

Current Comments

Introducing

Index to Book Reviews in the Sciences

Number 39

September 24, 1979

In 1980, approximately 15,000 new books related to science and medicine will be published in the English language. *Books in Print* lists about 67,000 books in science and technology and expects to add about 9,500 entries in 1980.

Another way of looking at the volume of science books is to examine the number of new books cataloged by the Library of Congress (LC). In 1978, LC cataloged 19,400 books in science and medicine.

Yet another view of science book publishing is obtained through the *Science Citation Index*[®] (*SCI*[®]). In 1978, we processed about 7 million citations in over 600,000 articles and book chapters. Of these, about 1 million were so-called non-journal citations. Many of these items were not to books, but they were to technical reports, patents, etc. However, we can estimate that at least 240,000 unique book titles were cited.

When the *SCI* first appeared in the early 1960s it tried to be all things to all readers. In an effort to be comprehensive in our treatment of journals, we gave book reviews the same priority as journal articles. We even created a pseudo-citation for each book that was reviewed. In the years 1964 to 1967 we processed 98,962 science book reviews! However, at the peak of the information explosion, subscribers to the *SCI* felt we should give a higher priority to certain as yet uncovered journals. In 1967 we covered about 1,700 journals. Today we cover over 3,000.

I have often regretted our decision to eliminate book reviews from the *SCI*. But publishing indexes often involves compromises between the ideal and the practical.

When we launched the *Social Sciences Citation Index*[™] (*SSCI*[™]) in 1973, we again faced a decision on whether to include book reviews. Unlike the sciences, the monograph is the dominant form of publication in the social sciences. The *SSCI* now covers 1966 to date. For those years alone, we have indexed 370,000 book reviews!

Book reviews are becoming increasingly important in the sciences. There are now probably more than 50,000 science book reviews published each year. In the less affluent days before World War II, it was traditional for librarians to rely heavily on book reviews when trying to decide whether or not to buy a book. During the 50s and affluent 60s, less reliance was placed on book reviews. By 1975, however, a joint study by the Association of American Publishers/American Library Association had this to say, "Publishers and librarians agree that book reviews influence library selection more than any other factor."¹ Librarians and others we recently consulted concurred that reviews are very useful sources of information. The recent decreases in library book budgets have made book reviews particularly relevant. Professor Ching-Chih Chen of Simmons College points out that "widespread budgetary cutbacks concomitant

with an information explosion make judicious, critical and systematic book selection more necessary than ever. Thus book reviews prepared by subject specialists are more important than before."²

While there are many useful guides to book reviewing in other fields, the sciences are still inadequately covered. According to Chen, "The bibliographic control of biomedical, scientific and technical book reviews deserves serious consideration. Compared to the bibliographic control afforded books and journal articles, the indexing coverage of book reviews is very underdeveloped."² Arthur P. Young of the Graduate School of Library Science, University of Illinois, agrees, "...Indexing coverage of reviews is still inadequate and expanded coverage for the sciences is desirable."³

One librarian, Allen Wynne of the University of Colorado Mathematics-Physics Library, recently found the need for access to physics book reviews so great that he developed his own computer-based physics book review index!⁴ And at the University of Louisville School of Medicine, Ruth Atwood, director of information services at the Kornhauser Memorial Medical Library, produced an experimental index to medical book reviews.⁵

Consequently, in January 1980, ISI® will launch its *Index to Book Reviews in the Sciences*™ (IBRS™). IBRS will be a multidisciplinary index covering reviews of books on topics ranging from chemistry, physics, life sciences (including some psychology) and medicine to engineering and applied sciences.

We expect to cover more than 35,000 book reviews in the 1980 IBRS. The reviews will be found mainly in the journals covered by the *SCI*, which will cover more than 3,000 journals next year. However, 1,000 journals will be the main producers of book reviews with *Science*, *Nature*, and others leading the list as expected. We will also cover relevant reviews from publica-

tions like *Science News* and the *New York Times Book Review* section which are not indexed in the *SCI*.

There are of course many well known book review indexes. The *Book Review Index* published by Gale Research Co., Detroit, Michigan and *Book Review Digest* published by H.W. Wilson Co., New York are two of the most commonly used. *Book Review Index* covers about 325 periodicals. Of these about half a dozen can be classified as scientific. Perhaps 1,000 of the reviews indexed are in the sciences. *Book Review Digest* covers about 70 journals but few are in the sciences. *Current Book Review Citations*, a recent H.W. Wilson product, covers about 1,200 journals each year. Only about 180 of these journals are in the natural and physical sciences. We estimate that about 3% of the 150,000 book reviews they say they cover each year are devoted to the "hard" sciences. Wilson's *General Science Index* covers about 2,000 book reviews in the sciences each year.

Technical Book Review Index is a monthly cooperative venture of the JAAD Publishing Company, Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh, and University of Pittsburgh Health Professional Library. It is very selective. About 1,200 books are covered each year from agriculture, medicine, and technology. However, excerpts from the reviews accompany each entry. Furthermore, there is a lag time of six to nine months between the time a review is published and the time it is indexed.

This last point is critical if a book review index is to be used for acquisition purposes. ISI's IBRS will reduce the time lag to an absolute minimum. Reviews will be indexed as soon as the journals are processed for *Current Contents*® and the *SCI*. In fact, the only significant timing element is the frequency of publication. IBRS will appear monthly for ten months of the year. Two semi-annual cumulations will be issued in July and January. They will include information from June and De-

ember which will not appear in monthly issues.

Of course there is one problem with indexing book reviews that we cannot solve simply by producing an index promptly. Science publishers know only too well that most science book reviews appear long after the book has been published. It is not unusual for science book reviews to appear one or two years after publication.⁶ Chen reported an unusual case of a review of a book that appeared nine years after the book was off the press.⁷

There is little hope that science book reviews will appear promptly, as is the case with most trade books, until reviewers are compensated for their efforts. However, journal editors could make a concerted effort to publish reviews earlier by using reviewers who are less well known and willing to give reviews a higher priority. Only after we have published *IBRS* for a while will we know how many are reviewed and how often and how soon. We may also find out how many are never reviewed.

IBRS will index book reviews in two ways—by author and by subject. Since the main use of *IBRS* is selective acquisition, the author of a book is the key element of information. All authors of a book appear in the index. You can find the book even if you only remember the name of a secondary author. Secondary authors are listed with a "see" cross-reference to the first author. Initially we will not index the names of the reviewers themselves. This in fact was the way book reviews were indexed in the *SCI*. As *IBRS* gains acceptance, an index of reviewers may be added.

Typical entries from the author index are shown in Figure 1. Authors' names will appear in boldface capital letters. Secondary authors' names are separated by a slash. The title of the book follows on a separate indented line or lines as required. If the book is part of a series, series data will be listed below the book title. Then the name of the publisher, place and year of publication, book

price, number of chapters and pages, when given in the review, will be shown.

The most crucial information is the citations of the individual reviews. Indented under the author-title entry will be the journal, volume, page, and year, followed by the reviewer. Language codes will be used in *IBRS* to tell the language of the book and the language of the review. Thus you can discern that a book in German is reviewed in French.

The rationale for an author index is fairly obvious. For example, if you see an ad for a new book, you can use the author's name to find reviews. I might add, however, that a very practical use of *IBRS* will be made by publishers and authors who have an obvious interest in knowing where all reviews of their books may be found.

There is a less obvious need for a subject approach to science book reviews. Suppose that you recall seeing an ad for a book, but you can't quite recall the full title or author's name. You could still find the review you need because *IBRS* has a permuted title index. This Permuterm[®] Subject Index (PSI) is composed of significant words in the titles of books reviewed. Thus, the PSI will act as a book title index as well as a subject index. Using the PSI, you can find the book review by looking up a title word. See Figure 2.

Another important use of PSI will be by librarians who want to follow certain subjects on a regular basis. While librarians have methods such as LC cataloging to keep up with new books by subject, the books will not necessarily have been reviewed by competent authorities.

My initial impression is that science book reviewing is rather chaotic and that science needs an equivalent to the London *Times Literary Supplement*. I am now investigating the possibilities of such a comprehensive new journal.

IBRS will give librarians quick and easy access to the book review literature in the sciences. It will also help them

Figure 1: Some sample entries from ISI's *Index to Book Reviews in the Sciences™* author index.

Author or Editor	<p>CHANG, TM BIOMEDICAL APPLICATIONS OF IMMOBILIZED ENZYMES AND PROTEINS Plenum, New York, NY 1977 \$47.40 359pp <i>J CHROMATOGR</i> 146(12):83 1978 Rev by TURKOVA, J <i>PHARM J</i> 221(111):100 1978 Rev by WORMSLEY, KG</p> <p>COPPI, B/STRINGER, T/POZZOLI, R/SINDONI, E THEORY OF MAGNETICALLY CONFINED PLASMAS Pergamon Press Ltd, Oxford, UK 1979 \$50.00 513pp <i>PLASMA PHYS</i> 21(6):491 1979 Rev by NASO, GR</p> <p>DEGROOT, LD/CAHILL, CG/ODELL, WD ENDOCRINOLOGY Grune & Stratton, New York, NY 1979 \$85.50 854pp <i>J CLIN END METAB</i> 49(1):70 1979 Rev by HOFF, LM</p> <p>DRUCKER COLIN, RR/MCGAUGH, JL NEUROBIOLOGY OF SLEEP AND MEMORY Academic, New York, NY 1977 \$19.50 456pp <i>ARCH NEUROL</i> 35(9):184 1978 Rev by PETERS, BH</p> <p>FRAGA, S/SAXENA, KM/TORRES, M BIOMOLECULAR INFORMATION THEORY Elsevier Scientific Publ Co Amsterdam, NETH 1978 \$48.75 272pp <i>THEOR CHIMA ACTA</i> 51(265):80 1979 Rev by PULLMAN, B</p> <p>GALLIN, JI/QUIE, PG LEUKOCYTE CHEMOTAXIS, METHODS, PHYSIOLOGY AND CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS Raven Press, New York, NY 1978 \$34 429pp <i>ANESTHESIOLOGY</i> 50(2):80 1979 - Rev by GRAHAM, CW <i>IMMUNOL COMMUN</i> 7(6):705 1978 Rev by PARK, BH</p> <p>GILL, W/LONG, WB SHOCK TRAUMA MANUAL Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore, MD 1979 \$18.00 283pp <i>SCI</i> 203(4387):1333 1979 Rev by DONOHUE, L</p> <p>KLEINHAUR, E HEMATOLOGY: PHYSIOLOGY, PATHOLOGY, CLINICAL (GR) Springer-Verlag, Berlin, DBR 1978 \$49.00 608pp <i>IMMUNOGENETICS</i> 7(14):377 1978 Rev by WERNET, D</p> <p>KNOWLES, PF MAGNETIC RESONANCE OF BIOMOLECULES Wiley, New York, NY 1976 \$9.75 343pp <i>PHYS MED BIOL</i> 21(11):1001 1976 Rev by FOSTER, MA HUTCHISON, JM</p> <p>LONG, WB -SEE GILL, W</p> <p>MARINETTI, GV LIPID CHROMATOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS 2d Ed. Dekker, New York, NY 1976 \$35 286pp <i>CLIN CHEM</i> 23(10):153 1977 Rev by CORNATZER, WE <i>J AM OIL CHEM SOC</i> 54(124):12 1977 Rev by PELICK, N</p> <p>MYRIANTHOPOULOS, NC/BERGSMAN, D RECENT ADVANCES IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL BIOLOGY OF CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM MALFORMATION Birth Defects: Original Article Series, Vol. 15, No. 3 Alan R. Liss Inc., New York, NY 1979 \$16.00 130pp <i>MED J AUSTRALIA</i> 1(7):275 1979 Rev by WALPOLE, P <i>SCI</i> 150(2040):621 1977 Rev by GREEN, MM</p> <p>RICHTERICH, R/COLOMBO, JP CLINICAL CHEMISTRY (GR) Karger, Bale, SWIT 1978 DM 98 620pp <i>ANN BIOL CLIN PARIS</i> 37(11):75 1979(FR) Rev by BOHUON, R</p>	<p>Publisher information including publisher's name, city, state and country (when applicable), year of publication, book price, num- ber of pages and chapters (when given), series title and series number</p> <p>Full book title and subtitle</p> <p>Reviewer's name ("Rev by Anonymous" will be used for any book reviews without the reviewer name)</p> <p>Language indicator of book</p> <p>Language indicator of review</p>
------------------	--	---

Figure 2: Some sample entries from the *Permuterm* Subject Index for the *Index to Book Reviews in the Sciences*™.

Primary Terms	Authors' Names
AMINO ACIDS	
CHEMICAL	- FONNUM F - GAFFNEY JS - SAVIGE WE
Cotermis	
CHEMISTRY	GROSS E LARSEN PO MARSHALL GR
TRANSMITTER	BERGER SJ DEBELLER JS FONNUM F GODFREY DA
TRANSPORT	BENDEROF S BIEGER W CHEN CS CROCKETT ME
HEMATOLOGY	
CLINICAL	KLEINHAUR E
NUTRITION	SCHMIDT P
PATHOLOGY	KLEINHAUR E
PHYSIOLOGY	"
PLASMA	"
TISSUES	RICO AG
INFORMATION - THEORY	
BIOMOLECULAR	FRAGA S
ESTIMATES	IZOKH VV
MEASURE	TANEEJA IJ
STRUCTURES	SIMONOV PV
MICROCIRCULATION	
ACTION	KESSLER M
BLOODFLOW	GUTH PH POWERS EW
DIABETES	DAVIS E
GASTRIC	WHITTLE BJR
PATIENTS	KESSLER M

use budgets more wisely by allowing them to be more selective. *IBRS* will also prove useful to scientists, scholars, and students. As Wynne confirms, people who may seek book reviews include "those entering an area of research new to them; professors teaching a course, especially for the first time; students desiring supplementary reading on a topic; and individuals who are doing independent study for whatever reason."⁴

Subscribers to the *SCI* may ask why book review information is not included as it is with the *SSCI*. At the present time we do not feel that the cost of processing book review information in the sciences should be carried by the *SCI* subscribers alone. Many librarians who do not now use the *SCI* will find *IBRS* within their budgets. And, besides, I suspect that most *SCI* subscribers will prefer to have this information available separately in the beginning. Later on, we can consider the possibility of relevant entries in the *SCI*, for example, in treating the reviewer as a source author.

In the past, finding book reviews in the sciences was pretty much hit or miss. *IBRS* should change all that. While we don't expect many individuals to subscribe at \$250 a year, *IBRS* is well within the budget of most university and research libraries.

© 1979 S

REFERENCES

1. Paul S K & Nemeyer C A. Book marketing and selection: selected findings from the current AAP/ALA study. *Publ. Weekly* 207(24):42-5, 1975.
2. Chen C C. *Biomedical, scientific & technical book reviewing*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976. 186 p.
3. Young A P. Scholarly book reviewing in America. *Libri* 25(3):174-82, 1975.
4. Wynne A. A computer-based index to book reviews in the physics literature. *Special Lib.* 104:135-9, 1979.
5. Atwood R. An index to medical book reviews: a computer experiment. *Bull. Med. Libr. Ass.* 55:66-9, 1967.
6. Broadus R N. *Selecting materials for libraries*. New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1973. 342 p.
7. Chen C C & Wright A M. Current status of biomedical book reviewing: Part II. Time lag in biomedical book reviewing. *Bull. Med. Libr. Ass.* 62:113-9, 1974.