

# Current Comments

## Will Advertising Change *Current Contents*?— Yes and No

Number 50

December 14, 1981

In the October 26, 1981, issue of *Current Contents*<sup>®</sup>/*Life Sciences* (*CC*<sup>®</sup>/*LS*) we began an experiment with paid advertising. There was no formal announcement but it should have been fairly obvious to veteran *CC* readers that the 16-page center signature of that issue was something new.

This experiment was launched with some trepidation. *CC/LS* is about to begin its twenty-fifth year of continuous publication. Incidentally, we haven't missed a deadline for over 1,250 consecutive weekly issues.

During that time, *CC/LS* has undergone many changes. Perhaps the most significant change is its size. During 1957 we published approximately 48 pages per week, covering about 1,000 articles. Today we average closer to 320 pages per week. Furthermore, by various methods we compress more information onto each page. We now include about 4,250 articles per issue. That's about 220,000 articles per year! And in 1957 there was no author address directory or subject index.

In 1958, the basic price of *CC/LS* was set at \$100 per year. Despite record inflation in the past two decades, in 1982 the basic US subscription price will be \$210 per year. I might point out that in spite of this price, *CC/LS* continues to enjoy a phenomenal renewal rate—almost 90 percent per year. And the ten percent we lose are replaced by a larger

number of "new" subscribers. Many of the new ones are in fact "old" readers with new affiliations. We are very proud of this record.

But there can be no doubt that the rate of growth of individual, as opposed to library, subscriptions has fallen in recent years. There is a point at which the average scientist cannot afford a particular scientific publication. One indication of this is the large number of pass along readers for each issue.

I might point out that were we solely motivated by profit, we could easily double the price of *CC* without losing half our subscribers. But we did not spend 25 years to create an elitist information service. My colleagues at *ISI*<sup>®</sup> and I feel that we can maintain and expand our large readership by trying to hold the line in spite of inflation, and by creating additional sources of revenue. Advertising was one obvious choice. We've discussed it for many years.

There is another factor in testing the feasibility of advertising in *CC*. Clearly, some readers and publishers feel that it will serve a useful information function. As long as it is informative, we and they believe that advertising is a legitimate function of a science information service. We've probably waited too long to realize how useful it can be in *CC*.

You will have observed that we have been printing *CC* on newsprint for many months. This was done as a way to re-

duce costs. If we are able to attract enough advertising revenue, we will consider restoring the use of more permanent and aesthetically pleasing opaque paper. It may surprise you to know that the savings involved is about \$10 per yearly subscription. But one has to generate a lot of advertising to cover even that amount.

We hope that our advertisers will find that *CC* is an excellent medium because *CC* readers are primarily just that—readers. Since readers influence purchasing decisions, publisher ads will predominate. But *CC* readers have other needs—both scientific and personal. While we started with emphasis on publisher ads, we now accept other ads as well. In fact, we are now accepting full- and half-page classified ads for positions available and meeting announcements. These ads should successfully fill a need for this type of communication within the life sciences and the rest of the scientific community.

Advertising in *CC* will not affect our journal selection policies. While any publisher can advertise a journal in the advertising section, its regular coverage in *CC/LS* will be determined by the same group of people at ISI as in the past. Coverage will be determined pri-

marily on the basis of objective citation data. We guarantee to cover the most important journals in the life sciences. I've explained our selection criteria *ad nauseam*. I did this explicitly two years ago,<sup>1</sup> but every journal citation study is also a reminder of our approach.

Since we will accept book advertising, you may wonder about *Current Book Contents*® (*CBC*®). I've discussed this feature before<sup>2</sup> but would like to reiterate that we list there mainly multiauthored books on a chapter-by-chapter basis. Since we index each and every chapter of a large number of books in *CC/LS*, we charge publishers an indexing fee. For this reason, *CBC* is not absolutely comprehensive. We are expanding our coverage of such multiauthored book material in our new online service, *Index to Scientific & Technical Proceedings & Books (ISI/ISTP&B™)*, which I described recently.<sup>3</sup> Incidentally, no indexing fee is charged for *CBC* coverage in other *CC* editions. And, yes, we do plan to include advertising in other editions in the near future.

Anyone interested in advertising in *CC/LS* should contact: Linda Sherman, ISI, 3501 Market Street, University City Science Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104.

©1981 ISI

#### REFERENCES

1. **Garfield E.** How do we select journals for *Current Contents*? *Current Contents* (45):5-8, 5 November 1979.\*
2. ...., Five years of *Current Book Contents* and multi-authored book indexing. *Current Contents* (51):5-8, 18 December 1978.\*
3. ...., Introducing *ISI/ISTP&B (Index to Scientific & Technical Proceedings & Books)*—online access to the conference literature and multi-authored books. *Current Contents* (34):5-9, 24 August 1981.

\*Reprinted in: **Garfield E.** *Essays of an information scientist*. Philadelphia: ISI Press, 1981. 4 vols.