ASCA --INSURANCE FOR CC READERS

I am often asked why a *Current Contents* reader should use *ASCA*®, ISI's computerized *Automatic Subject Citation Alert*.

If you are like me, you like to *browse* through each weekly issue of *CC*. At the same time you also systematically read or scan the contents pages of a few leading multidisciplinary journals, and a selected list of key journals in each of several other *CC* categories. A surprisingly large percentage of readers, like myself, leaf through every page. However, my areas of interest are not limited to those covered in the Life, Physical or Chemical Sciences editions of *CC*. My topical interests include: automatic indexing, chemical notation and nomenclature, numerical taxonomy, certain aspects of gerontology, and research administration. Many of the significant articles published on these topics may appear in a journal not covered by a particular edition of *CC*. *CC* does not aspire to cover every journal of possible interest to every reader.

I use *ASCA (Automatic Subject Citation Alert)* to solve this problem and others. Through *ASCA* I receive weekly reports which list articles of interest to me that have recently appeared in any of the nearly 2,000 journals being processed for ISI's *Science Citation Index*. By using *ASCA* to supplement *CC* the number of journals through which I can "browse" is significantly increased. Simultaneously, *ASCA* can provide me *systematic* coverage of the literature to insure that I do not miss anything that is absolutely essential to my work. *ASCA* does this for me by having the computer look at every article title for me, literally word by word and letter by letter. Furthermore, it examines the footnotes or bibliographies of every article as well as the list of authors.

To do this, I must of course construct a profile which enables the computer to find just what I want. Each week, my interest profile is compared with the profiles for all 7,000 articles being processed that week. *ASCA* then provides me with a personal printout of the information retrieved by the computer.

In some instances, I may already have seen in *CC* an article title that also appears in my *ASCA* report. I find this very reassuring. Many of the other items listed by *ASCA*, however, are those which have appeared in journals whose contents pages in CC I do not scan either regularly or systematically. In addition, through the unique citation indexing feature of the *ASCA* service, I am alerted to that special group of articles whose titles alone would not enable me to determine that they contain interesting or valuable information. By listing in my profile a selected group of authors or specific publications, I can be sure my *ASCA* reports will list, regardless of the words used in their titles, any new work which cites any of the previous works of the authors on my list.

You might sum up the situation by saying that I use *ASCA* as a form of current awareness *insurance*. Even if I am too lazy or too busy some weeks, or rush through several copies of *CC* after a trip, *ASCA* reports will prevent me from missing "must" reading or articles which can contribute useful bits of data to my current research.

Of course, I can also use key words, word stems, and other indexing devices to specify my areas of interest.

Another important feature of third-generation *ASCA* is that I can easily modify my profile whenever my interests change.

You will find a more detailed description of the *ASCA III* service elsewhere in this issue. I hope that you will take a few minutes to carefully evaluate this ISI service in terms of its potential value to you.