

Current Comments

Additional History and Sociology of Science Coverage in *Current Contents*

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For some time we have covered history and sociology of science journals in *Current Contents*® /*Social & Behavioral Sciences*. Beginning in 1979, we are extending our coverage to other editions of *CC*®, and to other ISI® information services. Figure 1 shows how coverage will be extended.

Considering my own interest in the field, I'm surprised I took so long to broaden *CC*'s coverage of this subject. Early in my career in information science, I almost became a historian of science myself. When I was the young upstart member of the Johns Hopkins University Welch Medical Library Indexing Project, my boss was Dr. Sanford V. Larkey.¹ He had been trained in medicine, but became fascinated by Elizabethan medicine and wrote several papers on it.^{2,3,4} My friend and mentor Chauncey Leake was one of the project's advisors.⁵ Chauncey was one of the rare individuals who was interested in the history of science while he was still doing scientific research. During my tenure on the project, I often attended Oswei Temkin's and Richard Shryock's lectures on the history of

medicine.⁶ During that time I also met Estelle Brodman, the only person who ever succeeded in getting a Ph.D. awarded jointly by the history and anatomy departments and the school of library service at Columbia University.⁷

Obviously we have weightier reasons for extending our coverage than to allow me to pursue an interest. When Robert Merton recommended that we cover the history of science in our new *Arts & Humanities Citation Index*™ (*A&HCI*™), I realized we had not taken this step for the *Science Citation Index*® (*SCI*®). From there it became obvious that we had neglected to do this for *CC*. Some of the historians we talked to gave us their opinions on how knowledge of the history of science can benefit scientists.

Robert Multhauf, who is retiring this year as editor of *Isis*, says it can open the scientist's mind and illuminate the process of discovery. Multhauf states that "in order to discover anything, a scientist has to deviate from the things that he was taught in school....The ordinary student who takes a course in science never hears that there are all wrong answers because the

Figure 1: History, philosophy, and sociology of science journals that will be covered in *Current Contents*® and other ISI services. The line in bold-face indicates services to which the journals will be added in 1979. The line in parentheses indicates which services already cover the journals.

Annals of Science CC* /LS, CC/P&CS, SCI* (CC/S&BS, SSCI™, A&HCI™, ASCA*)	Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences CC/LS, CC/CP, SCI (CC/S&BS, SSCI, ASCA)
Archives for History of Exact Sciences (CC/S&BS, CC/P&CS, SCI, ASCA)	Medical History CC/LS, CC/CP, SCI, SSCI, ASCA
British Journal for the History of Science CC/LS, CC/P&CS, SCI (CC/S&BS, SSCI, A&HCI, ASCA)	Philosophy of Science CC/LS, CC/P&CS (CC/S&BS, SCI, SSCI, A&HCI, ASCA)
British Journal for the Philosophy of Science CC/LS, CC/P&CS, SCI (CC/S&BS, SSCI, A&HCI, ASCA)	Scientia CC/LS, CC/P&CS, SCI (CC/S&BS, SSCI, A&HCI, ASCA)
Bulletin of the History of Medicine CC/LS, SCI, SSCI, ASCA	Social Studies of Science CC/LS, CC/P&CS (CC/S&BS, SCI, SSCI, A&HCI, ASCA)
Centaurus CC/LS, CC/P&CS, SCI (CC/S&BS, SSCI, A&HCI, ASCA)	Studies in History & Philosophy of Science CC/LS, CC/P&CS, SCI (CC/S&BS, SSCI, A&HCI, ASCA)
Isis CC/LS, CC/P&CS, SCI (CC/S&BS, SSCI, A&HCI, ASCA)	Synthesis - Cambridge CC/LS, CC/P&CS, SCI (SSCI, A&HCI, ASCA)
Journal of the History of Medicine and Applied Sciences CC/LS, CC/CP, SCI, SSCI, ASCA	Technology and Culture CC/P&CS (CC/ET&AS, CC/S&BS, SSCI, A&HCI, ASCA)

textbook only has right answers; that is, answers that are considered right at the time the textbook is written. He is likely to come out of school not having any idea of what is involved in the act of discovery, but this is something you can learn from the history of science."

Estelle Brodman, now librarian and professor of history at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, points out another advantage that a historical perspective can give: "It's useful to see some of the things that *didn't* work out, to

find out what made things successful....It gives a little humility to a group that thinks it knows everything about everything and should be allowed to make all the decisions for everybody in the world."

Alexander Vucinich of the University of Pennsylvania Department of the History and Sociology of Science notes that some historians do not concentrate solely on the study of scientific progress. They also take note of science in a social, economic, and political con-

scientists explore the relationship between science and society.

For these reasons, you might expect scientists to be keenly interested in the history of science. Yet many historians of science believe they are not. Multhauf states that before 1900, scientists received some general science history as part of their education. This is no longer true. One reason, he suggests, is that scientists are being forced to absorb more and more technical information. Thus, they are pressed for time and reluctant to spend it studying history. Another reason, Multhauf adds, is that "scientists have been very prosperous for the last generation, and prosperous people tend to become narrow-minded."

One historian of science here at ISI, Henry Small, editor of the Society for Social Studies of Science's *4S Newsletter*, says another reason is that scientists are forward-looking individuals. They are interested in what is happening now, or what is going to happen tomorrow. The scientists who take an interest in history usually do so after their careers have peaked, when they have the leisure time to study the past and the inclination to do so.

Stephen G. Brush of the University of Maryland's Department of History and Institute for Physical Sciences and Technology says many scientists are still unaware that the history of science exists as an independent, established

Solla Price estimates that in the US there are about 40 universities which teach history of science courses, and about 25 that give Ph.D.s in the history of science "or in some combination of it with the philosophy of science."⁸ Genevieve Miller, director of the Howard Dietrick Museum of the History of Medicine in Cleveland, Ohio, estimates that there are about 40 medical schools which offer electives in the history of medicine.

Arnold Thackray, also with the University of Pennsylvania Department of the History and Sociology of Science and the new editor of *Isis*, estimates that there are about 100 to 200 Ph.D.s in the history of science in the US, and about 30 each in Great Britain, France, and West Germany. He also estimates that there are about a hundred historians of science in the USSR. He blames scientists' lack of interest in the history of science on specialization, but cautions against exaggerating that lack of interest. Thackray thinks that though the percentage of interested scientists is relatively small, the number of interested *individuals* may be quite large.

Despite the benefits that our coverage should bring, some readers of the editions affected may be puzzled to find history of science journals in *Current Contents*. Others might object to this change and point to a few specialty journals that their editions of *CC* do not yet cover. However, I expect that

readers will find much useful or interesting material in them that they would have missed otherwise.

Our extended coverage should also please the publishers of the journals themselves. I'm sure they can use the additional exposure and subscription support that our coverage may stimulate. However, I must point out that many journals in this field adhere to archaic editorial and bibliographic styles.

We hope that the inevitable new contacts with *CC* readers will lead them to change them.

More importantly, we think our extended coverage will help increase interdisciplinary contact between scientists, sociologists, and historians of science—groups which, common sense tells us, ought to have a lot to say to each other.

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