

UCSD's new Center for Human Information Processing begins operating

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Knowledge which will help man "to learn better, teach better, and think better" is the ultimate goal of UCSD's new Center for Human Information Processing.

The Center's director, Dr. George Mandler, professor of psychology, says this goal may not be achieved in the near future. Meantime, the new facility will operate as the psychology department's basic research arm, concentrating on such fundamental questions as:

- How does the mind work?
- How do we develop intellectual skills?
- How does the mind receive and store information?
- How is sensory information registered?
- How does the mind recall data when needed?
- How does it assemble bits of information in reaching a conclusion or making a decision?

Though the Center has been in UCSD's plans for two years, it did not become a functioning reality until this month with receipt of a \$91,000 grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to fund the first year of a projected five-year program.

Operating temporarily in Urey Hall, the Center eventually will occupy 10,000 square feet of laboratory space on Muir Campus when Muir is completed in 1970.

An example of the phenomena to be explored, said Mandler, is the difference between short- and long-term memory.

"Experiments on short-term memory have shown that the average person cannot remember five items for more than 20 or 30 seconds if his mind is immediately distracted by other problems," Mandler observed.

As for long-term memory, he said it is clear that man stores facts for future reference. "The problem is how to get them out."

"The mind's capacity for processing new information appears to be limited," he noted. "This limitation may be a protective mechanism. If man were to remember every sensory experience, his mind would be faced with an immense organizing task to which it might not prove equal. However, once stored, information is organized and seems to be available for long periods of time."

Mandler said the new UCSD facility will serve also as a clearing house for the findings of other investigators and institutions on information processing and as a conference site and workshop for investigators from other institutions.