

basis of the existing IN. When the result of the interpretation has personal meaning (coincides with the existing need), the user considers that the information is found. It is not difficult to note that in this process information is in fact sought. However, this process is more complicated when the search is not carried out directly by the user but with the help of intermediaries, which can be people or mechanisms.

In this case the answers to the questions asked earlier are not so obvious. A statement by Lancaster, one of the most well-known researchers in information science, is significant. In his book *Information Retrieval Systems* (1979) he wrote, "Information retrieval is the process of searching some collection of documents." Further along he stated:

Information retrieval is not a particularly satisfactory term to describe the type of activity to which it is usually applied. An information retrieval system does not retrieve information. Indeed, information is something quite intangible; it is not possible to see, hear, or feel it. We are "informed" on a subject if our state of knowledge on it is somehow changed. Giving a requester a document on lasers, does not inform him on the subject of lasers. Information transfer can only take place if the user reads the document and understands it. Information, then, is something that changes a person's state of knowledge on a subject.

The complexity in the concept of the nature of information retrieval was noted also by other investigators, such well-known experts as Van Rijsbergen (1979) and Meadow (1993), and their views are similar to Lancaster's position (1979). Next we will consider the retrieval process in more detail.

We will begin with a case in which, during retrieval, the intermediary is a person. Thus, obtaining a search request from the carrier of an IN, the intermediary compares her interpretation of this request with her interpretation of the content of the collection of documents. Then, using some semantic criteria, the intermediary selects texts (communications) that are significant from her point of view, and these are considered as found. It is important to note that the procedures of comparison and choice constitute the retrieval process.

Then what is the intermediary searching? The answer would seem simple. The intermediary is searching for documents. However, we recall that a document is information fixed on some material of the carrier. Can we say that the intermediary is searching only for information fixed on the carrier or is she searching for a material of the carrier? What does the intermediary compare and what does she choose? It seems more appropriate to speak of searching for information.

In the analysis of the concept "information," it was pointed out that information is subjective. Therefore, in this case the chosen texts are not necessarily informative for the user herself. However, a retrieval is carried out only as long as it is assumed that the information chosen by the intermediary will be information for the user; that is, it will be actual information. Thus we completely agree with Lancaster, noting that as a result of information retrieval (by

the intermediary), the user receives selected documents. In fact, because information "is something quite intangible," any transfer of it is possible only with the help of a carrier. In this connection, it is possible to change the carrier without changing the information, and as a rule, many would consider that we are dealing with the same document. But if without changing the carrier, the information is changed, then in the overwhelming majority of cases the document will be considered to be new.

The information character of information retrieval carried out without the participation of a person is even less obvious. For such a search, concrete material objects are compared, which can be various electrical signals, their combinations, and so on. However, one must recall that these signals are information translated into the language of signals (which in this case is also the IRL) and contained in the documents of the retrieval set as well as in the request received from the carrier of the IN. Of course, it is difficult to talk about the quality of a translation, but in a certain sense it is possible to talk about recording information, because we do not assume that during the translation into the language of signals, for example, information contained in the document is completely lost. Moreover, in this case, information retrieval is carried out exactly because preservation of the information properties of the text is assumed during translation. Still, we cannot speak with certainty about what information is being sought. Here the comparison itself and the criterion of choice are formal and have a "mechanical" character, not "intelligent" as in the preceding case. We say not "intelligent," but how can we then speak about information. If it is not information that is being sought, then what? This question frightens us more than any consequences of accepting the view that this is a search for information.

Thus, in considering information retrieval it can be noted that the complexities with its understanding are connected first of all with the nature of the concept "information" itself, and the lack of a single view on this phenomenon by various authors also causes a different interpretation of several information processes. One of them is information retrieval.

It should be pointed out that information retrieval and the perception of information by the user are not equivalent. For example, a person can perceive information communicated to him or her by some person (society) not necessarily in the process of information retrieval. However, in retrieval performed by the user we can say that these processes coincide. In any case it is not easy to distinguish them. In fact, when "something" from what is perceived (read) in the process of information retrieval acquires meaning for the user (decreases uncertainty in the behavior algorithm), then, on the one hand, the information was found by the user, whereas, on the other hand, the user perceived the information. Here it is useful to note the correct statement made by Lancaster: "Information transfer can only take place if the user reads the document and understands it." Then it is clear why it is necessary for the user to read the