

a new glass-ceramic material, Kertalloy, for use in heat-resistant applications in the aerospace, automobile and domestic appliances industries.

The efforts of DTI are matched by equally significant efforts by several other agencies who have developed on-line services and software packages to bring computer-aided materials selection within the reach of designers.

The Engineering Information Company provides the Matus Materials User Service, an on-line materials selection databank giving access to trade-names, suppliers, and properties of engineering materials. In this service, materials can be searched for by composition, application, supplier name or the required combination of properties. Continually updated to include new materials as they become commercially available, Matus is not biased to any particular class of materials. The system covers about 150 engineering properties and divides its materials into three groups: metals occupy 38% of the databank, polymers 43% and others including glass and ceramics 18%. Composites are listed under the category of their matrix material.

Peritus from Matsel Systems, Liverpool, covers more than 1300 materials

and holds more than 60,000 materials and processing characteristics. Using this system, a user can compare the performance of different materials.

There is also an European Materials Information Service Network. Soon information on this network can be accessed by even those who have no special skills or knowledge of computers and telecommunication. The network brings together many European databanks and services: Matus, Peritus and the Metals Data File from the UK; Infos (machining properties of metals), Solma (ferrous and non-ferrous metals for design of pressure vessels) and Polymat (plastics) from West Germany; HTM-DB (high-temperature materials) from the Netherlands; Cometa (metals) from Italy; and H-Data (interaction of metals with hydrogen), Cetim-Materiaux (properties of metals, plastics, composites, adhesives and lubricants) and Thermo-data (thermodynamic properties of materials) from France.

Using a telephone connection and a computer terminal attached with appropriate models, one can access most of these services and get both textual information and graphic images.

Many materials-related information services such as RAPRA Technology's

Plascams (for plastics information) and CDMS (compound data management system for rubber products) are searchable on IBM-compatible PCs.

British researchers and manufacturers interested in any of these services and several other databases can get more information from Materials Information Centre at the Design Council in London, which acts as a clearinghouse. Today, thanks to all these computerized services, access to materials information is truly at the fingertips of Britain's design engineers and researchers.

Faced with a need for reliable information on materials—be it ceramics, plastics, composites or process-related information—where can an Indian researcher or design engineer get it? Are organizations such as INSDOC, NISSAT, TIFAC and other information centres geared to such tasks? Looking from another angle, how many scientists and design engineers in India are looking for such information? Answers to these questions will determine how soon India will join the ranks of the scientifically advanced nations.

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Panjab University defends itself in Gupta affair

In a circular released by its vice-chancellor's office, Panjab University, Chandigarh, has countered allegations of tardiness in mounting an investigation into charges of fraud against Professor V. J. Gupta of the university's Centre of Advanced Study in Geology. Gupta has been charged with 'recycling' the same fossils in different scientific papers, giving vague and misleading information about the location of the reported fossil sites, and polluting the Himalayan palaeontology data base (see *Current Science*, 59, 13).

Panjab University says in the circular

that, unprepared as it was for the 'suddenness and vehemence' of the controversy, it wrote to the heads of seven national organizations, informing them of the dispute and conveying Gupta's offer of co-operation with any enquiry. The organizations were the University Grants Commission, the Indian Council of Medical Research (whose director-general heads an independent society for investigation of scientific fraud), the Indian National Science Academy, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, the

Department of Science and Technology and the Geological Survey of India.

The Indian National Science Academy sent two respected geologists to Chandigarh to investigate the matter. The investigation concluded that an expedition under Gupta's leadership to the fossil localities was appropriate.

The university has announced plans for such an expedition, but says it can take place only in summer. It says that it is 'interested not in brushing the controversy under the carpet, but in arriving at the truth'.