

Electronics Replacing News Clippings

JOURNALISTS love to browse through clippings from old newspapers. Some of us have been known to discover so many distracting items of interest that we forgot what information we started out to find.

Most newspapers have maintained libraries of clippings, referred to as "the morgue," for use by reporters and writers. Alas, these yellowed, brittle clippings are headed for oblivion.

First, microfilm came into use as a more convenient means of searching for stories in back issues. Then phototypesetters electronically sent that wonderful invention called a Linotype to junk piles or museums. Finally video terminals with keyboards replaced typewriters in the newsroom and word processors were installed elsewhere.

Now instead of looking up references in bulky files of clippings, The Oklahoman and Times are using what is called a "DEC/Batelle online full-text retrieval newspaper library."

Stories are filed in computer memories and hardly turning in his

swivel chair a writer can run through hundreds of items in less time than it would take to walk across the room and ask a library clerk for clipping files that might contain data he needs.

The system was installed under supervision of Bob Farquhar, assistant managing editor of The Oklahoman and Times. In a 20-minute demonstration he convinced us that even a "hunt and peck" typist could quickly learn to utilize vast amounts of reference material.

State and local news stores are filed automatically in the library computer memory at the instant they are fed into production for printing. They become immediately available for reference.

Thousands of stories are added to the database monthly. To review items referring to a certain person or news event, a user need only direct the computer to find all items mentioning it. The computer may then be directed to sort those within a specified time frame or related to another code word, place or individual.

Summary paragraphs or com-

plete items selected then may be displayed on the video tube. When desired information is located, the user punches another button and, presto, he has a printed copy in hand.

Besides local news items, the system may be connected to as many outside information sources as might be desired. The amount of reference material that could be tapped instantly is overwhelming.

Businesses and home users are installing computers at a fantastic rate. They may be used for accounting, cost and inventory controls, technical information, ordering supplies, shopping, medical advice, investments, banking and dozens of other purposes.

The obsolescence of newspaper clippings is only an example of how our world is changing faster than we may realize.

"From the pre-World War I years until the mid-1960s, the automobile was the engine that made the U.S. economy grow," said a review in Business Week magazine recently. "Nowadays, the major stimulant may be the microchip. There is striking parallel between the two."