ISI ® Announces Availability of a Weekly
Subject Index to *Current Contents*® /*Life Sciences*

August 25, 1971

For many years, scientists and librarians have wanted a completely up-to-date, preferably weekly index to the scientific literature. To the best of my knowledge, no such service has ever been available, although some weekly services have attempted to cover small segments of the literature. In the past, the goal of a comprehensive weekly index has been difficult to achieve simply because of restraints on processing a substantial number of articles and then preparing an index to the material in the time available.

One of the salient features of *Current Contents* is its timeliness; and, despite numerous customer requests, we have always hesitated to consider an index lest it interfere with the timeliness of our coverage. In *Current Contents/ Life Sciences* alone, more than 1000 journals are now processed, and they publish well over 150,000 articles a year.

About two years ago, ISI, in conjunction with other indexing work for its *Science Citation Index*®, designed a computer data bank. The data bank has now enabled us within available time to produce each week a subject index derived from the titles of articles processed for *Current Contents*. In addition, the use of computer-driven photocomposition devices has overcome what had always been one of the principal barriers to publication of a weekly index--its production within one or two days after the closing of the weekly issue of *Current Contents*.

Unquestionably, the availability of such a weekly index will have an enormous impact on the entire library profession, and on the increased usefulness of *Current Contents*. In particular, I myself have often wished for the ability to determine quickly whether particular issues of multidisciplinary journals contain articles on specific subjects, both on a current-awareness basis and even for short-term retrospective search.

The new *Weekly Subject Index*™ *(WSI*™*)* will therefore have two major uses for most readers. First, it will permit immediate access by key words, either on the part of the reader or of his technical assistants, secretary, and other designated surrogates. In addition, the index will enable you to retrieve an elusive title that you may recall having read in *Current Contents* during the past few weeks or months, particularly if you can't recall the author's name.

From a retrospective point of view, the *Weekly Subject Index (WSI)* of *Current Contents* will serve as an interim index to our quarterly *Permuterm*® *Subject Index,* which must of necessity be approximately two to three months behind the literature. Now a retrospective search of the literature can be completely up-to-date insofar at least as current publication actually reflects the current status of

any research field.

While I believe most readers will still continue to browse through *Current Contents*, scanning their favorite journals pages, the availability of the *Weekly Subject Index* should undoubtedly attract many new readers who in the past have not been able to tolerate the contents-page scanning method of maintaining current awareness. And it should also alleviate to some extent the discomfort of other readers--and I recognize that there are not a few--who have found contents-page scanning tolerable only because absolutely necessary. But as the saying goes, *chacun à son gout*.

The availability of the *WSI* will, in my opinion, also alleviate my anxiety, and that of many readers, about the never-ending necessity for addition of journals to *Current Contents*, since it is fairly obvious that *Current Contents* has reached a point in its growth where some aid to scanning was becoming absolutely essential.

Undoubtedly librarians everywhere will now have to take a fresh look at *Current Contents* as a bibliographical tool in its own right. Till now, I believe, *Current Contents* has served in libraries primarily as a method of telling the reader what was available in the latest journal issues. Now librarians, and others of course, can use the subject index to complete any retrospective search, and especially to satisfy requests for "one or two current articles" on this or that subject, in other words for those so-called "quick and dirty" searches which so frequently turn out to be neither very quick nor especially dirty.