

The Mysteries of ISI's International OATS
Library Service Revealed (Again)!

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During the recent sixth national meeting of the Information Industry Association, copyright received its usual agonized attention. The IIA justifiably concludes that it must continue to press Congress for revision of the present archaic copyright law. Once that is accomplished we may, it is suggested, be able to deal more rationally with the USSR, the Third World, and others on the same question.^{1,2}

A critical issue in copyright is the problem of methodology. Is there a simple but inexpensive means for paying royalties? The method should not inhibit day-to-day use of journals, books, etc.

For about 15 years ISI® has been operating and advertising its *Original Article Tear Sheet* service.³ OATS® gives precisely what its name implies--tear sheets from original journals. But any reasonable person knows, or at least assumes, that one cannot provide hundreds of tear sheets of the same article if one stocks only one, two, or even three copies of a journal. But even reasonable people may be wrong.

I was reminded recently by some fellow members of the International Association of Scientific, Technical, and Medical Publishers (STM) that the

true facts about OATS are not generally known. Here they are for the world to ponder.

Presently ISI receives about 4,500 journals. We currently process and index more than 500,000 articles a year, about ten articles a journal. We obtain, by various methods such as gift, exchange, or subscription, about three copies of the average journal. One of these, usually received by airmail, is designated the master copy. The other two, usually sent by alternate routes (air-cargo, etc.) are used initially for various editorial purposes. But eventually they go into our "library" (warehouse) where they are stored by accession number.

From these facts any reasonable person ought to agree that we can now provide 1,000,000 *tear sheets* a year without resorting to photocopy. In fact, ISI provides 100,000 a year, about 2,000 a week. This seems large when compared to photocopying in small libraries. It is small when compared to photocopying at many large university libraries. OATS is certainly a minor fraction of all journal photocopying. Estimates of one billion a year are common.⁴ The latter number understandably upsets both non-profit and

for-profit publishers. Even governments may want copyright royalties or quid-pro-quo.

Averages do not tell the whole story. Any statistically minded librarian can tell you that if we receive 100,000 requests a year, some of them are bound to be duplicates. Thus, even though we have 1,000,000 tear sheets available, over 950,000 of them are never ordered.

Indeed, if 90% of the orders are duplicates then we have to provide 10,000 or more a year by photocopying. And that is in fact the case.

It does shock people, however, when I tell them that only once in the history of OATS service has an article been requested more than eight times! That was a paper on the total synthesis of bovine insulin published in *Scientia Sinica*, which was not generally available.

Having shown that we supply about 20 tear sheets or photocopies per journal per year, let me hasten to point out the meaning of this *average*. A large, well-known journal may or may not be requested as often as some smaller, less-known journal. This is very critical to understanding ISI's services. Unlike other libraries the patterns of OATS use are definitely atypical.

OATS is a service we provide to readers who cannot conveniently obtain a copy from other sources, not the least important of which is the author himself. Our weekly *Author Index and Address Directory* is designed to aid this latter process. Indeed, we even provide *Request-A-Print*® cards to facilitate the process. Clearly authors and publishers have much to gain from this. Many publishers today rely on reprint sales for their reasonable

margin of profit. Authors like to know who is interested in their work.

The number of tear sheets or photocopies we must provide for each journal may fluctuate considerably from year-to-year. If we announce a new journal in *Current Contents*® or *ASCA*® this may cause a flurry of orders until local libraries have been able to enter their own subscriptions. The bulk of OATS orders come from libraries; probably less than 10% from individuals. Most people can obtain free library service. They do not usually evaluate the importance of timeliness or convenience except in dire circumstances.

Indeed, the origin of the ISI tear sheet system is traceable to a phone call I received some fifteen years ago. A scientist called me to ask for an article from *Nature*. The journal had not yet arrived in his library.

A little later I received a call from another scientist. He asked me to read him an article from *Angewandte Chemie*. I am sure that R.B. Woodward has rarely used the OATS service since. But it is important to the peace-of-mind of CC® readers to know that we are able to provide an article if all else fails.

This philosophy is not unique and applies to many large centralized libraries. But there has been a tendency for "interlibrary loans" to be abused because they are often free to the direct user. In short, they are subsidized services.

ISI charges \$2.00 for a ten-page article. It is important to note that the *average* article is less than 10 pages. We then charge for postage and handling--which is not insignificant these days.

First-class or airmail is used. Out of the \$2.00 charge ISI pays a 10% royalty to journal publishers with whom we have negotiated agreements. A copy of our standard agreement will be provided to any publisher who, for whatever reasons, has never seen it.

Many publishers are concerned not about the small quantity of tear sheets we sell but about the principle involved: recognition of their copyrights. Not all journals are copyrighted, and not all publishers really care about the royalty payments. For example, a medical journal with a circulation of 300,000 and advertising revenue of millions may not be impressed by a check for \$25.00 each year. Their bookkeeping costs may exceed that.

We have never kept the OATS service a secret. Publishers may examine our records. These quarterly or annual computer printouts show the exact number of tear sheets and photocopies by journal and by article.

We believe that the ISI payment system has set a precedent which shows that royalty payments can be collected. This precedent could be used for a simple international royalty payment

system not unlike one now in use in Germany. But that can only come about when publishers, librarians, and scientists recognize that they have a common need to preserve the copyright system.

I hope this essay has dispelled some myths about the ISI tear sheet service. Were it not for the various other services we provide it would be difficult, at present, to operate the OATS service. As long as we continue to have the cooperation and approval of publishers we will gladly expand the use of this service, even to our competitors. It is particularly gratifying that we are still able to operate a service that is demonstrably cost-effective when compared to the known real costs of interlibrary loan and other corporate systems. That the users of OATS are even happier to receive a *tear sheet*, instead of a bulky photocopy, is only one of several other details this already lengthy story has omitted. If you want more information about this system, please contact Theresa Rosen or Darrell Nichols at ISI. They are the same people who, with the help of our friends, have the difficult job of monitoring our journal coverage.

1. Garfield, E. Some implications of the Soviet Union's becoming party to the Universal Copyright Convention. *Current Contents* No. 15, 11 April 1973, p. 5-7.
2. Copyright revision bill requires priority action to meet needs of the information revolution. *Current Contents* No. 16, 18 April 1973, p. 5-8.
3. OATS--an economic alternative to "free" library service and "free" reprints. *Current Contents* No. 51, 23 December 1969, p. 5-6.
4. Sophar, G. & Heilprin, L. *The Determination of Legal Facts and Economic Guideposts with Respect to the Dissemination of Scientific and Educational Information as It Is Affected by Copyright; A Status Report*. Final report prepared by the Committee to Investigate Copyright Problems Affecting Communication in Science and Education, Inc., for the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Project No. 70793, 1967.