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# "current comments"

## Does the *SCI*® Increase or Decrease Mediocrity?

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Several years ago the defunct magazine, *Scientific Research*, discussed the *Science Citation Index*® and stated that "There will be increasing premium assigned by this index on increasing mediocrity [1]". In my rebuttal [2] I called this "absolute poppycock".

Though such charges have proved to be without any foundation, it is incredible how fear of the computer can be translated into a false indictment of a new technique. Certainly, the international growth of science will produce an even larger number of "mediocre" papers but in all probability the *SCI* will be the tool used to measure that mediocrity. The *SCI* by and of itself cannot produce quality although the systematic use of the *SCI* can help eliminate much redundancy and low quality papers if the *SCI* is the stimulus to better literature reviews.

It has been repeatedly shown that the most significant works of science are almost invariably highly cited [3,4]. The case of Mendel has already been shown to be a myth [5].

The only mediocrity we have to fear is the result of mediocre work. The *SCI* does not produce mediocrity. It may identify or prevent it. Actually the growth of science is dependent upon an accumulation of many "mediocre" results that are produced by hard work. However, hard work alone does not produce genius or prevent absurd results.

Many scientists are technicians who provide useful grist for the mill of the scientific elite. The great men of science always have and will continue to inspire their peers to do such mediocre work as confirming or repeating clearly designed experiments. Sometimes, they execute ideas cast upon the waters by men who may never have enough time to perform all the experiments they might to answer the unanswered questions of science. Long live the mediocrities. Without them how could there by geniuses?

1. Anonymous, "The Dark Side of Automated Research", *Scientific Research* 1(6), 28-30 (1966).
2. Garfield, E., "More on the 'Dark Side' . . . ", *Scientific Research* 1(8), 4 (1966).
3. Garfield, E., and Sher, I.H., "New Factors in the Evaluation of Scientific Literature through Citation Indexing", *American Documentation* 14, 195-201 (1963).
4. Garfield, E., "Citation Indexing for Studying Science," *Nature* 227, 669-671 (Aug. 15, 1970).
5. Garfield, E., "Would Mendel's Work Have Been Ignored if the *Science Citation Index* was available 100 years ago?", *Current Contents /Life Sciences* 12(47), 5-6 (1969).