

SCI-TECH FORUM

USE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE JOURNALS

Eugene Garfield, Director, Institute for Scientific Information.

The article by Strain on "Use of Foreign Languages Journals in Technical Libraries" (*SCI-TECH NEWS* 20 (2), 43-44 (1966)) raises some very important questions about the economics of cover-to-cover translation programs. It is apparent that the continued support of such programs is based on the intuitive assumption that cover-to-cover translation is, in the long run, a more economic solution than alternative programs of abstracting and indexing. Indeed, for the time being, without more definitive data, both approaches will probably be continued.

A major point omitted in most studies of this problem is that the use of any journal in Russian or English, is primarily determined by specific subject matter. The use of broad categories is not valid as a base of comparison. A great deal of information published in any journal is of interest to but a few scientists anywhere. It is not surprising that this would also be true, if not more so, for material published by scientists in a different research milieu as well as a different language. This probably explains, in part, the low degree of American interest in Soviet biology journals as compared to the high interest in high energy physics.

Miss Strain perpetuates a myth which prevails in the minds of some librarians concerning the cost of citation indexing. While pointing to the increased use of journals in the Lipetz test through a citation index, she states "Perhaps more indexing is the answer, not necessarily in the costly form of a citation index, but indexing in the more familiar periodical subject indexes."

The fact is that citation indexing is not more costly than traditional word indexing. Rather, citation indexing is economical enough to permit broader and more thorough or complete indexing than can be provided by the conventional indexing systems. One should not be misled by the purchase price of most conventional indexes which are generally subsidized by government, society, or other sources and generally do not reflect the realistic costs involved in their production. Limited space would not permit me to provide substantiation of this point, but this is well illustrated by such examples as NUCLEAR

SCIENCE ABSTRACTS and INDEX MEDICUS.

But regardless of the relative costs for citation and word indexing, Miss Strain also missed the highly significant point that these journals are **already** indexed by the traditional indexes. However, citation indexing pinpoints the articles that are apt to be of interest to the individual scientists more specifically than traditional subject heading analyses. And that is probably why the Lipetz test produced a "surge of use in the test journals." It does not necessarily follow that subject headings would have produced the same effect, though this might have been tested in a control group.

Miss Strain or any other reader can test the efficacy of citation indexing in increasing use of foreign materials by use of the ASCA (Automatic Subject Citation Alert) system. I believe any reasonable person would agree that \$100 for 52 weekly computer reports is not excessively costly.

Paula M. Strain, IBM Electronic Systems Center, Owego, New York

Dr. Garfield and I agree completely on the desirability of questioning the economics of cover-to-cover translation, and that the use of journals varies according to their subject matter. In summarizing the data on use of foreign-language journals and journals translated from foreign languages, I did not touch on the latter point because I was addressing an audience which adjusts its purchasing of journals to the known interests of their readers: most libraries which receive *Sci-Tech News* do not buy many journals on biology when their clientele's interests are in electronics.

I am accused of perpetuating a myth on the cost of citation indexes, although I did not discuss that problem at all. The statement Dr. Garfield quotes merely implies that citation indexes, at present, cost the purchaser rather more than conventional indexes do — a fact that must affect the sale of those indexes with which he is identified.

I must disagree with him that foreign-language journals and journals translated from foreign languages are already indexed in the traditional indexes. Some, but by no means all, are. As example, no more than three of the eight magazines whose use was reported by title in my article

are indexed in the periodical indexing services found in almost all technical libraries. Six of the eight are indexed in at least one of the familiar periodical abstracting services, and two are not indexed in any indexing or abstracting service except those for narrowly specialized fields. I need not point out that an abstract in an abstracting journal does not always answer the same reference needs that a citation in an indexing journal does.

The point of my report, which Dr. Garfield's comments overlook, is that, if the limitation of indexing aids is one of the factors which inhibits the use of foreign-language journals (the few data we have seems to indicate this), that factor can be corrected, perhaps by subsidy of the index just as the translation of the journal has been subsidized. I am not urging the excellence of one type of index above another, as Dr. Garfield seems to do. I urge only that the index chosen for subsidy be priced comparably with other indexes to be within the budget of the libraries who buy it to make more available the information carried in foreign language journals.

THE FUTURE OF SCI-TECH NEWS

We thought it was settled

Helen F. Redman, Chairman, Advisory Council, SLA.

Letter to Frances M. Stratton, Lederle Laboratories Division, American Cyanamid Company

I am enclosing a page from the July issue of the Philadelphia Chapter's Bulletin that has an editorial note about *Sci-Tech News* and news bulletins for the new division off-spring from *Sci-Tech Division*. The concern expressed there is one that has worried all of us since division status for sections began to be considered. I had thought that it had been pretty well agreed that most, if not all, of the new divisions would continue to use *Sci-Tech News* as their principal means of communication and that *Sci-Tech News* would be altered as necessary to perform its new tasks gracefully.

If that is the present plan, perhaps it needs to be given more publicity.

QUOTED TITLE FROM PHILADELPHIA TECHNICAL BULLETIN

"Three sections of *Sci-Tech* have now become Divisions: Engineering, Nuclear Science, and Petroleum; Pharmaceutical will also soon cut loose. Your editor confesses to some foreboding about the steps taken, in that (for example) the new Divisions must try to replace in some way the function performed for them by that excellent publication of the *Sci-Tech Division*. Assuming each does establish a fine bulletin, what about the cooperative features made possible by an overall publication? Ten splinters don't make a board."

**Frances M. Stratton, Chairman, SLA
Letter to Helen F. Redman,
Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory**

The post-convention issue of *Sci-Tech News* should allay their fears. It includes, I believe, news from Aerospace/Engineering/Nuclear Science/*Sci-Tech* and will be subtitled, "Official Bulletin of the Science and Technology Oriented Divisions." Also I have seen some correspondence - including a letter of mine - which Gordon planned to publish in either that issue or the next which is explicit about the joint sponsorship of *Sci-Tech News*.

**Gertrude Bloomer, Chairman,
Pharmaceutical Division
Letter to Helen Redman,
Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory**

As far as the Pharmaceutical Division is concerned, it has been our intention from the beginning of division-oriented activity to utilize *Sci-Tech News* as our medium of communication.

That we could continue to have the services of STN was actually one of our "selling points" in convincing our membership to aim for division status. We had discovered that the prospect of not knowing what was going on in the other science-related sections and divisions was a stumbling block to some of our members.

It seems to me that Gordon has made it abundantly clear that STN is meant to serve all of us. Perhaps the Philadelphia editor just hasn't been listening . . .

**Judith C. Leondar,
Chairman, Engineering Division
Letter to Helen F. Redman,
University of California,
Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory**

It is unfortunate that misinformation has been picked up regarding the new divisions and their relationship to *Sci-Tech News*.

There has been no doubt in my mind that *Sci-Tech News* would be the voice of the Engineering Division.

Would it be possible for an announcement to this effect, on behalf of the Engineering Division and other new Divisions, to be distributed from SLA Headquarters through *Special Libraries* and also printed in *Sci-Tech News*.

**PUBLISHERS' ADVERTISING
Gretchen Little and Charles H. Stevens**

Since SLA has gone on record with the American Book Publisher's Council to request certain helpful practices in publishing and advertising, I wonder if it is timely to recognize one publisher that has long avoided the bug-a-boo of the undated ad. When you reflect on the gripes heard over ads that fail to give the issue date or the copyright date of the book advertised, then I believe that you will agree that the avoidance of this habit deserves our favorable recognition.