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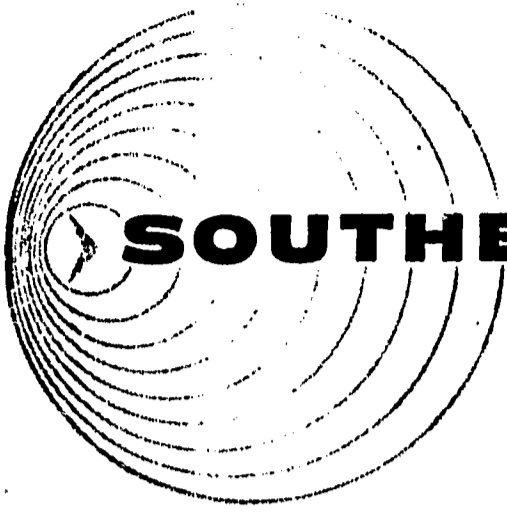
IRCD, ITS SPECIALTY IS ANSWERS.
BY- EGERTON, JOHN

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Durham's Education Improvement Project works to measure and develop the intelligence of children from age zero to early teens. Photographer Billy Barnes worked with writer David Cooper for a graphic description of the unusual research program. (See Page 2.)

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ITS SPECIALTY IS ANSWERS

By JOHN EGERTON

ABOUT 250 TIMES a month, somebody writes, calls or visits a 19-story building on Fifth Avenue in New York's lower Manhattan to ask questions about what is being done to educate culturally disadvantaged children.

Scattered over three floors of the building, a dozen persons—from file clerks to educational psychologists—make up the staff of an organization that probably knows better how to answer the questions than any other group of people in the country.

The Information Retrieval Center on the Disadvantaged (IRCD) is not the fount of all knowledge in this proliferating field of education, but it is the next-best thing: it knows where the fount is, or at least it is quickly finding out. Under the direction of Dr. Edmund W. Gordon, the IRCD staff pores over research

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Dr. Edmund W. Gordon, director of the Information Retrieval Center on the Disadvantaged.

papers, government documents, books, periodicals, grant proposals, speeches and other forms of the written word on the subject of educating the disadvantaged to find out what has been done and what is being done in the field. The materials they are collecting, and the abstracts and bibliographies they compile from them, constitute probably the best single source of information to be found anywhere on research, innovative programs and new developments in the education of the disadvantaged.

IRCD is one of 13 national clearinghouses of the Educational Research Information Center (ERIC), a branch of the U. S. Office of Education's Bureau of Research [see box, page 32], and it receives operating funds of about \$200,000 a year from that source. It is also one of the many service functions administered by Yeshiva University's Ferkauf Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences [see box, page 31], which is housed in the same downtown office building, a few blocks from Greenwich Village.

The Information Retrieval Center on the Disadvantaged is actually a forerunner of the vast ERIC network. Dr. Gordon, who is chairman of the educational psychology and guidance department at the Ferkauf graduate school, and Dr. Dorey A. Wilkerson, a faculty member there, began gathering material in the winter of 1963 for a book on compensatory education for the disadvantaged. The data they collected formed the nucleus of a more extensive catalog on the same subject which was funded for a year and a half by two different federal offices before the ERIC program

was started in the winter of 1965, and IRCD then became one of the first three clearinghouses to be supported under the new program.

The IRCD project has two basic functions. The first is to gather as much published and unpublished material as it can find on education of the disadvantaged, catalog and categorize the material, supplement it with annotations, abstracts and interpretive reviews prepared by the staff, and make it available to people in education who can make use of it. The second function is to serve as a national archives where such material can be stored for historical purposes.

It will take a long time to fulfill these objectives. The staff of IRCD is not large enough to keep up with the welter of materials already flowing into the center, and as more researchers and program developers learn of the center's existence the volume of incoming information is sure to expand. Computerization of the process is being planned to relieve the pressure, but that may take another year or more.

In the meantime, relying mainly on Gordon's expertise in the field, the IRCD staff is making as much as possible of what it has available to those who need it. More than 80 bibliographies, with a combined total of more than 2,800 references, have been compiled. A bulletin, published five times a year, is sent free of charge to more than 4,000 individuals and organizations. And the IRCD collection, now consisting of about 5,000 documents and expanding at a swiftly accelerating rate, includes only the materials that have been catalogued, cross-referenced, annotated or

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but it is the next-best thing

abstracted, added to the bibliography list and shelved in the center's library—and not the hundreds of other items which have yet to go through this process.

There is much more to the IRCD collection than what appears in the catalogs published by ERIC in Washington. The center at Yeshiva sends only a small number of documents—perhaps 20 or 25 per cent of what it gathers—into the central ERIC office, and the abstracts which accompany these major works are a maximum of 200 words long. For its own informational and archival purposes, IRCD produces abstracts of from 250 to 600 words, and a few of the most important items—the Moynihan report on the Negro family, for example, or the Coleman-Campbell survey of educational opportunity—are critically reviewed or presented in extended abstract of up to 8,000 words. These commentaries are printed in the IRCD Bulletin or issued as separate publications.

While the ERIC collection in Washington and its publication, *Research in Education*, deal almost exclusively with actual research projects sponsored by USOE's Bureau of Research, the IRCD collection includes everything from major, book-length studies to ambitious grant proposals that never got off the ground. Single copies of most of the bibliographies which have been compiled by IRCD may be obtained for 10 cents a page. A few are available free of charge. Requests for information are usually answered by means of the bibliographies, which in effect list the name, author, date and source of writings on a given subject. Some specific requests received by the IRCD

Books, brochures and monographs are processed by these staff members of the Information Retrieval Center on the Disadvantaged before going into the ERIC system.

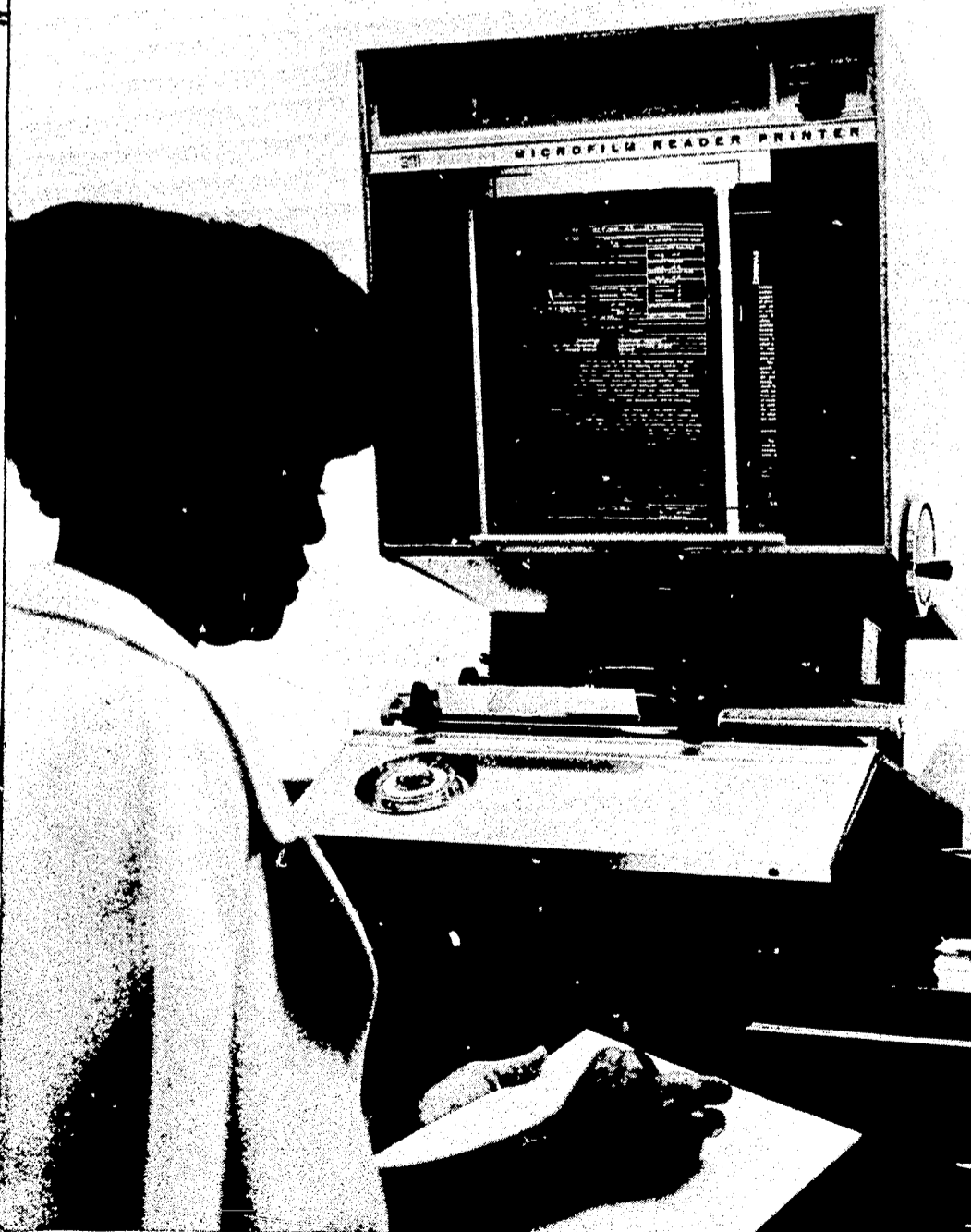


reference staff are answered with copies of abstracts, syntheses of information or even copies of otherwise unavailable documents—all reproduced at a cost of 10 cents a page. Visitors to the center may examine any of the items in the collection.

A look at the list of bibliographies available through IRCD shows that in the first four months of 1967 lists of references were compiled in these areas: negative attitudes of adolescents toward school, supportive evidence for reduced pupil-teacher ratios for culturally disadvantaged children, industrial arts education, teleological considerations of programs for the disadvantaged, learning problems of disadvantaged children, Puerto Ricans, family life education for the disadvantaged, child rearing and related parental responsibilities, and vocational education.

In addition to the Yeshiva program, several other ERIC centers around the country also gather material which has some relationship, at least indirectly, to education of the disadvantaged. IRCD also gathers some materials in related fields, such as economic and ethnic discrimination, school desegregation, and race in education. For the most part, the IRCD collection relates to disadvantaged school children in urban areas; a center on rural education and small schools is located at New Mexico State University.

A librarian takes notes from a projection of an ERIC document on the microfilm reader-printer at Yeshiva University.



Though it is having difficulty keeping pace with the flow of new materials, IRCD is the only place where professors, graduate students, foundations, state departments of education, regional laboratories, school administrators, teachers and others involved in any way with education of disadvantaged children can get anything approaching a comprehensive list of pertinent writings in the field.

Dr. Gordon and his staff get consultative assistance from a five-man advisory committee at Yeshiva and from a national board of 11 men who are recognized authorities on the problems of disadvantaged children.

Gordon himself ranks in the forefront of educators who are knowledgeable in the field, and his broad familiarity with the literature is the key to the IRCD program. Almost all of the materials received there pass across his desk, and he is the person who decides what should be abstracted, what should be annotated, and what should be sent to the ERIC headquarters in Washington.

His own background in education includes a bachelor's degree in zoology, a Bachelor of Divinity degree (and ordination as a Presbyterian minister), a master's in social psychology and an Ed.D. in guidance and child development. He has also done graduate work in industrial relations, sociology and psychology. Since 1951, he has held professional positions as a counseling psychologist, a clinical associate in psychiatry and a professor of behavioral sciences and pediatrics, and has been a consultant in several fields, including mental health, special education and other areas related to the education of the disadvantaged.

Dr. Gordon, who is 46, has been at Yeshiva since 1959, and has been professor and chairman of the Department of Educational Psychology and Guidance since 1965.