

ASCA Plus OATS Equals the "Repackaged" or "Personalized Journal"

July 26, 1972

In 1966, D.R. Swanson at the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago published a paper on the future of scientific journals. About a year later, a paper from Bell Labs on the same topic appeared in Science but did not cite the earlier work, although titles, subject matter, and even proposals were very similar. Shortly thereafter I discussed the subject in the pages of Current Contents 3 and bring up the topic again since it is quite relevant to our expanded program of ASCA-Topics so frequently advertised in Current Contents.

Both of the above mentioned papers theorized about the advantages of "a computer-based system" that would "repackage scientific journals" and "enable a subscriber to receive a personalized stream of papers." What frustrates me about such proposals is that ISI® was at the time operating just such a service, as it still does. The basic service is ASCA® (Automatic Subject Citation Alert (8). The repackaging of journals called for by Swanson to satisfy "invisible groups" (i.e., invisible colleges), is our Multi-ASCA; the personalized stream of papers, or personalized journal, called for by the boys at Bell Labs is ISI's ASCA-Matic. Multi-ASCA is ISI jargon for an ASCA profile which is used by dozens or hundreds of researchers working the

same invisible college. The difference between Multi-ASCA and the standard individualized ASCA service is simply the sharing of computer and other processing costs by the members of an invisible college. When their interests are so similar that a single large profile satisfies the demands of all members the cost to the individual members is drastically reduced. A significant feature of the service, precisely as recommended by Swanson, is the use of citation indexing to identify current papers which cite and are cited by the work of the group members, and of any other papers or authors specified by the group. Words, roots, phrases can also be used as retrieval criteria-especially those which occur with a frequency many individuals could not afford in personal profiles.

An extension of our *Multi-ASCA* service is *ASCA-Topics* in which ISI prepackages the profiles for popular topics. In a sense the group of individual buyers of an *ASCA-Topic* constitutes an incipient invisible college.

Multi-ASCA or ASCA-Topics by itself, however, would not completely satisfy Swanson's notion of repackaged journals. But we do in fact provide the repackaged or personalized journal by supplementing all ASCA-derived services with our "ASCA-Matic" service, which delivers original article tear sheets

(OATS •) of every paper listed in the weekly ASCA report. Furthermore, all this is done without violation of copyrights. ISI has copyright agreements with hundreds of journals, including most of those published by professional societies.

Multi-ASCA or ASCA-Topics is surprisingly inexpensive when one considers the amount of service provided and may prove as satisfactory as an individualized ASCA report, depending upon the field and individual requirements. Anyone interested in leading an "invisible group" for Multi-ASCA or sponsoring an ASCA-Topic should contact ISI. Details on costs, etc., will be made clearly visible.

- Swanson, D.R. Scientific journals and information services of the future. Amer. Psychol. 21(11):1005-1010, 1966.
- Brown, W.S. et al. The future of scientific journals; a computer-based system will enable a subscriber to receive a personalized stream of papers. Science 158, 1153-1159, 1967.
- 3. Garfield, E. ASCA-Matic, the personalized journal. Current Contents No. 31, July 30, 1968, p. 5.