

1998 Paper 8 Question 10

Information Retrieval

You work for a company that takes news stories from all over the world and provides reports on specified topics to customers, for example on political developments in the new Republic of Rumbaza during 1997. Your company's staff use a retrieval system to extract the material on which they base their reports from the company's very extensive archive of stories. The retrieval system is a 20-year-old makeshift and is to be scrapped. You are asked to design the new retrieval system.

- (a) Give a detailed description of the retrieval devices the new system will offer, explaining why they are available and how they will work. What facilities will the user have for modifying his or her search specification in response to system output? [15 marks]
- (b) What do you regard as the most difficult problem to be tackled, and why? [5 marks]

[Assume that the stories in the file are texts between 1 and 100 sentences long, with date and source headers in a standardised form.]