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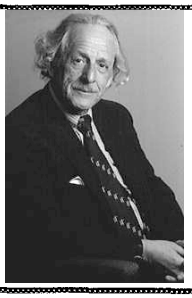

Current Comments®

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Introducing *Current Contents on Diskette*: Electronic Browsing Comes of Age

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This month ISI® is releasing *Current Contents on Diskette*™, a weekly diskette version of *Current Contents*® (*CC*®), for the Apple Macintosh. An IBM PC version will follow shortly. The Mac version of *Current Contents on Diskette* covers 300 journals in the life sciences. It uses Apple's HyperCard software and provides the ability to create custom search profiles by using keywords, to scan contents pages automatically, and to generate *Request-A-Print*® and *The Genuine Article*™ orders. *Current Contents on Diskette* offers the ideal complement to the print *CC*.

When we first began producing *Current Contents*® (*CC*®) over 30 years ago, we could only imagine all the technological developments that would change the way we deliver *CC* and our other products. Given the unceasing progress in the technology of personal computers, online databases, and data storage, change was inevitable—and ISI® has kept up with the times.

Late last year we discussed *Current Contents Search*™, the new online version of *CC*.[1] More recently, we unveiled the CD-ROM version of the *Science Citation Index*® (*SCI*®).[2] With both of these products, the speed and versatility of computer technology have brought new access and wider utility to the information in the *SCI* and *CC*.

That trend continues with one of our newest products, which I'll be discussing in this essay. For some time now, readers have been inquiring about a microcomputer version of *CC*. In response to customer demand and ever-changing technology, ISI is releasing *Current Contents on Diskette*™. Like *CC Search*, *Current Contents on Diskette* delivers the familiar, timely, and reliable *CC* data in a new and versatile medium. With its speed and ability to extract the precise information you need, *Current Contents on Diskette* will complement your use of the print version.

Current Contents on Diskette will be released in versions for both the IBM and the Apple Macintosh personal computers. The Mac version is being released in September. The IBM version will follow shortly. The data provided in these two versions will be the same, although the presentation will differ somewhat. This essay will primarily discuss the Macintosh version, which takes full advantage of that computer's graphics capabilities.

The Mac version employs Apple's HyperCard, a revolutionary "software engine" for information management. *Current Contents on Diskette* makes full use of HyperCard's utilities and terminology, which are based on the metaphor of index cards. Data are organized into "stacks" consisting of individual "cards," manipulated with the use of "buttons." Apple's commitment to the power and usefulness of HyperCard is considerable. In fact, the company has bundled HyperCard with each Macintosh shipped since the software was introduced over a year ago. HyperCard is also available to other Mac owners for less than $50.

To Start, Key Journals in the Life Sciences

Initially, *Current Contents on Diskette*'s coverage will be confined to the *CC/Life Sciences* edition. We have identified the 300 most highly cited journals in our life-sciences database, and initial coverage will cen-

ter on these most important and influential journals. Additional journals will be added based on demand. Every item, including letters, editorials, and so on, will be included. In addition, all book reviews from *Science* and *Nature* will be listed.

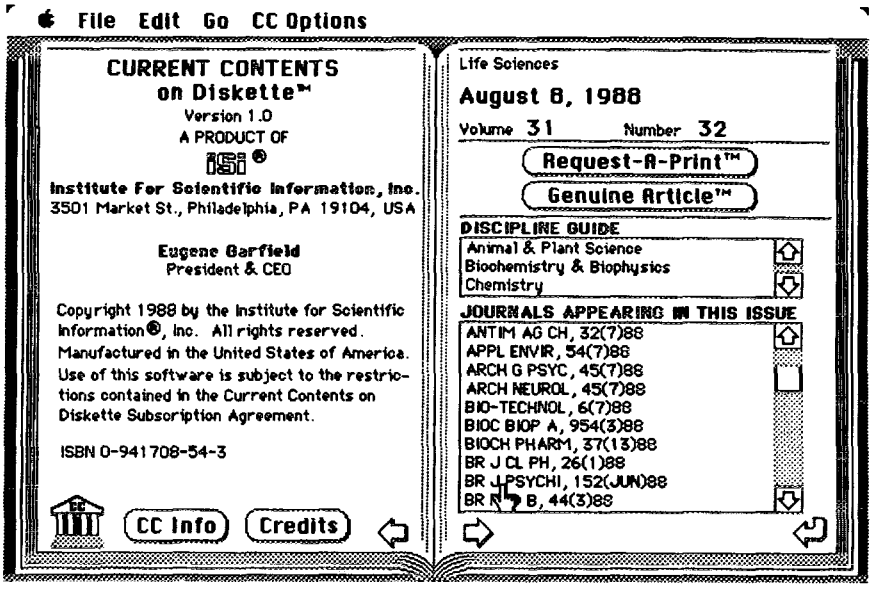
Just as important as *what* is covered by *Current Contents on Diskette* is *how* the material is covered. *Current Contents on Diskette* brings all of the speed and convenience of personal computers to your weekly browsing of *CC*. *Current Contents on Diskette* provides the following features, to name a few: the ability to create custom profiles by using key terms, journal titles, author names, and institutional names; the ability to automatically scan or manually browse contents pages; the capability to print out or electronically "export" individual references, contents pages, and search results for use in a personal database; and integration with other ISI products—namely, the ability to print *The Genuine Article*™ and *Request-A-Print*® orders. Of course, the best way to discuss *Current Contents on Diskette* is to take a look at how it actually works.

Using *Current Contents on Diskette*

As noted earlier, the Macintosh version of *Current Contents on Diskette* makes particularly good use of the Mac's graphics capabilities. In fact, the visual experience of using *Current Contents on Diskette* is very similar to that of reading the print version. After you load the diskette and perform a few simple preliminary operations, *Current Contents on Diskette* displays a replica of a *CC* cover. The program will then display the "table of contents" for that week's issue, as shown in Figure 1. The journals are listed in alphabetical order. By positioning the cursor and clicking the mouse on the arrows at the right, it is possible to browse up and down this list. Similarly, you can use the cursor to scroll the 12 discipline categories represented by the journals in any given week.

At this stage you can examine the contents pages of specific journals. Clicking on a discipline category, for example, will display the contents of the first journal in that category. You can also click on a journal name—for example, the *British Journal of*

Figure 1: *Current Contents on Diskette*™ journal index.

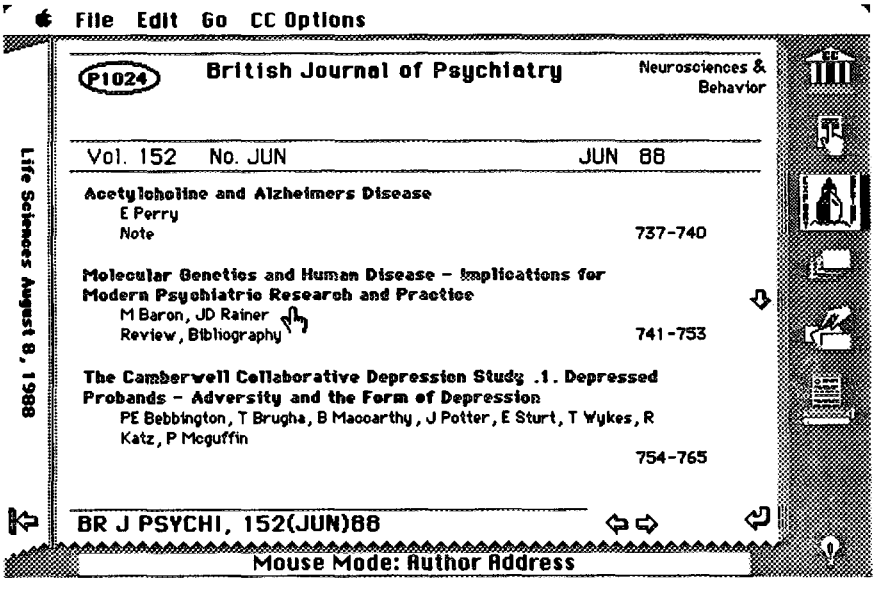


Psychiatry—and display the contents for that journal. A partial contents page for the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, as shown by *Current Contents on Diskette*, appears in Figure 2. As you can see, the information provided is similar to that in the print *CC*. The ISI journal accession number, with which articles can be ordered from *The Genuine Article* service, appears in the upper left-hand corner. The entire contents page, however, will not fit on a single screen. The serrated edge at the bottom of the display indicates that the page continues. By clicking the mouse on the arrows at the right of the page, you can scroll up or down to view the entire page. If you wish, you can set *Current Contents on Diskette* to scan "automatically," at a speed that you can adjust. The contents pages for that week's diskette will be displayed according to the time interval you've chosen.

Current Contents on Diskette, however, permits you to do more than simply read over contents pages. For example, if a certain article catches your eye and you wish to know the affiliation of the author to whom reprint requests should be sent, simply click on that article. The author's name and address will appear. Another click and you go on with your browsing.

This automatic display of author addresses is possible with the proper setting of the feature known as the "Mouse Mode." In Figure 2, the Mouse Mode setting is indicated on the status line at the bottom of the screen. The setting is for "Author Address." With this setting, a click on an article title will cause the name and address to appear, as demonstrated in Figure 3 for the *British Journal of Psychiatry* paper by M. Baron and J.D. Rainer. Different Mouse Mode settings permit different operations. The "Export to File" setting, for example, allows you to select the information that you wish to export or print (in other words, there is no need to rekey data before transferring it to your file-management or word-processing software); "Print Article" allows you to print this material. The two other Mouse Mode settings are "Request-A-Print" and "Genuine Article." As their names imply, these settings will assist you in automatically generating *Request-A-Print* or *Genuine Article* forms for the articles you select. In

Figure 2: Contents page for the *British Journal of Psychiatry*.



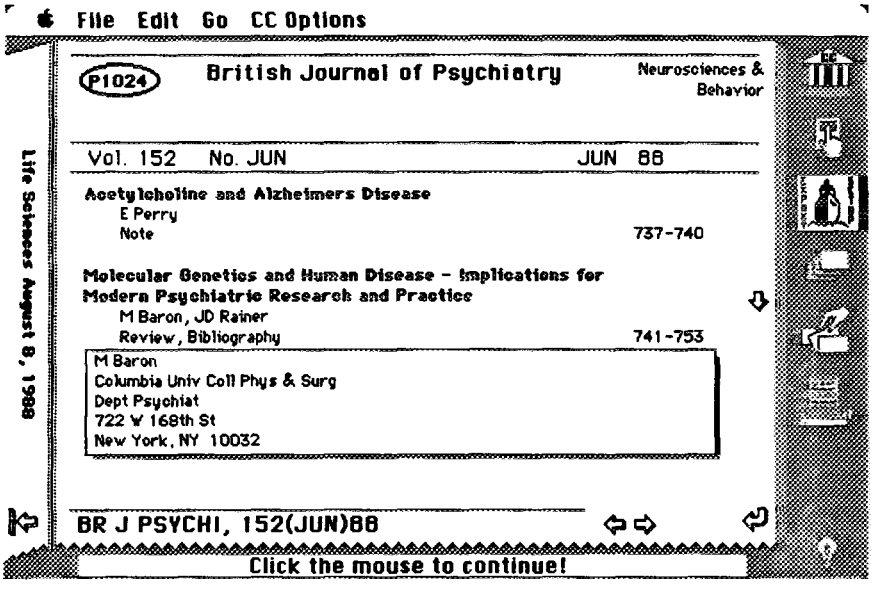
all cases, the features on *Current Contents on Diskette* are designed to save time and effort. Functions that previously required laborious typing, editing, or searching can now be performed with a click of the mouse. Below, we'll look at these features in a bit more detail.

The main functions of *Current Contents on Diskette* are denoted by the icons (or "buttons") at the right of the screen in Figure 3. The top icon, for example, returns you to the "CC Home Card," an introductory area displaying the files, or "stacks" containing various *CC* data. There are four such stacks in *Current Contents on Diskette*: "Current Contents Home," "Genuine Article," "Request-A-Print," and the weekly journal stack. Clicking on the second button, the icon representing a finger resting on a Macintosh mouse, permits you to select the Mouse Mode (all of these functions, incidentally, are also accessible via a pull-down "CC Options" menu).

The third button, which is represented by the ship icon, controls the Export function. With this feature you can select which fields will be included when you print or export records to a separate file. The "Export Set-up" box presents various fields ("journal title," "publisher," "accession number," "article title," etc.) that you may wish to extract from the pertinent articles you've identified. The fields you select constitute the output when you export or print articles. With the Mouse Mode set to "Export to File," you export articles simply by clicking on them. You can also export all articles published in a particular journal issue by clicking on the journal title banner. With the Export feature, you can quickly and easily separate out the information that interests you most.

The icon showing a stack of cards enables you, as mentioned earlier, to set up automatic scans of contents pages and journal titles. The next button, with an icon depicting a hand searching through cards, represents an even more versatile feature of *Current Contents on Diskette*: the ability to perform profile searches. You can perform an ad hoc search for words, phrases, and characters with HyperCard's built-in "FIND" command. You can also create your own custom profile. When the program

Figure 3: Author address display for *Current Contents on Diskette*™.



displays the "Profile Search" box, you can enter keywords representing topics in which you have a particular interest—"computer," for example, or "protein." *Current Contents on Diskette* will then search the contents data for items containing your keywords.

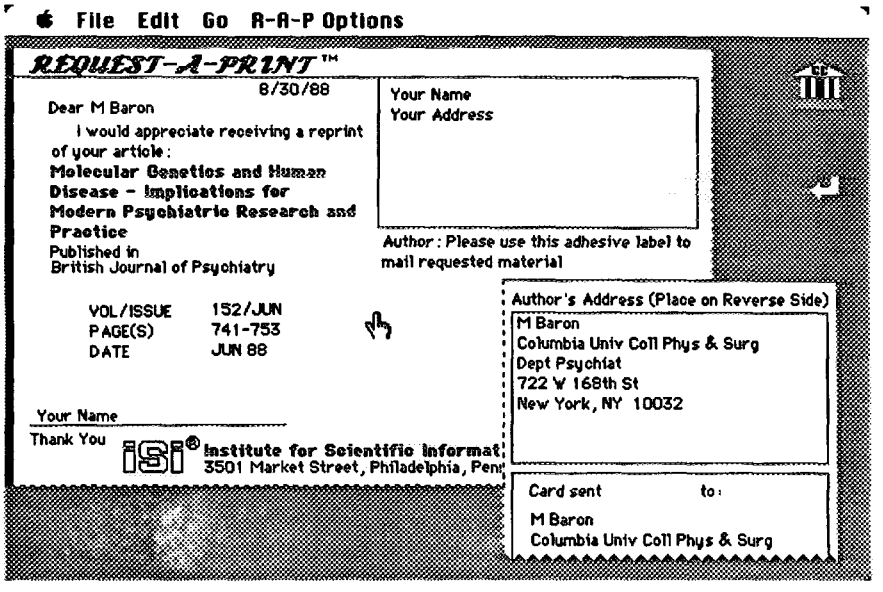
By using some simple options when entering your search terms, it is possible to fine-tune your profile—to find, for example, items featuring the *exact* word you've specified ("protein") or items with words *containing* your search term ("lipoproteins," or "protein-dependent"). You can also select the search logic for your profile (joining terms with "OR" or "AND") to obtain the desired groupings of keywords. And search profiles can be stored, so if there are searches you perform on a recurring basis, you need not create a new profile each time. You can display your search results on the screen, and also print or export them. *Current Contents on Diskette* permits instantaneous transfer of data into your personal database.

The icon representing a computer printer allows you to print the entire contents page of the journal currently being displayed. It is also possible to print individual article references by setting the Mouse Mode to "Print Articles." As with the other Mouse Mode operations described above, you have only to click on a given article to have the reference printed.

Current Contents on Diskette will also generate *Request-A-Print* orders, completely eliminating the need for you to type out these forms by hand. The program will automatically fill in the reprint author's name, your name and address, and the complete reference. Figure 4, for example, is the screen display of a *Request-A-Print* form for the *British Journal of Psychiatry* article by Baron and Rainer. The forms can then be printed on special postcards available from ISI. Setting the Mouse Mode to "Genuine Article" permits you to generate and print out orders on plain paper for *The Genuine Article*, ISI's document delivery service. When we receive the order, we will mail the full text of the article within 48 hours.

A significant percentage of *CC* readers scan each week's issue and mark those articles they want their assistant or secretary

Figure 4: *Request-A-Print*® form as displayed by *Current Contents on Diskette*™.



to order. There is no reason to change this practice. Now, however, your secretary can pick up the print version, simply key in the journal accession number, display the page, and actuate the commands to order a reprint or a copy from the library. Even if you make no other use of *Current Contents on Diskette* than to automate the typing of reprint addresses, your assistant will be delighted.

Combining the Ease of Print with the Power of Computing

The Macintosh version of *Current Contents on Diskette* requires the MAC Plus, the MAC SE, or the MAC II model. A hard disk drive and HyperCard software, version 1.0, 1.1, or 1.2, are also required (HyperCard must reside on your hard disk). Each week you will receive a 3½-inch diskette containing that week's journal contents data (as with the print *CC*, not every journal covered will appear each week). Weekly data are delivered in a compressed format. After you have copied the diskette's contents onto your hard disk, you simply double-click on an icon and the data decompress automatically.

As I noted in our essay discussing the online *CC Search*, there may be no electronic equivalent to the simple, physical act of browsing through a copy of the print *CC*—although, in look and feel, the Mac version of *Current Contents on Diskette* comes close. The print product is easy to use, completely portable, and comprehensive in its coverage. However, for *CC* readers who want to energize their browsing sessions with the speed and power of personal computers and the ability to search by keyword and manipulate data instantly, *Current Contents on Diskette* represents the perfect complement to the print product. To emphasize this, we are pleased to offer special discounts on the diskette version to print *CC* subscribers. The print version also serves as a guide to the weekly diskettes once they are stored for future use.

The Macintosh version of *Current Contents on Diskette* is available now. We will soon introduce the IBM version, making this latest incarnation of *CC* available to still more computer users.

* * * * *

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2. ———. Announcing the *SCI Compact Disc Edition*: CD-ROM gigabyte storage technology, novel software, and bibliographic coupling make desktop research and discovery a reality. *Current Contents* (22):3-13, 30 May 1988.

For more information about *Current Contents on Diskette*™, telephone, toll-free, 800-523-1850, ext. 1483. Outside the US and Canada, call 215-386-0100, ext. 1483, or contact the nearest ISI® representative listed on the inside front cover of this *Current Contents*®.