

Weekly Subject Indexes Now in All Editions of Current Contents (CC)

November 20, 1974

Number 47

Readers of *CC*[®] /*Engineering & Technology (CC/E&T)* and of *CC/Agriculture, Biology & Environmental Sciences (CC/AB&ES)* will find that we have added a *Weekly Subject Index (WSI)* in this week's issue of *CC*.

Thus, we complete a program begun in January 1972, when we added the first *WSI* to *CC/Life Sciences*. In January 1973, a *WSI* was added to *CC/Physical & Chemical Sciences*. At the same time, *CC/Clinical Practice* first appeared and also included a *WSI* from its first issue. In January 1974, *CC/Social & Behavioral Sciences* got its *WSI*. Officially the launch date for the new *WSI* is January 1975. However, we decided to go ahead at this point in order to iron out any unanticipated problems by the time of the first issue in 1975. This will give readers a chance to test its value before renewal time. Thus, readers of these editions can begin immediately to acquaint themselves with the *WSI* concept, and--we hope--to send us suggestions for change and improvement.

For readers not yet familiar with the *Weekly Subject Index* concept,

let me repeat its main characteristics. In the *WSI* we make a main entry of every significant word in every article title from every journal covered in that particular weekly issue. Some readers may find that, in their eyes, quite a few non-significant words have been made index terms as well. But what may seem trivial or insignificant to some readers may be extremely important for others.

Where it's sensible to do so, two or more consecutive title words may be joined together with hyphens to form a single entry. Thus, *nuclear power* and *air pollution* will appear in *WSI* as *NUCLEAR-POWER* and *AIR-POLLUTION*. This is done whether or not the author had used the hyphen originally. A large category of terms for which this will be standard practice is the Linnaean nomenclature of living organisms: an author's *Acer rubrum* will result in only one entry, *ACER-RUBRUM*, not two.

Our guiding philosophy in the creation of these 'word-phrases' is the frequency with which the combinations appear in titles. One of the many routine jobs done by

ISI® 's data processing software is the frequency analysis of vocabulary in scientific titles. We are especially interested in word-pair frequency. A subroutine of this particular piece of software alerts us each week to any word that appears in a title for the first time. This is part of our error detection system.

As I have noted previously,¹ the *WSIs* are no more perfect than most other indexes of this kind. But they are consistent and as current as any current index can be. I do not think the scientific community wants indexes in advance of publication. Reader suggestions will no doubt help us to improve the *WSI*. As the inevitable human errors occur, we will be glad to correct them.

Some readers, who may not share my own personal pleasure in the page-by-page and almost line-by-line scanning of contents pages, will find some weeks that the *WSI* offers a convenient alternative. Others may welcome *WSI* because it allows a more 'targeted' approach to use of *CC*, either in their own hands or in the hands of helpful staff members.

By preliminary screening, your assistant can prepare each weekly issue for a faster scan by checking off for your attention titles found through use of *WSI*. Those who prefer to have this process mechanized can use our computerized *ASCA*® (*Automatic Subject Citation Alert*) service.

But *WSI* will really be welcome when you are trying to remember where you saw that article by *Bloggs* a few weeks or months ago. Unless you have a computer terminal handy, *WSI* may be your only alternative. Even if you do, maybe you'll find the article with *WSI* within thirty seconds--or about the same time it may take you to get your connect signal.

There is a vast literature on the pros and cons of subject indexes, computerized and manual, which I need not belabor here. *WSI* is just another improvement in *CC*. I can assure you it won't be the last.

¹ Garfield, E. If ISI's *Weekly Subject Indexes* aren't perfect, whose are? *Current Contents*® No. 1, 3 January 1973, p. 5-6.