

# Inter Office Memo

CORPORATE DIVISION  
Corporate Research

To: Distribution

From: R. Stein

Subject: Charles Van Doren

Date: 12/10/82

Charles Van Doren will be out here on Monday and Tuesday, December 20th and 21st. While he is here Charles has agreed to lead a seminar on the structure of the current edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica and the implications it holds for an Intelligent Encyclopedia and related projects.

As you may know, the current edition of EB (the 15th edition, AKA EB 3) represents a significant departure ~~from~~ previous, strictly alphabetical encyclopedias in that it tries to organize all knowledge into a coherent whole and indicate how each topic relates both to the whole and to other topics. In fact, the Propaedia, the one volume outline of knowledge, is a bold attempt to offer a taxonomy of knowledge itself. In practice, dividing Britannica in three parts - the Propaedia, Micropaedia (brief treatment of many topics), and Macropaedia (in depth treatment of major subjects) has proven cumbersome. Finding your way in the database can be very difficult. However, the difficulties people experience may have much more to do with form (bound volumes) than the underlying structure.

In preparing for this discussion, people should definitely try to spend some time browsing in the encyclopedia, both print and Nexis versions. Additionally, Van Doren has suggested that we read some of the introductory pieces to the 15th edition of EB (attached), look at the EB article on encyclopedias (attached) and lastly an article by Van Doren, "The Idea Of An Encyclopedia" which will be distributed next week.

The plan for now is to have the seminar Monday afternoon - 1:00, place to be announced. On Tuesday we want to have some type of group exercise. Perhaps dividing into three or four small groups to tackle a specific problem (eg. draw a semantic map of all possible routes you might take with "x or y" as the central feature), then getting back together to compare results and sum up. We will probably do this on Tuesday morning and run through lunch. It would be good if a small group could brainstorm for a half hour or so next week and come up with an intriguing exercise.

We would like to make it possible for some people who have not had a chance to meet with Van Doren before, to spend some time with him informally, over dinner or cocktails, etc. If you are interested please leave me a message.