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Report of the Evaluation of

Unsolicited AEGIS Searches
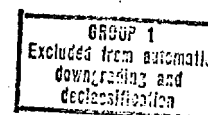
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INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of AEGIS, reported in late 1969, indicated that a significant number of production analysts, engaged in the conduct of research and the preparation of finished intelligence documents, make no use of AEGIS and, in some cases at least, are unaware of the existence of the system. Where AEGIS is known but unused,it is assumed that the analyst either (a) is completely satisfied with his own files or (b) is unaware of the capabilities of AEGIS and how to exploit the system most effectively. The evaluation also revealed that virtually all production analysts who had authored recent finished intelligence documents, without AEGIS support, would have found an AEGIS search to be of value in their research and in some cases of major value.

These findings strongly suggested that CRS should adopt a more aggressive role in publicizing AEGIS and informing intelligence analysts on the capabilities of the system. As a result, CRS has prepared a brief introduction to AEGIS intended for distribution to intelligence analysts. In addition, a number of unsolicited searches, designed to introduce production analysts to AEGIS, have been conducted. The methods used in the conduct of these searches, and the results, are described below.

METHODOLOGY

To identify potential research topics for which unsolicited AEGIS searches might be conducted we obtained advance data sheets for the

March 1970 issue of the DDI Research Projects in Process. This

listing of ongoing research projects was distributed to each of the

five CRS area divisions. Each division selected those projects

appearing to fall within their own area of responsibility and marked

each project according to the following set of codes:

A. AEGIS is known to have been used for this
   project or the production anlayst is known
   to be an AEGIS user.

B. AEGIS not used, analyst not recognized to
   be an AEGIS user, project not really suitable
   for AEGIS processing.

C. AEGIS not used, analyst not recognized to be
   an AEGIS user, project suitable for AEGIS
   processing.

It was from group C that we intended to draw candidate research topics

for the conduct of unsolicited AEGIS searches. A subset of C was marked

by the area divisions as being particularly suitable for AEGIS processing.

The results of this analysis of Research Projects in Process are

presented in Table 1. In all, 419 projects were considered and of these

160 (38%) were known to have made use of AEGIS (i.e., AEGIS is known to

have been used on the project or the responsible analyst is known to have

made use of AEGIS in the past), 114 (27%) were considered unsuitable for

AEGIS and 145 (35%) were considered by CRS staff to be suitable for AEGIS

processing although no use had been made of the system and the requester

was not recognized to be a user of AEGIS. Of this last group, 45 projects

were considered to be particularly good candidates for AEGIS assistance.

These figures are highly revealing. Taking a comprehensive

list of DDI research projects, planned or actually in progress as of

March 1970, 27% were found to be of the type that could not be helped

by AEGIS searches (although they might and usually could be assisted

by other CRS resources). Of the remainder, those current research pro-

jects for which it is believed that AEGIS could provide help, only a

little over 50% ($\frac{160}{305}$) are known to have had the benefit of an AEGIS

search. Put differently, we could say that AEGIS is only being used

on about one half the occasions it might be used profitably by DDI pro-

duction analysts or that about 35% of DDI research projects may be

completed without exhausting all available in-house intelligence sources.

Obviously, then, AEGIS could be used much more than it is being used

at present. Therefore, any steps taken by CRS to publicize the system,

and to encourage further use, appear fully justified. The present pro-

ject was intended as one step in this direction.

For each of the 145 research topics identified as being suitable

for AEGIS support, the appropriate CRS area division was asked to con-

tact the production analyst responsible, describe AEGIS to him (where

necessary) and offer to conduct an AEGIS search on the area of his

research. If the analyst agreed, an AEGIS search was conducted and the

results delivered to the analyst. If the analyst declined the assis-

tance, the reason for the refusal was recorded. For all searches

actually conducted the user was asked to evaluate the results by

completing the evaluation form illustrated in Figure 1. Usually

this was completed by a CRS analyst after discussing the results

of the search with the user.

RESULTS

An attempt was made to contact all 145 analysts in the period

March-April 1970. From these contacts 42 searches were actually

conducted. Table 2 summarizes the reasons why no search was carried

out in the other 103 instances. In 11 cases non-CIA personnel were

responsible for the final research and it was decided to exclude this

group. In two cases the responsible analyst could not be contacted (e.g.,

he was on a tour of duty abroad) and in two further cases it was

discovered that AEGIS support had been provided earlier through another

analyst. After discussion between CRS analyst and production analyst

it was decided, in six cases, that AEGIS would not after all be very

useful (e.g., the writer was working largely with open source material).

In 26 cases the project in question was either completed or too far

along the line to benefit from an AEGIS search. On the other hand there

were 19 instances in which the project was at a stage too early to

benefit - i.e., a situation in which the scope of the project had not

been fully formulated. In these instances the analyst contacted in-

dicated that he might request on AEGIS search at a later date. Six of

the 145 projects had either been cancelled or postponed indefinitely by

the time the responsible analyst was contacted. In 17 cases

the analyst declined an AEGIS search on the grounds that his own files

were adequate and in another 14 cases an AEGIS search was refused for

some reason not explicitly specified except that the analyst did not

feel that such a search would be of value to him. Rather complete

records of the results of each contact were made by each area div-

ision. For purposes of illustration, two of these reports are in-

cluded in Appendix 1.

From the 42 searches actually conducted, 31 evaluation forms

had been completed, more or less fully, by May 22, 1970, at which time

a cutoff was established to allow preparation of this report. The

results of these evaluations are shown in Appendix 2, division by div-

ision, for each of the searches. These data indicate production div-

ision, number of citations retrieved, number or proportion judged relevant,

number or proportion new to the analyst, whether the analyst was pre-

viously aware of AEGIS, his assessment of the value of the search and

an indication of whether or not he will use AEGIS in the future.

These data are summarized in Table 3. From this table it can be

seen that 18 of the search recipients claimed to be previously aware

of AEGIS and 13 (42%) did not. Twelve of the searches (40%)* were

judged to be of major value by the analysts receiving them and 15 of the

searches (50%) were judged to be of minor value. Thus, of the 31 un-

solicited searches evaluated, 90% were judged to be of some value by the

*We are excluding one search for which no value judgment was obtained.

analysts for whom they were conducted. Only three searches (10%) were judged of no value.

It was recognized at the outset of the project that the value of some of these unsolicited searches might be reduced considerably by the fact that they were conducted at late phases of various research projects - when the responsible analyst had already completed most of his data gathering. Therefore, the analyst was also asked to judge how valuable the search would have been if conducted at the very outset of his project. Viewed in this light, 17 of the searches (57%) were rated of major value, 12 (40%) of minor value and only one of no value. The "no value" search was unusual in that the analyst judged the search output against her original research topic although the scope of the search had been broadened considerably beyond this at her own request.

Perhaps the most encouraging figure of Table 3 is the one indicating that, of the 31 production analysts surveyed in this way, 29 (94%) indicated that they would be likely to make use of AEGIS in support of future research projects.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I feel that this experiment has been of considerable success. A number of production analysts previously unaware of AEGIS have been introduced to the system in the best possible way - by receiving an AEGIS

product designed to assist their current research activities. Some 90% of these analysts found the results to be of some value and 40% found them of major value. If AEGIS searches had been conducted at the very beginning of each research project, 97% would have been of value and 57% of them would possibly have been of major value. Almost 100% of the production analysts studied indicated that,on the basis of this introduction to AEGIS services, they would be likely to use the system in support of future research activities.

The findings of this study confirm those made in the earlier AEGIS evaluation. The following facts now appear quite evident:

1. A fairly large number of production analysts are not aware of the existence of AEGIS.

2. A larger number have never made use of the system.

3. When introduced to the system, by means of an unsolicited search, almost all analysts find the AEGIS product to be of some value and in some cases of major value.

4. These unsolicited AEGIS searches could be of even greater value if conducted at earlier stages in the various research projects.

5. There is still a hard core of analysts who have never used AEGIS and refuse to use the system even when its use is made as easy as possible for them.

It is worthwhile considering some of these findings in greater detail. Table 2 presents a summary of reasons why AEGIS searches were not conducted in 103 research areas for which the system was judged, by CRS personnel, likely to be able to provide assistance. Some of these reasons are "legitimate" and others less legitimate. It is obvious that there is an optimum time at which an AEGIS search should be conducted. Obviously such a search has little or no value after a research project is completed or at a point where the analyst is in the final stages of preparing his report. In 26 of the 103 cases, the project under review was too far along the line to justify AEGIS support - a legitimate reason for not conducting a search. Conversely, in 19 cases the research project was in too early a stage - the analyst had not yet formulated his requirements well enough to express them in a formal request for assistance. This again is a perfectly valid reason for not conducting a search, and the analysts involved indicated that they might make an AEGIS request at a later time.

However, in 17 cases the production analyst refused AEGIS assistance on the grounds that his own files were adequate, while in 14 cases the analyst refused help without specifying the exact reason. We must assume that these two cases are identical. That is, in both instances the analyst contacted felt that he had sufficient sources of information available (usually personal files, presumably) without using AEGIS.

How legitimate is this? Obviously, in some cases it is perfectly legitimate - for example, when the requester is working almost exclusively with data of the type that AEGIS does not include or includes only very selectively (e.g., open sources). However, I feel that in some cases the analyst is excessively confident in the completness of his own files. In the earlier AEGIS study, where 22 searches were conducted after the completion of research projects, a number of analysts found valuable references in the AEGIS search that they were not previously aware of.

It is quite true that the CRS dissemination system is efficient enough to reduce the need for retrospective searching quite drastically. However, even a good dissemination system cannot deliver everything of interest. The dissemination system must "profile" the interests of an analyst, or group of analysts, in fairly broad terms. It relies on foresight; that is, it predicts which documents are likely to be relevant to future research interests of various analysts. Such predictions can never be 100% correct. Moreover, research interests of analysts do change somewhat as assignments are altered. It is always difficult and costly to maintain dynamic interest profiles, constantly updated with every slight shift of interest.

The dissemination system is effective and many production analysts have, over many months or years, developed very valuable personal files that will and should be the first source consulted when they begin a new research project. It is for this reason that AEGIS may be regarded

as of greatest value to the relatively new production analyst, who

has not yet had time to develop his own personal files, or to the

analyst whose area of responsibility has changed rather suddenly.

However, it appears unwise to assume (as many analysts do) that one's

personal files are complete. Such an assumption could be dangerous -

even one highly pertinent document, uncovered by AEGIS but previously

unknown to the analyst, could significantly alter the research results

and justify the AEGIS search completely. The use of AEGIS does not

require an excessive amount of effort on the part of analysts. Is it

not reasonable that these analysts be required to exhaust all infor-

mation sources before committing their findings to print? Although I

have little doubt that some analysts have very excellent files, I

question the wisdom of 100% reliance on these files, especially when a

backup central system is readily available. Doubts on the completeness

of personal files are cast by examining the "novelty" factors summarized

in Appendix 2. For example, in the FE/PAC searches, one requester judged

eight of the retrieved items to be of major value, of which two were pre-

viously unknown to him. Another judged 15 of major value, of which two

were previously unknown. Even two major value documents, previously un-

known to the production analyst, could easily justify the conduct of a

machine search. But frequently the value is much greater. In some of

the searches analyzed, 70-80 major value "new" items were uncovered by

AEGIS. Moreover, it is perfectly legitimate and indeed sensible to con-

duct a corroborative search - to check on the adequacy of one's own files.

Perhaps AEGIS does not turn up anything of

importance that we weren't previously aware of - but at least this

gives us increased confidence that our previous resources were

comprehensive and that we have not missed anything we should know of.

In the intelligence field such a "fail-safe" mechanism appears well

justified.

In summary, many production analysts do not presently make use of

AEGIS in situations in which the system might well provide considerable

assistance. These non-users appear to fall into three major groups:

1. Those who do not know that the system exists.

2. Those who vaguely know it exists but have little idea
    of its true capabilities and limitations.

3. Those who rely entirely on their own files and make no
    use of the central system even though they are aware of
    it.

That AEGIS can be of considerable value to those who previously

made no use of it has been shown conclusively both in this study and in the

earlier evaluation. The problem is partly one of communication and public

relations. The system must be brought to the attention of all who could

potentially benefit from it. The AEGIS user guide will be one vehicle

for advertising the service. The technique of conducting unsolicited

searches, as reported in this study, is another method. Even though the

actual group of analysts served in these experiment was small - forty

only - it is likely that many more will be introduced to the system

through contact with those immediately served. We already have several

documented instances of one analyst, served in the present study,

referring colleagues to AEGIS for assistance. In other words, any

unsolicited service of this kind will have a certain snowball effect,

with people being influenced second - and third-hand.

Where should CRS go from here? It could continue to provide a

dynamic service by the conduct of unsolicited searches. In other words,

each issue of Research Projects in Process could be used to identify

ongoing research and thus to allow the responsible analysts to be con-

tacted. This would increase usage of AEGIS by making users out of

certain analysts who at present do not employ the system. It is a good

public relations approach and has indirect benefits (word-of-mouth

advertising). Presumably, since we are concentrating on analysts who

have not previously used AEGIS, the number of analysts to be contacted

would be reduced with each succeeding issue of RPIP until a plateau is

reached - when virtually everyone engaged in Agency research is aware

of AEGIS except for the new analysts who have recently joined the staff.

In contacting analysts, through the use of RPIP, the entire range of CRS

resources should be advertised and subsequently exploited. AEGIS would be

exploited in the context of other available resources.

This approach, although valuable, has certain basic limitations.

First, for some research projects, the offer of AEGIS help will be made

too late to be of material assistance. When they first appear in RPIP

some projects are already well along the road, but it is important that

the AEGIS search be conducted much earlier - as soon as the scope of

the research has been exactly delineated. Second, this approach has

no effect on the group of analysts that consistently refuse to use

the system either through inertia or supreme confidence in their own

local resources.

AEGIS is a relatively efficient central system providing access,

by computer search, to a fairly comprehensive collection of recent in-

telligence documents. When used by production analysts it is frequently,

although not invariably, found to be of considerable value. Yet not all

analysts are aware of the system or, if aware, make use of it. It would

seem not unreasonable to require every production analyst to exhaust all

available internal sources before completion of a research report or memo-

randum. My own inclination is to recommend that the Agency establish a

mechanism whereby, at the beginning of each new research project,* the

responsible analyst must discuss his information requirements with the

appropriate area analyst on CRS staff. If CRS resources are likely to

be of assistance - whether these resources be AEGIS, biographic files,

installation files, or other specialized file or CIA Library - they

should be exploited at this point. Routinely, the production analyst

should be required to document the fact that relevant CRS resources have

been exploited before his research project is considered completed.

* Quite apart from the fact that it is both logical and efficient to
  conduct a literature search at the beginning of a research project,
  use of AEGIS at this point will allow ample time for iterative
  searching. That is, the production analyst., on viewing the results
  of a preliminary AEGIS search, may be motivated to revise the state-
  ment of his need and to make a new request - more specific or more
  general - that better describes the true area of his interests.