""""""current comments"

ISI®'s New Weekly Subject Index to Current Contents®/Physical and Chemical Sciences Will Improve Access to the Literature of Mathematics, and Earth Sciences, as well as Physics and Chemistry

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With the first January 1973 issue of Current Contents/Physical & Chemical Sciences (CC®/P&CS), ISI will make available a Weekly Subject Index (WSI). Since this "basic sciences" edition of Current Contents covers mathematics, the earth sciences, and other disciplines as well as physics and chemistry, it will represent a real first for these long neglected fields.

The WSI to CC/P&CS will be the second weekly index in the Current Contents product series. We have been encouraged to undertake it not only by requests from subscribers, but also by the reception accorded ISI's Weekly Subject Index to Current Contents/Life Sciences. 1-2 That reception has surpassed even my optimistic forecast, proving that individual scientists will themselves use and pay for a cost-effective information service when they find one.

Some readers might wonder why we need yet another indexing service for chemistry and physics. After all, these disciplines are already served by well-established abstracting & indexing services, including Chemical Abstracts, Physics Abstracts and Science Citation Index. However, none of these provides the timeliness of a weekly service. Once we accept that the basic arrangement and coverage of CC/P&CS is what its readers prefer, then we must do everything economically feasible to make that service maximally useful, For those who

wish a subject index to complement their scanning, the WSI is more than adequate. Subsequently, as a titleword index WSI enables you to recover an article title by any word you remember.

The new WSI will not ordinarily replace large-scale cumulative indexes to CA or PA. Actually, we long ago found out that these services are used primarily for retrospective search and not for current awareness. As our surveys have shown, WSI adds a measure of insurance in maintaining current awareness that many readers seem to desire. And then there is also the information retrieval time gap that stretches between today's research and the latest available cumulative abstract/index compilation.

The Weekly Subject Index to CC/P&CS will be as current as each weekly issue of Current Contents. WSI will be bound into each weekly issue of CC. Therefore, much of the material will be retrievable even before it is received in libraries. Most readers appreciate this because it expedites requests for reprints.

The Weekly Subject Index is, of course, derived from the weekly input to ISI's huge multidisciplinary data base. Thus CC/P&CS and its WSI are closely tied to the Science Citation Index (SCI®). In 1973, all articles reported in CC/P&CS will be indexed in the various sections of the SCI. This policy, which began with our WSI to

CC/LS, now means an increase in SCI coverage to include about 70 journals not yet part of SCI.4 It also means that the quarterly and annual Permuterm® Subject Index section of SCI includes complete coverage of the WSI's of both CC/LS and CC/P&CS. PSI is, of course, not merely a cumulation of WSI, not only because all terms are permuted, but because of extensive man-machine edits which take place. And the SCI also covers journals not to be found in CC/LS or CC/P&CS.

Since the WSI is derived from the same data-base as the Permuterm Subject Index, it is also a "naturallanguage" system. For brevity, we describe the Weekly Subject Indexes as "title-word indexes" but that description is inadequate. Index terms are not hierarchical tags selected by indexers. However, it would be a mistake to think of our indexes as merely "computerized". Machines assemble and arrange the data, as well as "edit" variant spellings. But the computer's role is only the last phase of a long series of operations involving human analysis.

Not every title word becomes a separate index term. Some words have no significance in isolation or take on significance only in combination with other terms. In addition, some title words, though quite unambiguous,

occur so frequently that the user's convenience dictates combination with other words into "word phrases" or "hyphenated terms", e.g., ion-exchange, quaternary-ammonium, magnetic-field, etc. In making these combinations, however, there is some point at which the attempt at optimizing convenience for some users creates a dispersion of related material for others.

Unlike "selective" abstracting services, the coverage of every journal in CC and WSI is complete. There is no partial selection of items based on some a priori definition of disciplinary scope. This particularly aids in dealing with the many multidisciplinary journals. Thus, the impact of this new Weekly Subject Index will perhaps be felt less in chemistry and physics than it may be in mathematics, earth sciastronomy, instrumentation, ences. etc., where the information apparatus is far less well developed. Indeed, access to these literatures by chemists and physicists may be the greatest byproduct of this effort. Hopefully mathematicians and other CC readers may also benefit from the same kind of interdisciplinary need. I have repeatedly stressed that we must not only cover the primary literature of fields but also the literature of interest to members of the corresponding profession.

- 1. Garfield, E. ISI announces availability of a Weekly Subject Index to Current Contents/Life Sciences. Current Contents No. 34, August 25, 1971, p. 5-6.
- The Weekly Subject Index to CC/Life Sciences makes for zero delay in current awareness and information retrieval.

 Current Contents No. 37, September 15, 1971, p. 5-7.
- 3. Harris, R. M. & Garfield, E. Weekly Subject Indexes to Current Contents, a new aid to complement scanning scientific literature. Paper presented at the 1972 Fall Meeting of the American Chemical Society, New York City, August 28-31, 1972.
- Garfield, E. New CC/LS Weekly Subject Index means even greater coverage in the Science Citation Index. Current Contents No. 52, December 29, 1971, p. 5-6.