



Current Comments

ASCA Can Help You Monitor Publication in Your Organization or Country

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If we could justify the space required to publish a geographic and/or organizational index for each issue of *Current Contents*[®], I have no doubt that many readers would find it useful. For example, a science administrator in Nigeria might be interested to learn which articles, or how many, had been published by Nigerian scientists each week. Similarly, other *Current Contents* readers might want to follow the publishing activities of particular institutions or individual laboratories.

The mere suggestion of this new index may now require a serious investigation of its financial viability by ISI[®]'s product enhancement committee. Actually, this same information retrieval capability exists in an old established ISI service. Alas, this service, to my chagrin, has been insufficiently exploited by the scientific community. Indeed, I have stated elsewhere¹ that selective dissemination of information (SDI) has proved to be a great disappointment. After more than a dozen years it is, relatively speaking, used by only a fraction of the scientific and scholarly community.

Although this is not the place for us to explore the reasons for SDI's lack of success, I need to refresh your memory about ISI's SDI service called ASCA[®] (*Automatic Subject Citation Alert*). This is necessary in order to elaborate on a particular facet of the service that can be of special help to administrators or others who keep tabs on scholarly publication occurring in their own organizations or elsewhere.

ASCA is a personalized current awareness service designed to help keep you informed of new articles relevant to topics specified in a customized profile. Many readers use ASCA as "awareness" insurance—to make sure they don't miss anything important, especially when they don't have time to browse through *Current Contents*.² In fact, we designed a special low-cost ASCA service for *Current Contents* readers. The response to this particular service has been dismal. However, ASCA continues to be used by several thousand subscribers for current awareness. But, its use for other purposes, mainly by librarians, sociologists of science, or administrators, is the main point of this piece.

An *ASCA* profile usually contains a list of words or phrases likely to appear in relevant titles. It may also include names of authors who have written on the subject or specific publications likely to be cited by pertinent new articles.³ This "interest profile" is matched by computer against 10,000 articles published each week in more than 5,200 science and social sciences journals in the ISI data base. Each subscriber gets a weekly printout of all new articles which match his or her profile.

Since we record authors' addresses you can include any organization in a profile. Thus, one primatologist subscriber uses "Yerkes Primate Center" as one of the descriptors in her profile. This produces a list of the articles published by anyone affiliated with Yerkes. Such an "organizational" question is generic—it saves one the trouble of specifying the names of all individuals affiliated with that organization.

ASCA's ability to search by organization was originally conceived as a way to retrieve articles on specific topics. But administrators have increasingly used it to monitor new publications by scientists in their own organizations.

Roberta Kolman, head of the reference department at the University of Connecticut Health Center Library in Farmington, calls *ASCA* "a lifesaver." Kolman is in charge of maintaining the Center's medical archives. For years she has been trying to identify every article published by the faculty. But most faculty members are too busy or too

forgetful to inform her of recently published papers.

Obviously, it would be impossible for her to monitor over 5,000 journals for faculty publications. But by using "University of Connecticut Health Center" as the descriptor in her *ASCA* profile, Kolman receives a weekly report that alerts her to all new articles by authors at the Center.

The Louisiana State University Medical Center at Shreveport also uses *ASCA* to find out about recent faculty publications so they can be listed in the university's quarterly faculty newsletter. And the staff of a well-known corporation uses *ASCA* to locate recent employee publications. A list of the new articles appears in each issue of the company's journal.

I can also envision invidious applications of *ASCA* by university administrators who like to count publications. Obviously, *ASCA* makes it easy to play the 'publish-or-perish' game. But I do believe it is important that administrators know *what* their faculty staffs are publishing. It would later be more relevant for them to use citation analysis to determine the impact of these publications.⁴

A few publicity-minded universities or corporations also use *ASCA* to keep an eye on interesting developments worthy of a press release.

We have had the organizational search capability since *ASCA* began in 1965. I had always assumed that you could search by each element of an organization's address. But in fact I had never tried to in-

clude a city or a country in my own profile. However, a request by Dr. Regina Morel, a social scientist at the Institute of Research of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, made me realize how wrong my assumption was. Morel wanted an ASCA report based on her country. She uses this information for studies of the publication productivity of Brazilian science. She recently published her first data.⁵ In this study she compares the output of Brazilian scientists to that of other countries. She also provides a breakdown by regions, institutions, etc.

In response to Morel's requirements, we made "country" searches available through ASCA in 1977.

Since then a number of national science libraries have also expressed interest in maintaining complete archives of articles published by native scientists. ASCA can simplify this task considerably.

Costs of individual ASCA subscriptions vary. However, the minimum fee for a year of service is \$115 in the US and Canada, \$125 elsewhere. Like words or phrases, the frequency of publication within countries varies considerably. Most countries of the world can be covered by the minimum fee, but the more frequent publishers are listed in Table 1. The prices were calculated on the basis of 1977 data and will be modified from time to

Table 1: Annual ASCA® subscription prices for locating articles by authors in the countries listed. An ASCA subscription for a country not listed here is \$115 per year in US and Canada, \$125 per year elsewhere. Divisions of the UK (Wales, England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland) and republics of the USSR may be searched individually. Write to ISI® for rates.

Annual Price	Country	Annual Price	Country
\$ 674	Australia	\$ 812	India
204	Austria	354	Israel
300	Belgium	700	Italy
126	Brazil	1,584	Japan
1,618	Canada	434	Netherlands
340	Czechoslovakia	168	New Zealand
226	Denmark	164	Norway
2,176	Federal Republic of Germany	328	Poland
146	Finland	176	South Africa
1,808	France	206	Spain
456	German Democratic Republic	430	Sweden
206	Hungary	476	Switzerland
		3,278	United Kingdom
		2,406	USSR

time as is necessary with high frequency words.

If the price for monitoring the Soviet literature seems low in comparison to other countries listed, keep in mind that even in the hard sciences our coverage of Soviet literature, while quite extensive, is selective and not comprehensive.

We have omitted the US from the list because anyone prepared to receive such an enormous printout

would probably acquire our tapes. A purely statistical report could be prepared on request if our published data are not current enough.

If you are interested in ASCA for organizational or country searches (or for the many other types of searches available), please contact Mr. James Hofstaedter, Institute for Scientific Information®, 325 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA. 19106.

REFERENCES

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3. -----, "The role of man and machine in an international selective dissemination of information system." Delivered at the International Congress of Documentation, Buenos Aires, 21-24 September 1970.
4. -----, Publication counting vs citation counting in evaluating research. *Current Contents* (22):5-7, 2 June 1971.*
5. **Morel R L & Morel C M.** Un estudo sobre a producao scientifica Brasileira, segundo os dados do Institute for Scientific Information (ISI). (A study on Brazilian scientific productivity based on data of the Institute for Scientific Information.) *Ciencia d Informacao (Rio de Janeiro)* 6:99-109, 1977.

*Reprinted in: Garfield E. *Essays of an information scientist*. Philadelphia: ISI Press, 1977. 2 vols.