

Current Comments

Introducing Robert A. Day,
the New Director of ISI Press

Number 27

July 7, 1980

In 1977, ISI® expanded into the area of book publishing by establishing ISI Press™. The primary mission of ISI Press is to publish books and other materials dealing with the process of scholarly communication and the sociology of scholarship. This includes all aspects of the intellectual creation, production, and publication of scholarly work as well as its dissemination, retrieval, and use.

Although ISI Press has produced few books so far, they have enjoyed encouraging success both critically and in terms of sales. We expect this trend to continue, especially in light of the real boost we've just received from a new addition to our staff. On July 1, Robert A. Day, former head of the publishing program of the American Society for Microbiology (ASM), assumed the leadership of ISI Press.

ISI Press began with the decision to publish a collection of *Current Comments*® in book form. This was partly in response to subscribers and colleagues who had written to me for back copies of *Current Comments* essays, which were becoming harder and harder to find.¹ Having decided that the publication of the first two volumes of *Essays of an Information Scientist*² would be of value, we faced the question of whether to find an outside publisher or publish the books ourselves. We chose the latter course primarily as a cost-cutting measure. By publishing the books ourselves, we were able to keep the price down. So we officially established ISI Press.

The early driving force behind ISI Press was Chief Editor Bob Hayne. It

was he who supervised production of the first two volumes of *Essays*. After Bob's death in July 1977, Tom DiRenzo, ISI's vice president for direct marketing and corporate communications, held the Press together. Tom shepherded the first two volumes of the essays through the final stages of publication. We were gratified when these first ISI Press volumes were reviewed favorably in such journals as *Journal of the American Medical Association*³ and *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*⁴ and won the American Society for Information Science award for best information science book of 1977. We hope that the recently published third volume of *Essays*, covering 1977-78, enjoys as much success as its predecessors.

Earlier this year ISI Press released the *Transliterated Dictionary of the Russian Language*.^{5,6} I edited this book, with the assistance and guidance of Hayne. The dictionary is intended for use by people who must occasionally deal with Russian. For the librarian, this may mean recording bibliographic citations; for the scientist, reading an abstract. The dictionary has also proved useful to journal publishers, booksellers, and anyone entering orders from Russian customers. Our own subscription department uses it this way.

The premise behind the dictionary is that using a traditional Russian dictionary is difficult for English speakers because the Cyrillic alphabet not only uses characters that are strange, but also does not follow the order of the Roman alphabet. The dictionary con-



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tains a conversion table that makes it possible to quickly determine the Roman equivalent for each Cyrillic letter.⁷ Once transliterated, nearly 17,000 Russian words can be looked up in the order of the Roman alphabet to obtain the translation. The dictionary can also be used to translate from English to Russian. Although it has been on the market for only a few months, its rapidly growing sales volume indicates that we have created a tool of some utility.

ISI Press's most outstanding success to date, however, came when we published *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper*.^{8,9} by Robert A. Day, the same Robert A. Day who has joined ISI to direct the Press's efforts. Day's "cookbook" for authors was sorely needed by many within the scientific community. The number of copies sold, nearly 19,000 to date, attests to this need. Few books designed to reach the technical market sell more than 2,000 copies! But Day's book is unique in several respects. For example, it uses a how-to approach showing the reader how to organize scientific material into a coherent and readable journal article. Day also places a great deal of emphasis on how to publish a scientific paper in

the most prestigious journal possible. And the book contains a generous dose of humor. Most books that deal with this topic are unnecessarily dull. Day's lively delivery helps the reader get through the tedium of what might otherwise be a dreary subject.

Day's book grew out of an article he wrote in 1975 for the *ASM News*.¹⁰ "How to Write a Scientific Paper" attracted more than 3,000 reprint requests. The article has since been republished in eight other journals in three languages. Encouraged by this response, Day began work on a book-length manuscript on how to write and publish what one has written. The resulting book, published in June 1979, received many favorable reviews in the literature. For example, Donald Heyneman wrote in *New England Journal of Medicine*, "Few how-to books can be read for pleasure as well as content. Day's brief guide to writing a scientific paper is a delightful exception, fulfilling its title in a deliciously witty and informative style. He deals cogently and practically with each section of the properly organized paper...."¹¹ And a review by C.T. Bishop in *Scholarly Publishing* declares that Day's book should "be read by anyone who writes scientific papers. It should be of particular benefit to graduate students and those among their professors who are concerned about the quality of scientific writing; it is, to repeat, certainly the best book yet written on this topic."¹²

Many of the qualities that made Day a creditable author for *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper* also make him the logical choice for the directorship of ISI Press. For 19 years, Day served as managing editor of the *Journal of Bacteriology* and eight other journals published by ASM. Among his responsibilities were the supervision of ASM's substantial book publishing program and the management of its marketing effort. Day has served as chairman of the Council of Biology Editors and is currently vice president and president-elect of the Society for Scholarly Publishing. Some of Day's other memberships in-

clude the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Council of Engineering and Scientific Society Executives, the Society of Technical Communication, and the Society of National Association Publications.

Day was born in 1924 in Belvidere, Illinois. After a four-year period of military service, he attended the University of Illinois where he earned his BA in English. He received his MS in Library Science from Columbia University in 1951. He was employed for three years in the science and technology division of the Newark (New Jersey) Public Library. In 1954, he moved to the Institute of Microbiology at Rutgers University, where he had a dual appointment as both librarian and editor for the Institute. It was here that Day's career in publishing began in earnest. During his seven years at Rutgers, he edited hundreds of scientific papers, published some 15 books on behalf of the Institute, and taught a graduate seminar in scientific writing. In 1961, he left Rutgers to become managing editor of ASM, where he succeeded in building a \$5 million per year publishing program, and where his many talents became known throughout the world of scientific publishing.

Scientists will undoubtedly agree that he has a remarkable record of accomplishment. Those who know Day are impressed with his wide range of experience as well as his biting wit. I like the way he emphasizes simplicity of expression in scientific writing. A long-time colleague of Day's, Morna Conway, a Washington, DC, marketing consultant, believes his respect for simplicity stems from a deep-rooted disdain for pretension, a quality apparent in his writing.¹³

I'm pleased to have Day join ISI. He certainly has much to offer ISI Press. But the Press has much to offer him also. The challenge of shaping the growth of a new enterprise is certainly attractive to a person of Day's capabilities. I've always had a special regard for individuals who are able to bridge the two cultures of science and the humanities. In Day's case this is not only true, but he also understands what it means to meet a deadline. For this reason, I encourage you to consider ISI Press if you have an idea for a book that might fit in with the Press's objectives. Please contact Robert Day, ISI Press, 3501 Market Street, University City Science Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104.

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*Reprinted in: **Garfield E.** *Essays of an information scientist*. Philadelphia: ISI Press, 1980. 3 vols.