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An Agenda for Progress held at  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
on 24-27 September 1972**

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AN AGENDA FOR PROGRESS

September 24-27, 1972

Cincinnati, Ohio

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## Preface

The National Environmental Information Symposium: An Agenda for Progress, held in Cincinnati, Ohio, on September 24-27, 1972, was attended by more than 1700 representatives of industry, government, universities, libraries, professional and trade associations, the press, and citizen action groups. The purpose of the Symposium, sponsored by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), was to outline and clarify the difficulties of interchanging information in the myriad forms now available, to present the user of environmental information with a review of the services available, their location, accessibility, and cost, and to describe some of the solutions already being formulated.

The program was structured into four categories: scientific and technical; legal, legislative and regulatory; management and planning; and socioeconomic. The information services covered included information and data centers, publications, and document services and referral activities.

Interspersed in the program were a number of general sessions with key speakers, designed to set the tone for the meeting, represent various segments of producers and users at policy-making levels, and address specific issues. Two evenings were devoted to Informal Forum Sessions to permit further detailed discussion on key issues.

EPA's National Environmental Research Center in Cincinnati served as the host for the three-day Symposium.

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## Introduction

The concern for environmental degradation has rapidly become an issue of public policy. The recognition of our environmental situation as a national and international problem has created a demand for a large variety of information and data to more clearly define the problem and aid in its solution. The widespread interest in this growing field has resulted in the development of myriad sources of information which vary in type, quantity, frequency and reliability, as well as means of access. It is safe to say that even those who have spent their entire careers in environmental pursuits are not totally aware of all sources of environmental information. The National Environmental Information Symposium was planned to provide a forum from which the existing sources could be studied and examined from the point of view of user communities across the length and breadth of society. The Symposium does not represent an end to our search for environmental information; on the contrary, it represents the beginning of what one hopes might be the dissemination of knowledge and skills necessary to access the total body of environmental information available today. It is my feeling that those who carried the burden of describing the existing systems as well as those who commented upon their utility met the charge given by Administrator Ruckelshaus at the opening of the Symposium. There now remains the more substantive task of cooperatively developing some system by which we can effectively retrieve and use the overwhelming bodies of information we have collectively produced and which stand on the threshold of availability and usefulness.

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