

new method for producing lists of cultures

For the first time Canadian scientists have used a computer to produce a "List of Species of Micro-organisms Maintained in Canada". The system has attracted international interest

Cultures of micro-organisms such as algae, moulds, yeasts, viruses and bacteria are among the basic equipment of the micro-biologist and the microbial biochemist. The organisms are studied for their own sake in basic research, because of the many and varied chemical abilities that they possess and because of their involvement in plant and animal diseases. They are also grown on an industrial scale for many purposes including the production of beverages and antibiotics.

Because of their importance to the industrial, scientific and medical communities, cultures are stored in collections all over the world, including Canada. From time to time most of the large national culture collections publish manually-compiled catalogues but these contain only minimal amounts of information and soon become out of date.

Maintaining culture collections is exacting, time consuming work. Most microbiologists restrict their collections to groups of micro-organisms in which they have a special interest and rely on their colleagues to provide the others as the need arises. Information about "who has what" is provided in part by the available catalogues.

Compiling information about holdings of micro-organisms and providing lists and descriptive catalogues for distribution is also time consuming and expensive. Some depositories for micro-organisms balk at the manual effort required and do not publish lists. A knowledge of such holdings must be obtained through published papers or by word-of-mouth.

During the last six years, the National Research Council of Canada has pioneered in the use of computers to speed and reduce the cost of recording and cataloguing information about cultures of micro-organisms. This work



Roger Latta, a research officer in the Division of Biology, transferring a stored culture to a fresh nutrient medium for growth.

Roger Latta, chargé de recherche dans la Division de Biologie en train de transférer une culture, gardée en réserve, à un bouillon récemment préparé. Ce faisant, il peut encourager la reprise de la culture.