

INFORMATION, PLEASE
by Father Jack Pejza

After you have DXed for a number of years, you acquire a great deal of information about the stations you have heard. At times I have become very frustrated trying to find some bit of information -- format, s/off time, or whatever -- which I recorded somewhere in my log. It would be nice to have a system of filing information which makes access to the information very easy. Those who have access to a computer can keep their log quite easily, and are able to produce a list, for instance, of daytimers heard on frequency checks, in a matter of seconds. Most of us, however, don't have computers available and thus must depend on memory and lists to keep our information straight.

A number of years ago I came across a system of filing information which makes it easy to recover whatever information one wishes. The system consists of punchcards, cards which have a series of holes punched around the edges. Information is recorded on the card, and then some of the holes are notched. For instance, one hole might stand for daytimers. If the station recorded on that card is a daytimer, that hole is notched. After the whole pack of cards, one for each station, is assembled, to collect the cards for the daytimers, you push a rod through that hole in all the cards. Since you have notched that hole for all daytimers, only they will fall off the rod.

Something similar can be done for numerical data. For instance, one hole can stand for all the 600's; another for the 700's, etc. A second set of holes can be designated for the 10's, 20's, etc. One big advantage about this filing system is that the cards do not have to be kept in any special kind of order.

About three years ago, I tried this punchcard technique to help me as DXFW editor. I kept cards on all foreign stations reported in DX Monitor and DX News. I kept it up for about a year. My major problem at the time was that I had to hand-punch all the holes -- about 50 on the cards I was using. This got to be too time-consuming, so I eventually abandoned the system. Now I have discovered a commercial source for such punchcards: Indexes, Arlington, Vermont 05250. They make about six different styles of cards. The one I am using for my personal log is called the Research Deck. It consists of $5\frac{1}{2}$ by 8 cards with 2 rows of 110 holes around the edges. The advantage of the two-row cards is that numbers can be indicated by many fewer holes than in a one-row system. For instance, in my old system, I needed 22 holes just to indicate only the even channels between 540 and 1600; on the double-row cards, I need only 16 outer-row holes to indicate all numbers between 0000 and 9999.

I have listed all states, provinces, and countries by number. For instance, California is 205; Alberta is 260, and Cuba is 110. In this system I need only 12 outer-row holes to list all countries/states/provinces in the world. I could also have listed 100 locations in each state, etc. by using an additional 8 outer-row holes.

I have listed as many categories as I wanted for each station. I have categories for type of frequency (clear, regional, local); type of station (unlimited, daytimer) power; my DXing locations; time heard (day, evening, after midnight, SM, MM); s/on, s/off, f/; tentative, reported, verified, taped. Thus I could assemble if I wanted to, in a few minutes, a list of all verified Kansas daytimers which I have heard from San Diego on Monday mornings on frequency checks. The possibilities are almost unlimited for data recorded. I still have a great many spaces available, and can add other categories, such as distance, at a later date if I desire.

At present, I am going back over my log, making out cards for all stations which I have heard. Next season I plan to start another deck for all foreign stations reported, to help me with DXFW. The biggest problem in this method, or in any method, of filing information is taking the time to record the information and keep it up to date. If you could start such a system right at the time you begin to DX, you'd have it made, because it only takes a few minutes to fill out a card for a new station or to add a bit of new information to a card. When you try to go back over four or five years' worth of information, it takes a lot of time. Right now, I'm only up to 1969 in making out cards, but when I'm finished, I can give you all the information you want about the stations I've heard.

Naturally, such a system has other disadvantages besides the time needed to keep it up. The cost is a big factor. 600 cards cost about \$25. Indexes has an introductory deck of 200 cards, including instructions, file box, hole repair sheet, etc., for about \$10. If you happen to be a nut on statistics, as I am, and you want to be able to retrieve your information quickly, this is a relatively small expense over a couple of years. It's a lot cheaper than buying a computer!

Many thanks to Father Jack for the above article. As you know, IRCA is not endorsing the product mentioned but presents it for the information and interest of our membership. If anyone else has a good system going, let's hear it! -- BH.