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The *Weekly Subject Index*™ to *CC*®/*Life Sciences*
Makes for Zero Delay in
Current Awareness and Information Retrieval.

September 15, 1971

A recent editorial in *Current Contents*®¹ announced the availability of the *Weekly Subject Index (WSI*™) to *Current Contents/Life Sciences*. *WSI* subscribers will receive the first index along with the January 5, 1972, issue of *CC/Life Sciences*.

The *WSI* presents in alphabetic order every significant word from the titles of every article on every contents page published in each weekly issue of *CC/Life Sciences*. Under the title words are displayed the *Current Contents* page numbers on which target contents pages can be found in the *CC* issue. Also shown is the page number in that journal issue on which there begins an article whose title includes the target word.

Computer editing of each week's input will unify variant spellings of title words, particularly (e.g. edema, oedema) when their original forms would dissociate them in the alphabetic array. The index uses the current vernacular of publishing scientists (foreign-language titles are translated into English before construction of the index), unchanged by the interpretations and translations required in the use of subject heading lists and hierarchial classifications.

The *CC/Life Weekly Subject Index* will be as current as *Current Contents* itself. Each weekly issue of the index will be bound into the issue of *Current Contents* to which it applies. For the first time there will be zero delay between receipt of indexed material and the index itself.

The use of the *Weekly Subject Index* will do much to make *Current Contents* an even more effective tool for current awareness than it has been in the past. With whatever feelings one picks up each weekly issue of *CC*—feelings range from delight at another opportunity to browse to downright distaste—there seems to be near unanimity among readers of *CC* that there is no more effective way of accomplishing the necessary job of keeping up than by using *Current Contents*. But scanning each weekly issue of *CC* has become progressively more time-consuming as *Current Contents* coverage has grown—readers' interests and requests make growth the primary characteristic of coverage. Use of the index to pinpoint articles of immediate interest will not only save time; it should also restore some of the pleasure that browsing allows, simply because much of the frustration over being sure about that needle in the haystack will have been removed by use of the index.

The *Weekly Subject Index* will, in addition, fill the dreadful void that now stretches at the end of every literature search. As their authors and publishers appreciate as well as their users, every lexicographical and bibliographical work—especially if it attempts any kind of comprehensiveness and precision—is foredoomed to be out-of-date the moment it appears, even before. This is a fact of life with which scientists and librarians have learned to live, though grudgingly, because it has required in-

ordinate amounts of time, ingenuity, and frequently plain luck, to complete any up-to-date literature search, and with little guarantee of success. The *WSI* is going to change that fact of life, because it will cover the significant scientific literature without delay. Thus, the *WSI* will make *Current Contents* in

the future as important, and as easily usable, for information retrieval as it has been for current awareness. This new applicability for information retrieval will be especially relevant in the case of multidisciplinary journals that are the core of so many separate disciplinary literatures.

1. Garfield, E. ISI® announces availability of a Weekly Subject Index to *Current Contents/Life Sciences*. *Current Contents/Life Sciences* 14(34):5-6, August 25, 1971.