

*Current Contents* Paper and Other  
Problems--Your Priorities and Ours

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Number 13

Priorities and choices, yours and ours--cost as against convenience; convenience as against the ecologically preferable; the ecologically preferable as against shrinking time and failing eyesight! In short, Frazer 22 lb. NewsPrint as against Allied 22 lb. Bright-Lite Bible--both of which are kinds of paper on which we've printed *Current Contents*<sup>®</sup> (CC<sup>®</sup>).

We hear a lot these days about establishment of priorities, for individuals, for organizations, for nations. Setting individual priorities is often easier, or should be, than setting group priorities. In matters involving organizations and nations, it can be more difficult, for one must eventually arrive at some consensus as to *what* should be undertaken, and *when*, and *how* so as to benefit the most people.

Some time ago, I posed an alternative to CC readers: the *ISI*<sup>®</sup> *Press Digest* or more journal coverage. For what it costs to include the *Press Digest* weekly, we could add at least 100 mediocre journals to our coverage. By *mediocre* I mean any of the hundreds or indeed thousands of journals that don't achieve significance on the basis of citation analysis or any other factor. As yet, few people have suggested that we drop the *Press Digest* to add such journals. Nor has anyone suggested we drop it in order to increase our coverage of books in CC's *Current Book Contents*<sup>™</sup> section.

Recently, we made an improvement in CC. But I'll bet that most readers think by this time that it's always been part of the standard CC format. I refer to the repetition of a journal's title at the top of a CC page whenever the contents page has to be continued from one CC page onto the next. Lots of readers tear out CC pages on which they've checked titles of papers they want copies or reprints of. When they do this, it's important that the journal title appear on the page. We finally developed an efficient method of putting the journal abbreviation there in the case of run-on contents pages. You'd be amazed how often we were asked to provide this feature by annoyed readers who'd checked titles, torn out pages, and found later at the circulation desk that they'd forgotten to note the journal title. And yet not a single person has written to tell us that the requested feature has indeed saved the time and spared the annoyance they were sure it would--not even any of those who had complained in the first place.

The cost of this improvement can, I assure you, be translated into a cost equivalent to covering 10 or 12 journals this year. And I assure you as well that it is this kind of improved efficiency that allows us to increase coverage without increasing subscription costs. If the Russians ever stop photocopying CC, maybe we'll get a few extra paid sub-

scriptions that will allow us to cover some of the journals they, and perhaps even you, might like us to add.

All of this is by way of introduction to my main point. With this issue of *CC* we've made a major change. Didn't you notice? It won't surprise me if you haven't noticed that this week's *CC* is printed on a paper different from last week's. But your secretary or assistant undoubtedly has noticed. I don't know how many of them have written to tell us they've been going blind trying to read the small print in our *Author Index and Address Directory*, and the *Weekly Subject Index* as well, especially since the beginning of the year, when we started using newsprint.

There's no doubt that the use of newsprint decreases legibility, especially when five-point type is involved. And no one will challenge the assertion that the paper we are now using for *CC* is an improvement. It is more opaque than the newsprint, it's stronger (greater rag content and not just recyclable wood pulp), it offers better contrast for the ink (bleaching and addition of titanium). In short, it costs a bundle, and the difference in cost is the difference between covering at least 100 or even more of those mediocre journals I mentioned earlier.

But readers complained about the newsprint, so we've listened to the complaints and stopped using it. Now it's possible that I've misread the desires of the majority of *CC* readers. Perhaps it was just a few already myopic crackpots who wrote to me complaining that when they tried to write on the page, the ink bled into the paper, rendering their notes indecipherable. But I happen to agree with the "crackpots." One British reader wrote me that we'd finally made *CC* completely suitable for reading in the loo, or as we say in America, in the john. To another com-

plaining reader I was forced to admit that we might well have better considered using Kleenex® tissue, since so many readers constantly have their noses glued to *CC*.

The 'new' paper--actually we've used it before--has few auxiliary hygienic advantages beyond the high legibility reflected by its luxuriant cost. It can't be used for much else than very fine-printing work. Our readers in the United Kingdom may, however, find to their regret that this paper has the moisture absorption capacity of the toilet paper commonly used there. In this respect, the 'new' paper will not satisfy the ecologically-minded, who may have preferred the newsprint, even with its decreased legibility, because it is easier to recycle.

I happen to believe that ease of mind--and eye--are as important to scientists as to anyone else. If laypersons think deep down that most of us are balmy, we know among ourselves that the idea is an absurd myth. If anything, we react less often and less strangely than most to the minor and major irritations of life. But, as I told the well-intentioned cost-cutters at ISI when they prevailed upon me with their newsprint: when you mess with a reader's *CC*, you're aiming at his or her solar plexus, and maybe as a result at your own!

If the ecologists think I've misinterpreted how most readers want us to order priorities in producing *CC*, then they should by all means organize a protest group, just as other readers do covertly or overtly to pressure us into covering their favorite journal. In the meantime, let's hope the supply of 22 lb. Bright-Lite Bible paper lasts and continues to be made in the quantities we need--at least until the time when electronic dissemination of information has made *CC* and similar services unnecessary.