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PUBLICATION DATES -- REALITIES OR PROMISES

Current Contents has always made every reasonable effort to provide timely information for the hundreds of journals it covers. *CC* is widely renowned for its timeliness.

It is particularly frustrating and disconcerting when this reputation is blemished by the archaic publication dating practices of some otherwise reputable journals. *Current Contents* is not alone among information services to be criticized for seemingly excessive time lags noted by users. It is important to observe, therefore, that these lags are often created by the journals themselves and create bibliographic confusion for everyone -- librarians, scientists and publishers.

There is a very simple remedy for this problem. The solution requires the realistic acknowledgement by the individual journals involved that publication date time lags developed years ago will not change. Therefore, why not simply date each current issue realistically.

Readers of *Current Contents* are urged to write to the editors of such journals requesting them to adopt internationally acceptable bibliographic standards and practices. And I hope that readers will keep the following point in mind when they wonder why we list certain journals so many months after they are "published." The date on the cover of a magazine is not necessarily the date it is received at *ISI* or by anyone else. Some journals send us advance proofs. Other journals send us advance copies by air-mail. Many journals will not as a matter of policy release journals before the official publication date. And, unfortunately, some journals are chronic offenders. They are either erratic, consistently late or cannot make changes for political or other reasons. Fortunately, the latter group is a small minority.

In general, the performance of the leading scientific journals of the world has vastly improved during the past decade. I like to think that *Current Contents* has helped contribute to that improvement.