

**Current Book Contents Settles In;
Progress Report on a
Resoundingly Successful Experiment!**

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One year ago we launched *Current Book Contents*[™] (*CBC*) in *Current Contents*[®]/*Life Sciences*.¹ *CBC* is now a permanent feature of *CC*[®]/*Life*, and has been or will be included in other editions of *CC* as well.

The "experiment" has been a success—if one is justified in using the word "success" for a quasi-market-research effort. Some would argue that the results were bound to demonstrate the obvious. I can assure you this was not the case with most publishers. The need and value of *CBC* was obvious to many *CC* readers. The response has gone beyond even my information-conscious expectations. More than 4000 coupons have been received to date, along with hundreds of letters.

Information about the contents of books, and especially of multi-authored volumes, such as proceedings and other one-shot journal-like collections of articles, is poorly disseminated. The indexing situation is even worse.² Had many of these articles been published in journals, as they might have been ten years ago, they would surely have been in journals covered in *CC*. Many readers, most of whom are authors, have confirmed that in the affluent sixties they would have published material twice—once in a journal and then in un-refereed books or "proceedings." However, most of these people now feel that journal publication

is wasteful duplication. Furthermore, much of the recent material is of a review nature. Good reviews are always desirable. Indeed, ISI[®] plans to issue an *Index to Scientific Reviews* in the near future.

When we began *CBC* we used only two pages in *CC/Life Sciences*. During the year (in spite of the paper shortage) we expanded it to four pages. Later we added *CBC* to *CC/Social & Behavioral Sciences*, *CC/Clinical Sciences*, and *CC/Physical & Chemical Sciences*. During 1975, we intend to add *CBC* sections to the other two *CC* editions—*CC/Agriculture, Biology & Environmental Sciences* and *CC/Engineering & Technology*.

To date we've listed the contents pages of about 340 books in *CBC*. Considering the large number of such books published each year,³ one might be inclined to dismiss the effort as well-meant but trivial. However, I suspect that of the thousands of scientific books published each year, *CC* can only hope to be selective. That is still true of journals.⁴ The economic realities of life apply to books as well.

In listing the books, ISI offers to transmit orders or requests for information to publishers. We ask no fee for this of you or the publisher. For each book included in *CBC* so far, ISI has passed on an average ten orders to its publisher. In some cases, over 100

orders have been transmitted. We also know that three to four times as many readers order books seen listed in *CBC* through their regular purchasing channels. These readers have followed the prescribed ordering path in their own organizations. Furthermore, we also know that the use of these books has increased significantly in those libraries that have standing orders for almost any book in certain classes.

We've discovered some interesting things in this "experiment." One of them attests to the large pass-along readership of *Current Contents*. It is by no means unusual to receive an inquiry or order for a book listed in a six-month old issue of *CC*. This may also be due to the value of the *Weekly Subject Index*, which includes entries for these books.

We've also learned, since publishers of books do not prepare the contents pages with *CC* in mind, that in most cases, we have to "recompose" the contents pages. We need to save space, but also to make these contents pages as easily scannable as possible. We've also learned that authors' addresses are frequently not provided in these volumes, or, if they are, reprints may not be available. In a few cases, publishers have asked us to include addresses. We will explore methods of including complete addresses when given. It only makes sense if reprints are in fact available, but it is also

important to know where a piece of research has been done.

From the beginning, all titles--book, section, chapter, "article"--have been included in the *Weekly Subject Index*. In this connection, I should like to quote here from one of many letters we've received about *CBC*: "I've noted that you have also indexed the terms used in the chapter titles in *CC*. This will be immensely useful since it will give us more information about the contents of a book than does the library catalog. Used in conjunction with the *Science Citation Index*[®], we find it even more useful, since the authors of the book chapters will be experts in their fields and one can track down more related papers."

The success of our *CBC* experiment may also be judged by the now active participation of dozens of publishers who not only welcome more orders, but also enjoy the knowledge that more timely transmission of useful scientific information is accomplished--and greater usage results. Another *CC* reader has told us: "In our own case, we have not ordered any books through *ISI* because we have an acting working relationship with a local bookseller, but volumes have been purchased, either entirely or earlier than otherwise, because of this department. Please allow *CBC* to continue." We plan to do that, and in *CC/Life Sciences* will soon expand the section to 6 or even 8 pages.

1. Garfield, E. New section in *CC/LS* designed to cover the non-journal literature. *Current Contents (CC)* No. 35, 29 August 1973, p. 5-6.

2. Indexing books--small and large loopholes. *CC* No. 26, 26 June 74, p. 5-8.

3. "Design of information systems in the social sciences." Bath University Working Paper Number 7, April 1974. -- This

paper reports information gathered by UNESCO on world book production in 1970. Of the 546,000 books published that year, 83% were classified as functional, that is, "of a scholarly nature", as opposed to the non-functional "literary and imaginative."

4. Garfield, E. The economics and *Realpolitik* of exponential information growth; or, journal selection ain't easy. *CC* No. 34, 22 August, 1973, p. 5-6.