

There's More than One Way to Search  
the Chemical Literature

Number 29

July 19, 1976

Its editor, Ben Luberoff, describes *CHEMTECH* as "the poly-disciplinary monthly of the American Chemical Society." I wrote the article<sup>1</sup> which follows at Dr. Luberoff's invitation, after much arm-bending, considerable time, and certainly more agony than I would have liked. He's a tough man to please.

Though you would never know it from the title, the article concerns the *Science Citation Index*<sup>®</sup> (*SCI*<sup>®</sup>). And it starts from scratch. Even though I've written dozens of articles about the *SCI* before, I never questioned whether this particular piece was worth the trouble. While my own enthusiasm for the *SCI* is unabated, I've often been distressed by the real but regrettable fact that there are still people who don't know what the *SCI* is. And there are others who may know the *SCI*, but don't use it routinely in their research. Ironically, this is true most of all amongst chemists. It is presumed amongst library and information workers that chemists are more literature-conscious than any other group of scientists. I think this is a myth simply because there are so many of them. But that's also the reason so many of the people who don't know or don't use the *SCI* are chemists.

This article was directed primarily at those people who think that a waltz through *Chemical Abstracts* (*CA*) or *Beilstein* is adequate to any literature search. But it is almost futile to attempt to teach

old chemists new tricks. Most will remain stubborn holdouts. Many of them read *CHEMTECH*, and will have been exposed to what follows.

It would be incredible that any reader of *Current Contents*<sup>®</sup> (*CC*<sup>®</sup>) does not yet know about the *SCI*. This article is directed, however, at their students. Many *CC* readers who are chemists realized long ago that *CA* is not completely adequate to the problem of current awareness. Maybe this article will provide some insight on how to supplement *CA* when trying to retrieve information.

No paper on the *SCI* can be definitive. Information about it seems to grow almost as quickly as the information in it. It's not an exaggeration to say that every week I find or learn of new uses for it. Its primary mission still is information retrieval. That it can contribute to our knowledge of the economics and logistics of scientific publishing, to the study of scientific history, or to the evaluation of research must still be regarded as a bonus.

The original title of this article was "There's More than One Way". I did not select this title. In fact, I wrote my friend Luberoff that this was undoubtedly the worst title I have seen since the publication in some obscure journal of "An experiment that failed". I have expanded the title somewhat so that the potential reader can tell that it is not an article about gardening, sex, or skinning a cat.

1. Garfield E. There's more than one way (to search the chemical literature). *CHEMTECH* 6:167-73, 1976. Reprinted in *Current Contents* (*CC*) No. 29, 19 July 1976, p. 5-15.