

# THE INFORMATION SCIENTIST

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## 200TH "ANNIVERSARY" OF *INDEX CHEMICUS*

A few months ago, ISI published the 200th consecutive issue of the *Index Chemicus*. Many readers of *Current Contents* are not too familiar with *IC*. As a publication and system for registering all articles reporting new chemical compounds, it is only of interest to a fraction of *CC*'s readers. However, the increasing interest of biochemists and pharmacologists in the synthesis of large molecules may have increased their need, in addition to the organic, medicinal, and other chemists, to rely on it more heavily.

We take special pride in the *Index Chemicus* for a number of reasons. Those chemists and pharmacologists who use it regularly are generous in their praise of the job done by the *IC* staff in promptly indexing over 150,000 new chemical compounds per year. Their continued support of *IC* alone would justify its existence in spite of competition from a variety of other information services, not the least of which is ISI's *Current Contents*. It is remarkable that *IC* has survived eight years of intense competition with these other services. Many organizations claim they cannot afford to be without *IC* since so many of their chemists prefer it to other services also received in their libraries.

Why is *Index Chemicus* used by so many organizations that receive other chemical information services as well? *IC* is selective. It does not purport to cover everything chemical, which nowadays is tantamount to covering most of science. Information is presented in the international language of the chemist - - the structural diagram - - and the information is reported quickly. In addition to its unique format, replete with structures and flow diagrams, most of *IC*'s abstracts are author approved. Furthermore, *IC* has built and maintained an excellent reputation for accuracy.

In addition to its appeal as a facile means of scanning for interesting new structures, *IC* is also a permanently useful retrieval system. It is in fact a registry of new chemical compounds. Its molecular formula indexes are completely up-to-date appearing monthly, semi-annually and annually. Early next year *IC* plans to publish an eight-year cumulative index covering over 800,000 new compounds reported since 1960. If your library has a set of *Beilstein*, then the complete set of *IC* ought to be placed right nearby to facilitate retrospective searches. Of vital significance to any chemical or major medical library is the fact that *IC* has indexed thousands of compounds that were never indexed by *Chemical Abstracts* for a variety of reasons.

It is estimated that to synthesize the average series of compounds costs five to ten thousand dollars. ISI has substantial evidence that many chemists today unwittingly report as new, compounds we have already indexed. Thus the cost of a complete set of the Cumulative *Index Chemicus* is trivial in comparison to the money and energy it can save. This is, so to speak, the acid test for a chemical information service.

But we also take great pride in *IC* because it was said that "it couldn't be done", that only a mammoth organization could accomplish the task of indexing the world's chemical literature. ISI has not only produced and expanded *IC* but has also recently introduced a compound searching service, and in the near future I will tell you about plans for *IC*'s new magnetic tape service that will make sub-structure or generic searching practical both by computer and manual methods.