

Neither rain, nor snow deters ISI®'s Pony Express Man in London

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Most readers of *Current Contents*® are probably unaware of the elaborate arrangements ISI has established to assure that journals and contents pages arrive quickly and promptly at our editorial offices. Journals published abroad arrive by air. For most journals, each of several copies is sent by different methods. In case one encounters unforeseen delay or diversion, the others may not. But when the mails stop completely, as they did recently in the United Kingdom, extraordinary measures are called for.

ISI's man in London--Anthony Cawkell--and his diligent staff, have been retrieving journals directly from publishers' offices. On the return trip to our office in Uxbridge, journals are delivered to our air freight carrier at Heathrow Airport. Twice-weekly shipments to ISI's editorial offices in Philadelphia are then made *as usual*. At the same time, however, the latest issues of *Current Contents* and other ISI services are picked up. By even more extraordinary special arrangements, the latest issues of CC® are delivered to most U.K. subscribers with minimum delay.

Chiselled into the entablature of the main post office building in New York City is a paraphrase of Herodotus: "Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." None of us rejoices

when the postal service fails to live up to this ancient heritage. When the postal service totters on the edge of chaotic dissolution, our complaints about its daily inadequacies seem minor. The population and information explosions contribute significantly to the underlying problems, not to mention the role of technology. But deep within our minds, like some instinctual generic imprint, is a deep adulation of postriders. If one is American, the Pony Express is burned into one's memory as a child. In that same context Tony Cawkell and his colleagues must seem to Europeans like the postriders of the ancient Persian kings about whom the Greek historian actually wrote (in a truer translation), "The Persian messengers travel with a speed nothing human can equal . . . snow, rain, heat, darkness--nothing is allowed to retard them."¹

All of these extraordinary measures may be impressive but what is the gain, one may ask, if CC readers in the U.S. and elsewhere do not have the British journals available? However, the present "emergency" epitomizes the *typical* use of ISI's *Original Article Tear Sheet* service. For those readers who can't wait for a critically important article we suggest you write, phone, cable or Telex for OATS® service. We will do our best to provide the *usual* 24-hour service.

For our more desperate readers in

the U.K. we suggest you contact our Pony Express man in London. With a little bit of help from his friends in Uxbridge you might even smuggle out a few reprint request cards. Please

don't blame ISI for the reprint tidal wave when the postal crisis is over. That would be like looking a Pony Express horse in the mouth!

1. Herodotus, Book VIII (Urania), Chapter 98.