group resource would be greatly diminished. While we have control over the use of our databases (i.e. while other sites have access only through our own computer), we are retaining the credit deserved for the work carried out, and use of the data can be monitored. Also, should we supply this data, we cannot easily refuse other companies the same service, which may then involve computing in a lot of work in future.

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