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Concerning Cover-to-Cover Translation Journals

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A recent letter in *Nature*¹ revived the question whether it is cheaper overall to abstract articles in Russian and other "inaccessible" languages and then fully translate only those articles requested, or whether it is cheaper to produce cover-to-cover translations². This controversy is not new and not everything relevant to this problem has been said even now. Figures which are cited for one U.S. Air Force research station certainly do not provide definitive conclusions for all of science. Let's begin at the beginning.

If Soviet scientists and others really wish to enter the international mainstream of science, they can never hope to do so by publishing exclusively in Russian language journals. As I have indicated previously³, English is increasingly the international lingua franca of science. Most Japanese and European scientists recognize this fact. Further, Soviet scientists are increasing their use of English at international meetings. They realize that non-Russian scientists have enough trouble reading papers in English—so why look for more headaches.

Cover-to-cover translation journals are undoubtedly a financial success for certain publishers. It is only stubbornness on the part of Soviet science and publishing administrators that fails to recognize the opportunity of increasing their foreign exchange, as well as of

brightening the image of Soviet science, by publishing all their leading journals in English editions. Not the least of these are Soviet technological journals.

Most existing cover-to-cover translation journals are not published rapidly enough to put their contents into the mainstream of science. The delay creates problems for readers of Current Contents® and of Current Abstracts of Chemistry^{T.M.} We must translate the contents pages of selected Soviet journals. Many Soviet journals in the life sciences now include English contents pages, but most Soviet journals do not contain English abstracts.

The existence of two versions of the same journal only adds to the bibliographic information overload that exists in the world today, but redundancy does have its value. In fact, there is reason to believe that redundancy in scientific communication has become a necessity and not a luxury because there is so much of it. It is the increased probability of information loss within a growing information network that requires the introduction of redundancy to prevent "errors" or losses. The existence of preliminary communication journals as well as archival journals is a further reflection of this problem.

Unlike the problem of accommodating more international telephone mess-

ages, one does not necessarily solve the problem of voluminous scientific communication by laying another cable or launching another communication satellite. However, the ultimate elimination of duplicate foreign journals by promptly publishing English versions does not seem to be likely in the next decade. We can conclude that the place

of the cover-to-cover translation journals will remain secure. Therefore, Current Contents and Current Abstracts of Chemistry must include the really important journals in their earliest version. Translation editions can only be covered to the extent that space and economics allow.

- Groos, O.V., Cover-to-cover translation. [A letter to the editor commenting on an editorial in Nature]. Nature 225, 482-3 (1970).
- 2. Tybulewicz, A., Cover-to-cover translations of Soviet scientific journals. ASLIB Proc. 22(2), 55-62 (1970).
- 3. Garfield, E., English--an international language for science? Current Contents/Life Sciences 10(52), 4-5 (1967).