

Current Contents--All-Inclusive or Personalized?
Using *ASCA* is a Reasonable Compromise!

September 8, 1975

Number 36

"Miss Woodlaw!" barks a bare-desk executive at his intercom in a *New Yorker* cartoon,¹ "bring me a coffee, black no sugar, a poppy-seed roll, and an idea whose time has come!"

At ISI® we're not short on ideas. We have plenty of mediocre, some very good, and even a few sensational ideas. And if we didn't, our many friends outside ISI would keep ideas coming at us at a steady pace. Sometimes ideas come from readers as suggestions or complaints. Whether any of those includes ideas 'whose time has come' is another question. Besides, how you deal with an idea has a lot to do with whether its time has come or not.

Sometimes good ideas seem to be in direct conflict with one another. For example, among others Professor D.J. DeSolla Price of Yale feels that the ideal *Current Contents*® would be all-inclusive.² He would merge all *CC*'s into one large edition, thereby eliminating all overlap and the need to make arbitrary decisions about classification and categorization. On the other hand, lots of people wish that *Current Contents* could be individually tailored.

Perhaps the advent of weekly-subject-index technology makes it more realistic to imagine a single multidisciplinary edition of *Current Contents*. This is the fundamental notion of the *Science Citation Index*® (*SCI*®). But when we decided to cover the social sciences in depth, the problem of economics could not be avoided. For *CC/Life Sciences* readers, we would have to produce at least twice as many pages a week and for others the ratio would be even higher.

For those who prefer the personalized, completely relevant edition of *CC*, I've said before that you can have it if you can afford it. Our *ASCA*® system is fully capable, right now, of delivering a customized printout of just those journal contents pages you select. Unfortunately, the computer printout that you receive may not be as typographically aesthetic as you would like. As long as your *ASCA* report is a few pages a week, it is quite easy to scan. When highspeed computer printers are able to handle a variety of type fonts then the personalized *CC* can come closer to reality.

I think we've found a compromise between these two 'ideal' *CC*'s. By now, most *CC* subscribers know what it is because we announced it when we sent out renewal invoices for 1976.

The average *CC* reader covers about 1000 journals. Now we intend to give you access to most of the other 3000 journals by a special *ASCA* supplement. This *ASCA* report will appear monthly and provide access to all journals through citation indexing. This is something you just can't do by scanning *CC* each week. At a cost of \$50 a year, we believe it is a significant step in the direction of in-depth coverage of your personal needs.

The six editions of *Current Contents* cover about 4,320 journals. Actually, there is much less overlap than many readers suppose. Only about 15% of the journals are covered by more than one edition of *CC*. Together, the editions publish about 560 different tables of contents every week. Since the average journal comes out about seven times a year, this means we publish about 30,000 contents pages a year. In 1976, most of these journals will be covered in the *ASCA* system. There is no limit to the number of journals that can be handled in the *ASCA* system. It has the ability to deal with an unlimited number of input articles and an unlimited number of customer profiles. I won't repeat, *ad nauseam*, the details of the *ASCA* system, since this has been the subject of numerous editorials, as well as ads in *CC*.

What is significant is this: the new *ASCA* service for *CC* readers is limited, at present, to cited author and cited reference questions. For \$50 a year, you will be told not only where any of your papers has been cited, but you can also select fourteen specific papers by co-authors or colleagues or competitors.

If you haven't received the information describing this new *ASCA* service for *CC* readers, then let me know. We have a small brochure describing this marriage of two ideas, whose time, we believe, has come.

1. *The New Yorker* 7 July 1975, p. 43.
2. Price D.J.D. Personal communication, 8 March 1974