

The Information Revolution Reaches the
Social Sciences -- ISI Helps Bridge the Gap
Between the Two Cultures

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In 1959, C.P. Snow floodlighted the gap between science and the humanities with *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*.¹ I have never fully comprehended the why and wherefore of this "gap", but there is evidence of its effects in my work. For more than a decade I have doggedly prodded my scientific colleagues into a familiarity with the principles and advantages of citation indexing. Now I must "re-introduce" citation indexing to the social sciences in which it originated.

There is some irony in this. Citation indexing was first applied in the documentation of legal precedents.² I first used it in an experimental index to Biblical studies.³ In an early article its advantages for the social sciences were delineated.⁴ Karl Deutsch indicated that acceptance of the *Science Citation Index*® might have been easier to achieve if we included social sciences material.⁵ We recognized the fact somewhat belatedly when we included the leading sociology journals two years ago. But this was only a token gesture.

The fact is that the advantages of citation indexing for the "harder" natural sciences are doubly advantageous for the social sciences. Information problems in the social sciences

have their counterparts in the hard sciences, but they are apt to be more severe. The "technical" vocabulary of the social sciences is more variegated. The concepts with which they deal are less precise and more often abstract. This being so, traditional methods of indexing are harder to apply in the social sciences, and certainly less helpful than they can be in the "objective" natural sciences.

Today there is in both cultures a new sense of urgency about the need for better and more timely access to information relating to the study of man in all its ramifications. For scientists and engineers who now want to bridge the gap, access to information in the social sciences is of the highest priority.

After several years of planning, ISI® has now implemented a *total information system for the social sciences*. It still lacks a suitable umbrella name, but nevertheless it exists, just as the well-known MEDLARS system exists for medicine. This total information system for the social sciences comprises three basic information products or services, supplemented by our document procurement or OATS® (library) service.

The first component of the new system is the *Social Sciences Citation Index™* (SSCI™).^{6,7} The SSCI is identical in concept and methodology with the *Science Citation Index*. Like the SCI®, the SSCI will be current, with two four-month and an annual cumulative index each year. As does the SCI, the SSCI will offer a multiplicity of access points. All authors and their organizational affiliations will be listed in the SSCI's *Source and Corporate Indexes*. All title words will be indexed in its *Permuterm® Subject Index*. And all cited works (journal articles, books, reports, theses, etc.) will be covered in its *Citation Index*.

The second component of the ISI social sciences information system is ASCA®.⁸ In case you have forgotten, ASCA is the system by which we send you a weekly personal reading list based upon your own profile of interests.

While I've mentioned before the advantages of ASCA for *Current Contents* readers,⁹ ASCA now takes on special significance. In 1973, the ASCA V system covers over 3000 journals, of which about 1000 bear directly on the social sciences. This further increase in ASCA's multidisciplinary coverage should be of great interest to those concerned with bridging the gap between the two cultures. Articles on the drug problem may appear in law review journals, while articles on the religious and ethical implications of population control appear in sociologic journals. Whatever their origin, scientists should at least know these problems are being

discussed in journals they do not even know exist at present. How much they choose to read outside their own specialties must, of course, be decided as before on the basis of personal priorities.

To make the process as simple as possible, and to foster maximum communication between the two cultures, ASCA reports in 1973 will provide authors' addresses.

The third component of the ISI system is, of course, *Current Contents/Behavioral, Social & Educational Sciences*. While our social sciences information system produces the SSCI for recovery of information, *Current Contents* and ASCA are meant to aid discovery of information. In short, CC® and ASCA help the scientist and scholar maintain a current awareness of developments in his field. Authors' addresses or our library service (or his own) provide access to the documents themselves.

The scope of the expanded ASCA input brings benefits for both natural and social scientists. The SSCI will cover only about 1000 journals completely. It will selectively cover 2000 additional SCI journals. Similarly the coverage of SCI will be "limited" to its present 2400 journals. However, all of the 3000 journals covered by both the SCI and the SSCI will be covered by ASCA each week.

For social scientists, this provides for the first time the timely current awareness that has been available till

now only to their colleagues in the hard sciences. Thus, they will not only gain access to the obvious journals, but, in addition, to articles of interest to social scientists that appear in multidisciplinary journals like *Science* and *Nature*, and even in more specialized journals like *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Just as we have helped to bridge the gap between the multitude of specialties and disciplines in science, medicine and engineering, ISI's integrated information system for the social sciences will help eliminate the "gap" between the two cultures, as far as it concerns the literature. As Snow has said, "Closing the gap between our cultures is a necessity in the most abstract intellectual sense, as well as in the most practical."¹⁰

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3. Garfield, E. "Citation indexes, a new dimension in documentation." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Documentation Institute, 2-4 No-

vember 1955, Philadelphia, Penna.

4. ————. Citation indexing; a natural science literature retrieval system for the social sciences. *Amer. Behavioral Scientist* 7:58-61, 1964.
5. Personal communication.
6. Garfield, E. The new *Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)* will add a new dimension to research on man and society. *Current Contents* No. 22, 31 May 1972, p. 5-7.
7. Weinstock, M. "ISI's *Social Sciences Citation Index*, a new current, multidisciplinary, research-organized social-sciences retrieval system." In press. Based on a paper presented at the Conference on Access to Knowledge and Information in the Social Sciences and Humanities, Queens College, City University of New York, 5-6 April 1972.
8. Garfield, E. *ASCA (Automatic Subject Citation Alert)*, a new personalized current awareness service for scientists. *Amer. Behavioral Scientist* 10:29-32, 1967.
9. ————. *ASCA*, insurance for *Current Contents* readers. *Current Contents* No. 52, 24 December 1968, p. 4.
10. Snow, C.P. *Two Cultures*, p. 53.