A Current-Awareness Service Based on Meetings—the Need, the Coverage, the Service*

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Papers presented at scientific meetings are at least as valuable as those published in the journals. As a medium for current awareness, meeting papers have important advantages over those published in the journals. *Current Programs,* a new current-awareness service, is making it possible to take advantage of this heretofore underutilized information source.

World Meetings Information Center has been collecting and disseminating information on scientific and technical meetings for ten years. We have seen the number of meetings taking place during that time expand until, last year, our data bank covered 3669 national, international, and regional meetings scheduled to take place in 95 different nations. Last year, more than 25,000 papers of importance to chemists were presented at meetings. Most of the papers are publishable, and about 80% probably will appear in the journals. The quality of the meeting papers, from the scientific aspect, is approximately on a par with that of papers published in journals. But, the researcher knows very well that the utility of scientific information diminishes with time. The most valuable information is that which can be obtained quickly enough to enable one to correspond with the author while the material is still fresh in his mind. In a very real sense, therefore, meeting papers are more valuable than those published in journals. In spite of this, this information resource has been poorly exploited. The reason for this lack of exploitation of meetings is that, like the youngsters in the family, everyone loves them but no one really respects them. As an experiment, at the next meeting you attend, go over to someone and ask, "Well, what did you think of the meeting? How were the papers?" The chances are good that he'll reply something like this: "Well, the papers were all right, but not really good. But, I don't attend meetings for the papers. It's what goes on in the halls that's really the meat of the meeting."

MEETING PAPERS *VS.* JOURNAL PAPERS—REFEREEING

On analysis, this attitude is nonsense. Furthermore, the scientific community knows that it's nonsense, but for some emotional reason will not admit it even to itself. Whenever meeting papers are mentioned, someone will invariably pop up, waggle a finger, and say, "But meeting papers aren't refereed!" Implicit in this assertion is the sacrosanct notion that all *journal* papers have been scrupulously examined and passed upon as major contributions to science or technology. The truth is somewhere in between. Most meeting papers are passed upon at least in abstract form by a program committee. Many of them are rigorously evaluated in manuscript form. On the other hand, it is common knowledge that if an author has a paper he wants published in a journal, he can almost always get it published. The paper may be rejected by the first one or two journals to which it is submitted, but if the author is persistent, acceptance will eventually come. This is really common knowledge, but for documentation, see the series of reports prepared by the Johns Hopkins Center for Research in Scientific Communication.[1-5] These reports clearly indicate that almost all papers originally presented at a meeting that are submitted for journal publication will eventually be published.

Once and for all, let's lay aside the notion that there is a qualitative difference in the value of the information in a meeting paper as opposed to that in a journal paper. There is excellence, mediocrity, and, in all probability, incompetence to be found in both media. As a matter of fact, one of the Johns Hopkins Reports[1] points out that if anything, meeting papers are preferred to journal articles.

ADVANTAGES OF MEETING PAPERS FOR CURRENT AWARENESS

As a medium for current awareness, meetings have several advantages over the journals. The most important of these is that information on research and development is made public at meetings an average of more than a year before it is published in the journals. Almost equally important, meetings have a degree of flexibility that cannot be equalled by the journals. Research often diverges from the channels defined by currently accepted disciplines. The first recognition of a new research direction will usually be in the form of a meeting organized to bring together the researchers interested in the field. This first meeting will often be followed by specially organized sessions at larger meetings. It is only after a new field has received real momentum that a new journal can be established to cover it. In the meantime, journal papers in the new area will be widely scattered throughout many journals. It is only in the meeting programs that one will find an overall view of the growing field.

In general, the flexibility of the meeting format enables papers to be presented in meaningful groupings. Papers presented at a single, coherent session at a meeting will often be published in a dozen different journals over a period of several years. Furthermore, an important percentage of the papers presented at meetings never see journal publication. Thus, in both a figurative and a literal sense, many of the papers presented at meetings are lost. This was pointed out by F. Liebesny in a study entitled "Lost Information—Unpublished Conference Papers"[6] and, more recently, in the Johns Hopkins reports. The Johns Hopkins reports very clearly show that a significant percentage of meeting papers, particularly in the engineering applications area, are not published, *and that this lack of publication has little to do with the worth of the papers.*

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Meeting Papers and the Pursuit of Priority

What, then, accounts for the lack of respect that the scientific and technical community has for papers presented at meetings? The answer, I feel, is a simple one. The scientific and technical community views the meeting presentation as merely a way station on the road to journal publication of research results. It is only in journal publication that the scientist feels that he has finally properly recorded his material for posterity and assured himself of credit for his work. This attitude, unfortunately, is self-reinforcing. Too often, little attempt is made by organizers of meetings to make the texts of presented papers available and to see to it that they remain available. To add to the problem, papers presented at meetings are rarely abstracted by the major services. For the most part, the reason given is that meeting papers are ephemeral. Nevertheless, these same meeting papers will in all probability be published in a journal with no substantial change, with publication to take place anywhere from six months to three years after the paper was presented at a meeting. It is only at this point of publication that the author himself feels that he has established priority, and it is at this point, also, that most abstracting journals will, finally, pick up the information. I consider this situation deplorable and counterproductive.

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ORDERING INFORMATION: Extended summaries booklet, Dec 72; papers as journal supplement, Jun 73; proceedings (including discussion), Jun 73: Dr. C. V. S. Ratnam, NRDC of India, 61 Ring Road, Lajpat Nagar III, New Delhi-24, India.

031463. **Heat & mass transfer.** *Sitaramayya DK,* Dhrangadhra Chem Works Sahupuram P.O. Arumuganeri, Tirunelveli Dist. Tamil Nadu.

031464. **A study on performance of shell & tube heat exchangers, used for different duties in crude oil conditioning plant.** *Gogoi NN.,*

031465. **Latest developments in mixing & separation techniques--a review of patent literature.** *Gopalan KR,* L. S. Davar & Co., Calcutta.

031466. **Pilot plant studies with a remotely operated pulsed solvent extraction column.** *Srinivasan N,* Bhabha Atomic Res Cent.

031467. **Stability of chemical reactors & some practical considerations.** *Perlmutter DD,* U Of Pennsylvania, Phila., Pa., USA.

031468. **Simulation studies of activated sludge system including a primary clarifier.** *Mishra PN,* Kansas State U, Manhattan Ks, 66506.

031469. **Optimization of alpha galactosidase production by mould.** *Taguchi H,* Osaka Univ, Suita, Osaka, Jap.

031470. **Studies on dynamics of a continuous microbial reactor.** *Soni VK,* Indian Inst Of Tech, Delhi.

031471. **Studies on immobilized glucose oxidase on deae-cellulose in a reactor.** *Bihari V,* Indian Inst Of Tech, Delhi.

031472. **A dynamic model for oxygen absorption in microbial cell synthesis in St Permenter.** *Mukhopadhyay S,* Indian Inst Of Tech, Delhi.

031473. **Kinetic models for citric acid fermentation by aspergillus niger A--588 NCIM.** *Khan AH,* Indian Inst Of Tech, Delhi.

031474. Si... us

Figure 1. Sample of meeting program from *Current Programs*

Program listing includes full name of meeting, location, inclusive dates, sponsors, ordering information for abstracts and papers and a list of papers presented with first authors and addresses. The six-digit number preceding the paper title is used for indexing

Current Programs—A Remedy for the Underutilization of Meeting Papers

Let's review the facts:

(1) Meeting papers are at least as valuable as those published in the journals.

(2) Meeting papers are presented an average of a year before journal publication.

(3) The first coordinated presentation of a new research direction is almost always made at a meeting.

Considering these points, there is absolutely no question but that meetings are extremely important as carriers of current awareness information. They have been slighted in the past largely because there has been little effort to make this wealth of information available beyond the original context in which the papers have been presented. After all, how can one take advantage of this body of information? You can subscribe to the important journals in your field, but how do you subscribe to the important meetings in a field? Certainly you cannot attend all of the meetings that might be of interest.

I feel that the new service we are offering is the answer. Starting in January of 1973, World Meetings Information Center began publication of *Current Programs. Current Programs* serves the same purpose for scientific and technical meetings that the "contents" type of publications serve for the journals. Each year, *Current Programs* will make available, in convenient form, the programs of approximately 1200 national, international, and regional meetings taking place throughout the world. These will include some 120,000 papers in the areas of life science and medicine, chemistry and the physical sciences, and engineering.

In chemistry, we expect to cover about 25,000 papers to be presented at about 300 meetings. The ACS national and regional meetings will comprise only about 20% of this total. The papers covered will be about equally divided between meetings taking place on this continent and those taking place overseas. *Current Programs* will reproduce the scientific programs of those meetings, giving full titles of the papers presented, along with the name and address of the first author. In addition, complete informa-

...ethanol as	048715
...serotonin in vo... ...ection of **ethanol**	048533
Solubility of **ethanol** in compressed hydrogen	033303
delta 1-THC or delta 9**THC) & ethanol** on	048858
Functional **tolerance** to **ethanol** in rhesus m-	048714
on inhibition of AIB **uptake** by **ethanol** in i-	048539
role of catalase-H2O2 in **ethanol utilization**	047213
turnover changes during **ethanol withdrawal**	040660
supersensitivity during **ethanol withdrawal** in	049975
ETHANOLAMINE	
pathways with **choline, ethanolamine,** & me-	047959
by **cyanohydridoborate & ethanolamine.**	044943
di(2, 4-**dichlorophenyl)-ethanolamine** on lev-	049172
In vivo **incorporation** of 14C-**ethanolamine**	046557
studies of **ethanolamine-phosphate** interacti-	044520
Utilization of -14C of **ethanolamine**-1-14C by	047723
ETHER	
active beta-phenyl-vinyl-**alkyl ethers.**	024731
Photoisomerization of aryl **alkyl ethers.**	042018
derivatives of 1:1 perfluoroalkyl **allyl ether**	032487
Wittig rearrangements of **benzhydryl ethers**	032945
Debenzylation of glucose **benzyl ethers** & b-	032282
Bis ether.	042860
Effects of **decapitation, ether** & pentobarbit-	048436
Rearrangements of silyl **enol ethers.**	032624
Polymerization of phenyl **glycidyl ether.**	024742
methyl **ethers; intramolecular** hydrogen bon-	032288
Ether-linked glycerol lipids: detection & ide-	031680
of 2,4-dichlorophenyl-p-**nitrophenyl ether** on	029263
Preparation of perfluoro-**polygly...** ...ethers by	032496
trihalide compl...	

Figure 2. Sample of subject index from *Quarterly Index to Current Programs*

Primary and secondary indexing terms are shown in bold-face type within the title fragment. Listings are displayed alphabetically by secondary term within the primary category. The six-digit number refers to the full listing in *Current Programs* (see Figure 1)

tion will be provided on any preprints, reprints, proceedings, abstract publication, etc. expected to issue from the meeting (Figure 1). The timeliness of this information will enable the scientist and engineer to correspond with the author of a paper while he is still working in the same area. It will make possible much more meaningful correspondence than could possibly take place a year or more later when the same paper appears in a journal. Furthermore, it will serve as a means of preserving those papers that might otherwise have been lost through nonpublication in a journal. It will make the papers presented at a meeting available in the same context within which they were originally presented, instead of viewing them scattered through a multitude of different journals over a span of several years. Perhaps of equal importance to the information specialist, indexes to *Current Programs* will provide a large measure of bibliographic control over meeting papers. Detailed subject indexes (Figure 2), author indexes, and indexes to the meetings covered by *Current Programs* are being published every three months under the title *Quarterly Index to Current Programs.* At the end of the year, these will be cumulated into a single hard-bound volume, the *Annual Index to Current Programs.*

CONCLUSIONS

Current Programs is much more than a publication listing meeting papers. It is a tool of real importance to the working scientist and engineer; it is a means of moving the scientific and technical community away from its complete reliance on journal publication for evidence of accomplishment, so that the whole area of meetings, with its inherent richness and flexibility, can be more completely and rapidly utilized.

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Environmental Chemistry—An Examination of Available Literature

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Literature sources for environmental chemistry are detailed, such as data services, abstract and index services, periodicals, books, handbooks, and bibliographies.

Interest in the field of environmental quality has increased many fold in the last several years. Problems of water and air pollution and related problems have generated a growing number of academic courses, publications, and background literature relative to the pollution problem. Research in the environmental area is being done in many institutions: governmental, industrial, and academic. Each of these diversified groups makes demands for environmental literature and information in areas of their expertise or specialization.

Environmental literature is particularly difficult to cope with. This difficulty stems from the nature of the field itself. There are three factors here. One, environmental science is a new field. Its boundaries are not yet clearly defined. It was not until December, 1970, that the United States Environmental Protection Agency was established, to centralize in one agency the major Federal pollution control programs, formerly scattered in different departments. Ohio's Environmental Protection Agency is more recent still.

Scattering is the problem with the literature, also. There are no comprehensive bibliographies of books, periodicals, or reports. There are numerous partial bibliographies which must be located one by one. The need for coordination and cooperation in literature identification and exchange was one of the concerns of the United Nation's First Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm last June, and one of the concerns of the United States Environmental Protection Agency's First National Environmental Information symposium, held in