

Keeping Up With New Magazines

Number 9, February 27, 1978

About 2,000 popular magazines—consumer-oriented publications which accept advertising, as opposed to scholarly journals, company publications, and in-house organs—are published worldwide. Each year about 300 such magazines are born, and about 150 die. These estimates were provided by Bill Katz of the State University of New York at Albany, editor of the "Magazines" column in *Library Journal*.

Some of the new magazines that come to my attention because of the ISI® Press Digest treat topics related to science and scholarship quite substantially. What follows is a brief description of some new magazines which might interest *Current Contents*® (CC®) readers. My intent is to give you a quick impression of the major editorial thrust of each publication, not a detailed critique. Unless otherwise noted, all magazines discussed began publication during 1977. Most of them are published in the United States, but many have circulation outside the US. Subscrip-

tion information for each magazine appears on pages 13-14.

Two of the most impressive new magazines I've seen are *Human Nature* and *Quest/78*. The first issue of *Human Nature* appeared in January. Its introduction states:

Our editorial position is simple: people matter.... And so we are inviting professionals in the human sciences to discuss the topics and ideas that excite us. Each writer will describe his or her work so that you will know what effects the research could have on your life, what it explains about you, what its implications are for the rest of humanity. Such information is more than interesting—it is vital.¹

As examples of "human sciences," *Human Nature* lists medicine and health, psychology, education, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, paleontology, genetics, ethology, biology and ecology. So far the magazine is keeping its promise to offer writing by scien-

tists. In "Health and Creative Adaptation" Rene Dubos asserts that, "for human beings, health transcends biological fitness. It is primarily a measure of each person's ability to do what he wants to do and become what he wants to become." Michael Argyle of Oxford University discusses the social role of eye contact in "The Laws of Looking." And in "Hypnosis and Consciousness" Ernest R. Hilgard of Stanford University suggests "a division of consciousness into parallel parts instead of higher and lower levels."

One regular feature in *Human Nature*, "The Practical Cogitator," is a sort of Press Digest of the past. It contains short, thought-provoking quotes from writers like da Vinci, Francis Bacon, Emerson and Simone de Beauvoir. The magazine runs reviews not only of new books, but also of *old* books.

Unfortunately, the articles in *Human Nature*, though written by scientists, do not contain citations. However, like *Scientific American*, they do list sources "for further information," which is better than nothing at all. Too many magazines and newspapers merely mention "a paper in a recent issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*"—when they bother to mention the source at all! A selective bibliography at least allows readers to satisfy their curiosity.

Quest/78 (*Quest/77* last year) is described by its editor, Robert Shnayerson, as "a *New Yorker* with photographs." The purpose of

Quest, he says, "is the dissemination of courage. Its focus is on people as they really are—and could become. Its charter is the pursuit of excellence, the search for the fully lived life.... Without being elitist or precious, it will attempt to show you the best of everything, from art to humor, science to sports"² *Quest* is published by the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation. The Foundation is supported by the Worldwide Church of God, headed by TV evangelist Garner Ted Armstrong. While *Quest's* editorial policy is one of boundless optimism, Armstrong once predicted that the world would end on January 7, 1972.³

One *Quest* article profiles Roy Curtiss III, a microbiologist at the University of Alabama, who helped develop *chi 1776*, a strain of the bacterium *E. coli* designed to make recombinant DNA experiments safer.⁴ The same issue has a story on cetologist Kenneth S. Norris of the University of Southern California. Norris' areas of interest include ecology and the possibility that dolphins and porpoises are intelligent creatures.

Two new magazines reflect growing interest in computers and electronic calculating devices. *Calculators/Computers Magazine* publishes games and exercises which can be used to teach students from elementary school through college the use of computers and hand-held calculators. Figure 1 shows a typical exercise designed to teach grade-school

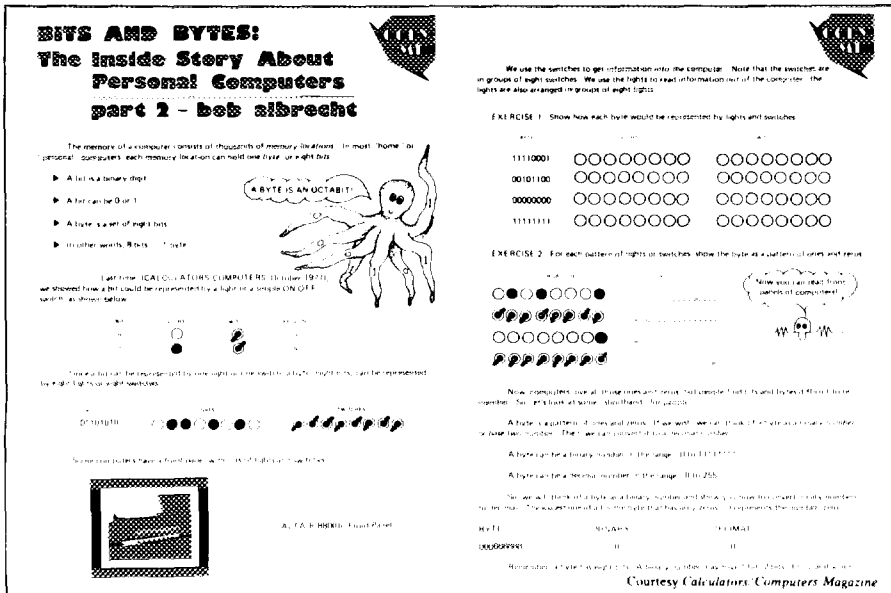


Figure 1. *Calculators/Computers Magazine* contains games and exercises students can use to learn about computers and hand-held calculators. "Bits and Bytes" is designed to teach grade-school students the fundamentals of the binary system.

children the fundamental concepts of the binary system. An explanation of bits and bytes is followed by short workbook exercises which help students understand what they have read. Later in the "lesson" the binary system is compared and contrasted with the decimal system. The "Copy Me" symbol in the upper right-hand corner encourages teachers to make photocopies and distribute them to students. Answers to problems are provided for the teacher's use.

Creative Computing, founded in 1975, is aimed at a more mature audience of computer enthusiasts. It recognizes the utility of computers

as teaching tools, but also emphasizes the fun side of computers. Much space is devoted to computer games. The magazine also contains technical notes, a buyer's guide to computer equipment, and how-to articles. One article points to the possible pitfalls of banking by computer. Another protests, tongue-in-cheek, the way computers are portrayed and treated in films like *2001*.

Space travel and colonization is another area in which a new magazine has arisen to reflect growing interest. *L-5 News*, subtitled "The Latest Developments in Space Industrialization, Satellite Solar

Power, and Space Habitats," began in 1975 as a small newsletter and has grown into a slick 22-page magazine. It is published by the L-5 Society, a group formed to support the "space colony" concept popularized by Gerard K. O'Neill of Princeton University. L-5, incidentally, is a location in earth orbit where space colonies might be built. An object at L-5 would always remain in the same position relative to the earth and the moon (see Figure 2). The long-range goal of many members of the L-5 Society is to arrive at L-5 in person.

Articles in *L-5 News* cover topics like the space shuttle, law and industry in space, lunar colonies, mining the moon and asteroids, and pro-space lobbying of Congress. A recent article replied to Senator William Proxmire's statement that space colonization is a "nutty fantasy."⁵ *L-5 News* offers a forum for

discussion of such questions as: Who should exploit space, industries or government? How should "colonists" be selected? What kind of social system best fits a space station? Can satellite solar power stations be the solution to energy shortages? The magazine's tone indicates that its writers and readers believe that space will play an important part in the future of the human race.

Along with the high technology covered by magazines on computers and space exploration, several new magazines are devoted to "appropriate," or do-it-yourself, technology. Although we did not find any new publication with the wide appeal of *Popular Science* or *Science Digest*, several are aimed at readers who are also craftsmen.

One such magazine, *Telescope Making Techniques*, is aimed at the amateur astronomer. It is concern-

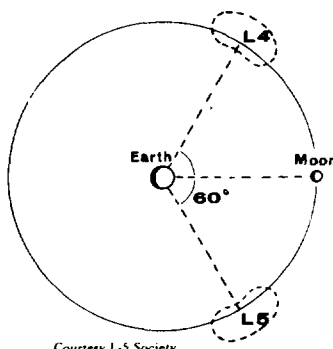
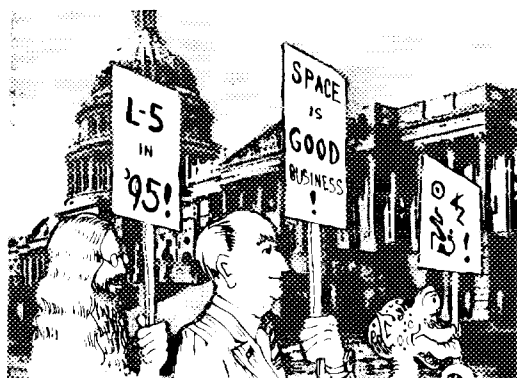


Figure 2. *L-5 News* contains articles on establishing space colonies, including the political problems involved. "L-5" is a location in earth orbit whose position relative to earth and moon does not change.

ed with all phases of telescope making—optical and mechanical, practical and theoretical. Apparently, its readers invest a great deal of time and money in their hobby. *Telescope Making Techniques* claims to be the first magazine devoted wholly to the building of the instruments.

Mother Earth News (not to be confused with the investigative political magazine *Mother Jones*) is not really a new magazine. It was founded in 1970, but its success indicates a growing interest in alternative lifestyles. Its increased popularity might also be due to the recent energy shortages and the prevailing economic uncertainty. *Mother Earth News* presents features on more efficient ways to run a household, grow food, and build devices and structures. Recent pieces include advice on buying wood stoves, building a house from a mixture of sawdust and concrete, building a greenhouse, and raising grain. The latest issue contains an interview in which Linus Pauling discusses his controversial stand on vitamin C.

During any particular month, many magazines seem to feature stories on the same scientific subject. But *To the Point International* has demonstrated a unique ability to identify science news that one does not see elsewhere. Although it is almost four years old, it is worth mentioning here because of its excellent coverage of Africa, the Mid-East, and the rest of the world.

One new magazine should appeal to social and political scientists. *National Opinion Poll*, which began in January 1978, strives for maximum reader participation. Each issue includes a mail-in ballot for the use of readers who have previously become "registered members" of the poll. Members may also vote by phone. The editors comment, "By voting in the *National Opinion Poll*, you are really participating in a NEW DEMOCRATIC PROCESS." Geoffrey W. Dohrman, the publisher, adds, "The future of American democracy just may depend upon that participation."⁶

Actually, the premiere edition of *National Opinion Poll* contains several interesting and useful features. It lists and discusses bills before the US Congress, contains a monthly map and index to lawmakers, reports on the voting records of senators and congressmen, and summarizes legislative issues. It also features a novel, thumb-indexed contents page. It will be interesting to see whether readers support the magazine and participate in its polls.

National Opinion Poll might yield some insight on how the public views scientific topics. Questions asked in the first poll include, "Should saccharin's use be restricted?" and "Should America build more nuclear power plants?" Readers are also invited to select topics for future polls (see Figure 3). Suggested scientific topics for

When voting in the National Opinion Poll, you can help pick the issues that will appear in future polls and will be covered by the magazine.

PICK THE ISSUE

Select one of the following key issues and put the number on your mail-in ballot. If, instead, you decide to phone in your vote, give the number to the operator when asked for your choice of an issue. (See "Voting by Phone.")

You may also write in your own issue on the mail-in ballot or you may give it to the operator (no more than 15 words, please).

1. Should federal (tax) dollars be used to finance abortions?
2. Should the minimum wage be increased?
3. Should mandatory retirement be extended to age 70?
4. Should the Senate ratify the Panama Canal treaties?
5. Should Social Security taxes be raised to keep the program solvent?
6. Should we give foreign aid to countries that violate human rights?
7. Should \$12 billion in Federal funds be given to the nation's aging cities?
8. Should victims of crime receive Federal aid?
9. Should we build the neutron bomb?
10. Should federal clean air standards be relaxed?
11. Should utilities be forced to burn coal rather than natural gas?
12. Should the government stop controlling the price of natural gas?
13. Should the national debt limit be raised?
14. Should the food stamp program be continued?
15. Should government prevent major oil and gas companies from buying up coal and uranium reserves?
16. Should lawmakers' outside income be limited?
17. Should tax credits be given for installing solar and wind energy equipment?
18. Should the Federal Government set efficiency standards for home appliances?
19. Should Congressional elections be financed with public (tax) dollars?
20. Should gasoline taxes be raised to reduce fuel consumption?

Courtesy National Opinion Poll

Figure 3. *National Opinion Poll* asks its subscribers to express their views on controversial topics by voting in its monthly poll. "Pick the Issue" allows subscribers to help select topics for future polls.

the next poll include: "Should we build the neutron bomb?" "Should federal clean air standards be relaxed?" "Should government prevent major oil and gas companies from buying up coal and uranium reserves?"

Unfortunately, the results of these polls are bound to be biased.

Voting is open only to those who take out "memberships" by subscribing to the magazine. A year's subscription is \$36, or \$48 for households with two voters. Not everyone is willing or able to pay that amount to subscribe and the magazine cannot be purchased at newsstands. The results of the polls

will have more meaning when the editors know what kind of people subscribe and vote.

Many scientists are avid readers of science fiction. *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, now a little over a year old, runs short stories by veteran writers from the pulp years, as well as the work of younger writers. Asimov is the magazine's "editorial director"; he sets the policy and tone of the magazine. He also writes an editorial for each issue and regularly contributes short stories. In general, the emphasis in Asimov's magazine is on strongly plotted, traditional science fiction as opposed to the literary experiments of the last decade's "new wave."

Science fiction magazines have usually appeared in a 5½ by 7½ inch format, a size probably left over from their pulp origins. *Galileo*, founded in 1976, comes in a larger 8½ by 11 inch size. It too concentrates on fiction, but also features a regular column on sciences, "Encyclopedia Galactica," which discusses topics like space colonies or the nature of the outer planets. An article on the state of the genre by novelists Alexei and Cory Panshin asked: "Is the success of *Star Wars* an isolated phenomenon, a fluke? Or is *Star Wars* the first sign of a fundamental change?"⁷ The Panshins suggest that science fiction is on the brink of unprecedented popularity, and that some day magazines devoted to it will see circulations of a million.

Science Fiction Magazine is a new French publication which places strong emphasis on artwork. The issue we examined contained, in addition to the many story illustrations, three posters. Most of these were depictions of spacecraft or alien landscapes. The magazine also runs fiction, book and film reviews, and interviews (most recently with American science fiction writer Theodore Sturgeon). So far the magazine is available only in French.

Unearth is a new science fiction magazine with a unique editorial policy. It publishes only stories by writers who have never before appeared in a science fiction magazine or anthology. Regular features include columns on writing science fiction by Harlan Ellison and Hal Clement, and reprints of first stories sold by prominent figures in the genre. The author is given a chance to tell how the story came to be written and sold, and what he thinks of it today.

Two magazines *about* science fiction also were started in 1975. *The Science Fiction Review Monthly* seems intended as a consumer guide for readers and librarians. It publishes short reviews of *all* major science fiction, including paperback originals and reprints. Richard Delap's *F&SF (Fantasy and Science Fiction) Review* does not attempt to cover the entire field, but reviews nonfiction and movies in addition to in-depth reviews of books.

Sky-Worlds, subtitled "Classics in

Science Fiction," is a quarterly devoted to reprinting old science fiction stories. The magazine does not mention when or where the stories originally appeared, but they seem to derive from the pulp magazines of the '50s. One story in the second issue, "Precedent," is by Daniel Keyes, who later wrote the excellent novel *Flowers for Algernon*.⁸

I cannot resist the temptation to mention a few new magazines devoted to a subject that interests a small but enthusiastic group of CC readers: jazz. *Musician, Player and Listener*, which started in 1975, seems aimed at *Downbeat's* audience. A recent issue includes a profile of jazz bassist Charles Mingus and short interviews with four jazz pianists: McCoy Tyner, George Duke, Bill Evans, and Mose Allison. Regular features include columns of advice for aspiring musicians. There is also an equipment buyers' guide.

Jazzline is a weekly six-page mimeographed newsletter published by a nonprofit group called Jazz Interactions, Inc. It is six years old, but is still little known. It lists jazz performances at clubs in New York City and surrounding areas.

The reader who is not intimately familiar with jazz may find *The Grackle*, a Brooklyn-based irregular mimeo, a good deal less accessible than *Downbeat*. Most of the articles concentrate heavily on techniques of playing and teaching jazz. *The Grackle* also views jazz

largely in terms of black culture. A recent issue includes an interview with author Ralph Ellison, who discusses how jazz influenced his life.

As I've noted before, you can learn a great deal about a person by examining the list of magazines he or she reads regularly!⁹ By large-scale extensions of this kind of analysis, perhaps one can characterize the changing interests of society and detect developing trends.

It is imperative that scientists remain aware, not only of what society is saying about science but also of the impact science has on society. The ISI Press Digest performs a substantial part of this alerting function, but we are well aware of the coverage limitations of an eight-page feature which digests only about 40 items per week.

For some time we have been considering a variety of ways in which ISI services might cover popular magazines on a broader scale. We soon hope to offer a new service which would announce all significant new magazines while digesting, in one form or another, the main content of the core publications in contemporary public affairs. This service would be designed to help those who would like to systematically cover such literature themselves, and would make it easy to delegate the task to others.

Producing such a service is not easy. Much of the material from

magazines, like that from the arts and humanities literature,¹⁰ is less amenable to straightforward computer processing than we would like. Considerable human intervention and intellectual enrichment of

biographical records would be required to assure the retrievability of relevant items. But problems like these make the work all the more challenging.

REFERENCES

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4. **Durden-Smith J.** The promise of *chi* 1776. *Quest/77* 1:2-10, November/December 1977.
5. **Friedman B.** More on Proxmire. *L-5 News* 2:17, December 1977.
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7. **Panshin A & Panshin C.** The end of the ghetto? *Galileo* 5:14-22, October 1977.
8. **Keyes D.** *Flowers for Algernon*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1966. 288 pp.
9. **Garfield E.** Does the reading list make the person? *Current Contents* No. 3, 19 January 1976, p. 5-6.*
10. -----, Citation indexes for studying science. *Nature* 227:669-71, 1970.*

*Reprinted in Garfield E. *Essays of an information scientist*. Philadelphia: ISI Press, 1977. 2 vols.

Subscription Information

Calculators/Computers Magazine
DYMAX
P.O. Box 310 Menlo Park, CA 94025
7/yr. \$12; foreign \$17.
started January 1977

Creative Computing
P.O. Box 789-M
Morristown, NJ 07960
6/yr. \$8; 3yrs \$21.
started January-February 1975

Delap's F & SF Review
11863 W. Jefferson Blvd.
Culver City, Calif. 90230
12/yr. \$12; individuals \$9
started 1975

Galileo
339 Newbury St.
Boston, MA 02115
4/yr. \$4; \$9 for 10 issues
started October 1976

Subscription Information (continued)

The Grackle

P.O. Box 244
Vanderveer Station
Brooklyn, NY 11210
Irregular, \$4.50 for 3 issues
started 1976

Human Nature

P.O. Box 9110
Greenwich, CT 06830
12/yr. \$15; Canada & Mexico \$16.50;
elsewhere \$18.
started January 1978

Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine

Box 1855 GPO
New York, NY 10001
6/yr. \$5.95; elsewhere \$6.97.
started winter 1977

Jazzline

527 Madison Avenue
Suite 1615
New York, NY 10022
Free copies available
at Times Square Information Center
52/yr. \$15;
\$10 for members of Jazz Interactions, Inc.
started 1972

L-5 News

1060 E. Elm
Tucson, AZ 85719
12/yr. \$3 (included in membership dues:
\$20 per year; students \$10 per year)
started September 1975

Mother Earth News

P.O. Box 60
Hendersonville, NC 28739
6/yr. \$12; 2 yrs. \$12;
3 yrs. \$33; lifetime \$300.
Canada & foreign: 1 yr. \$14;
2 yrs. \$27; 3 yrs. \$39; lifetime \$350.
started 1970

Musician, Player and Listener

P.O. Box 1882
Boulder, CO 80306
8/yr. \$8; 2 yrs. \$15; 3 yrs. \$22.
Add \$1 per year outside U.S.
started December 1976

National Opinion Poll

30 North San Pedro Road
San Rafael, CA 94903
12/yr. \$36; \$48 per couple
started January 1978

Quest/78

P.O. Box 3700
Greenwich, CT 06830
6/yr. \$12; foreign \$14.
started March-April 1977

Science Fiction Magazine

18, rue Theodore-Deck
75015 Paris, France
8 francs per copy
\$2.25 in U.S.
\$1.50 in Canada
started 1977

The Science Fiction Review Monthly

56 Eighth Avenue
New York, NY 10014
12/yr. \$11.
started 1975

Sky Worlds

100 N. Village Ave.
Rockville Centre, NY 11570
4/yr. \$.75 per issue
started November 1977

Telescope Making Techniques

P.O. Box 231
Kinnelon, NJ 07405
4/yr. \$12; foreign \$16.
started Winter 1977

To The Point International

P.O. Box 8
2000 Antwerp 20, Belgium
US & Canadian subscriptions:
P.O. Box 697
Hightstown, NJ 08520, USA
\$12/yr.
started 1974

Unearth

102 Charles St., #190
Boston, MA 02114
4/yr. \$4; Canada \$5; elsewhere \$6.
started Winter 1977