

January 19, 1972

The average weekly issue of *Current Contents*[®]/*Life Sciences* reproduces the contents pages of almost 200 different journal issues. In all, during the year, we'll reproduce about 10,000 contents pages for *CC*[®]/*Life* subscribers. Even in 52 weekly time-chunks, that's a lot of material to scan, from whatever combination of pure business or sheer pleasure.

I don't know how many readers of *CC/Life* actually scan every page of every issue, as I do. I suspect, however, that a great many readers do just that, rather than restrict their weekly purview to journals in their own "field". There's good reason to avoid such a restricted outlook. On the one hand, there's excitement as well as instructive pleasure in sharing, if merely through the information of a contents page, hypotheses and discoveries in other fields than one's own. You don't have to be a physician, for example, to be interested in articles—all of them listed in this week's issue of *CC/Life*—about "written homework" for patients with emotional crises, about the outbreak of an unknown paralytic illness in Spain, about a unified theory of human aggression, or about use of an antiserum together with the BCG tubercle bacillus in treatment of leukemia. On the other hand, it's becoming more and more difficult to know just exactly what journals make up the periodical literature of one's own "field". The old dis-

ciplinary boundaries have been all but obliterated by the interdisciplinary character of so much of modern research, and especially of its applications. Some physicists may, for example, be surprised to learn that the work of Albert Einstein has been cited during the past five years in journals devoted to plant physiology, dairy science, and obstetrics, but a great many won't be. Like their colleagues in other "fields", they must be well aware that the area of their professional concern is constantly expanding. I expect that this expansion will indeed accelerate as such multidisciplinary "disciplines" as ecology demand their share of the research budget.

So, all in all, I've never found regular scanning of *Current Contents* to be a chore. There are many times, however, when almost every reader would like scanning to be a quicker process of more controlled aim than by nature it can be. And it's for such times, among others, that we've begun this year publication of the *Weekly Subject Index* to each issue of *CC/Life Sciences*.^{1,2,3} With the *Weekly Subject Index*, readers can in a minute or two find out whether an article on any subject of immediate interest has appeared in one of the 200 or so journal issues covered in the week's *CC*. Or one can, also in a minute or two, relocate in last week's issue, or the one before it, a

title of previous passing interest that some subsequent finding or event has made more significant than at first casual scanning it seemed to be. Few frustrations can equal that of knowing one has seen, and of not knowing where one has seen, something only later recognized as important. It is that sort of frustration, of course, that library users bring to the reference desk every day ("I can't remember the author's name, but I'm almost sure it was a British journal . . .").

We expected that a great number of subscribers to the new *Weekly Subject Index* would be library users of *Current Contents*. And a great many subscribers are librarians and information scientists. But the *Index* wasn't designed to be the librarian's secret weapon, however well

suited to that purpose. An almost equal number of subscribers to the *Index* are the same readers who for more than a decade have stowed *CC* in a side pocket to make profitable use of what snippets of time arrive with no prior claim of occupation. They are finding how neatly use of the *Index* meshes with the scanning process to reinforce the basic effectiveness of *Current Contents* as the current awareness tool *par excellence*.

So many readers have for so long urged us to publish a *Weekly Subject Index* that we hope there will now be few of their colleagues who fail to take advantage of their foresight. Readers who haven't subscribed to the *Weekly Subject Index* will find an order card in the front of this week's issue of *CC/Life Sciences*.

1. Garfield, E. ISI[®] announces availability of a *Weekly Subject Index* to *Current Contents/Life Sciences*. *Current Contents* No. 34, p. 5-6, August 25, 1971.
2. -----, The *Weekly Subject Index* makes for zero delay in current awareness and information retrieval. *Current Contents* No. 37, p. 4-5, September 15, 1971.
3. -----, A *Current Contents* Odyssey from 200 to 1100 journals plus a *Weekly Subject Index (WSI)* with zero time-lag. *Current Contents* No. 3, p. 3-4, January 5, 1972.