LEATHER INFORMATION SERVICES
— USER REACTION STUDY

A survey was carried out at the Central Leather Research Institute on the user reaction to the abstracting (Current Leather Literature) and indexing (Leather Titles Service) periodicals brought out by the Institute. This paper gives the result of the survey regarding (i) the regularity of use, (ii) purpose, (iii) the sections used most regularly, (iv) the subject arrangement of abstracts, (v) the provision of contents sheets and indexes and the annual cumulation of these and the adequacy of abstracts, (vi) the range of subjects covered, (vii) the range of periodicals covered, (viii) promptness of reporting, and (ix) the format. The results revealed that these services are of great utility to the research workers and to technologists in the industry.

Two Leather Information Services entitled 'Current Leather Literature' (CLL) (Monthly abstracting service) and 'Leather Titles Service' (LTS) (Trimonthly awareness service) were started by the Central Leather Research Institute in July 1968. These two services cover nearly 90% of the world literature on leather and a high percentage of literature published in the penumbral areas of interest to the scientists and technologists in the leather field. These two services were mainly started to serve the research and technological community engaged in the science and technology of leather.

Aim of the survey

The survey was carried out to find out to what extent these two services fulfilled the information needs of the readers and to identify the areas in which improvements could be made.

Methodology

Two separate questionnaires were designed for each of the two services (vide appendices 1 & 2) on the lines of the questionnaire issued by the Society of Analytical Chemistry for their service 'Analytical Abstracts'.

The C.L.L. questionnaires were distributed to 133 individuals and L.T.S. questionnaires were distributed to 133 individuals and L.T.S. questionnaires to 125 individuals. 44 (i.e. 33%) responded in the case of C.L.L. and 39 (i.e. 31%) in the case of L.T.S. The questionnaires were issued in July '69 and were returned by the end of August 1969.

On the basis of the answers obtained an analysis has been made to understand the user reaction and expectations of the clientele.

The report is divided into two parts: the first part deals with C.L.L. and the second with L.T.S. Some of the respondents did not answer all the questions. Nevertheless, the answers received represent a fair cross section of the reaction of the clientele. Perhaps, if more persons had responded to the questionnaire it would have helped considerably in formulating with greater confidence the future programmes for rendering better service with L.T.S. and C.L.L.

Part I - Current leather literature

Regularity of use

91% of the respondents reported that they use the abstracting service regularly while 7% do not.

Purpose of use

27% of the respondents use C.L.L. purely for scanning purposes, whereas 16% use it as a source for literature search and 50% attached equal importance to both scanning and literature searching.
Sections used regularly

The answers indicated that of the 16 sections enumerated, the percentage of use was as follows:

1. Leather Science & Technology 82%
2. Chemistry 61%
3. Science & Technology 57%
4. Biology 50%
5. Chemical Technology 43%
6. Management Science 32%
7. Plastics & Polymers 30%
8. Footwear & Leathergoods 27%
9. Medical & Veterinary Sciences 21%
10. Wool technology 21%
11. Industrial Economics 16%
12. Zoology 16%
13. Agricultural Sciences 14%
14. Botany 14%
15. Public Health Engineering 14%
16. Mathematics & Physics 7%

That 82% use the section devoted to Leather Science and Technology shows that this service is quite useful. A decreased percentage of readership for the other sections is obvious as these are only of penumbral interest to the scientists in the field of Leather Science and Technology.

The following remarks were made regarding the subject headings of the sections enumerated above:

(1) Industrial Economics to be changed to Agricultural Economics: This is not feasible as in this section the economics of production, trade including exports and imports are dealt with.

(2) Medical and veterinary sciences should be brought under Agricultural Sciences: It is generally accepted that Agricultural Sciences and Medical and Veterinary sciences are separate though inter-related disciplines. It is for this reason that these two subjects are dealt with in consecutive sections.

(3) Chemical technology is too broad a heading: While no doubt chemical technology is a broad division, it is pointed out that the entries under this section are subdivided under specific sub-headings such as 'Colour, Dyes, Paint Industry', 'Adhesives' etc. and these subdivisions are shown both in the contents sheet as well as in the mainbody of the abstracts.

(4) Science and Technology is too broad a heading: Such a division has been done deliberately as papers abstracted under this section are of a very general nature and moreover, there are very few abstracts to merit further subdivisions.

(5) The sequence of the subject arrangement should be in the following order: a, b, f, c, d, e, g, h, m, i, j, k, o, p. (vide Q. 3 appendix 1): When examined closely it is seen that there is no filiation in the sequence suggested for the arrangement of the subjects. The present scheme applies the principle of dividing the abstracts basically into two broad groups - applied sciences and fundamental sciences and these are arranged in the decreasing sequence of interest to the Leather Scientists & Technologists for whom these services have been established.

(6) Subject sequence of abstracts: The present arrangement of the abstracts has been found satisfactory by 89%.

Suggestions: The subjects should be arranged either alphabetically or in the following sequence - a, b, h, o, g, c, l, m, p, k, n, e, d, f, i, j (vide Q. 3 appendix 1).

Contents sheets and indexes: 82% find them useful while 9% do not think so. It has been suggested that an annual author index alone is sufficient with a monthly subject index.

Range of subjects covered: The range of subjects covered in this service is found to be satisfactory by a majority of the respondents i.e. 68%. However, one criticism that the depth of the abstracts should be properly maintained is a feeling shared by the Editorial Committee. In this context, however, it may be stated that author summaries from foreign language periodicals are often found to be merely indicative and the difficulties of not having subject oriented language experts to abstract these papers de novo has remained a problem to be solved.

Suggestions: A few suggestions have been received for a wider coverage of subjects like Rubber Technology, Footwear and Leather goods, Biopolymers, Biophysics and Chemical engineering and Process techniques and it is felt by a few that Medical and Veterinary Sciences, Botany, Zoology, Poultry farming, Industrial crops, Genetics, Pure and Applied
Biology, Bacteriology & General Science and Technology should be most selectively abstracted. While the suggestion for greater coverage is accepted the criticism regarding lack of selectivity in the case of the subjects mentioned above is difficult to accept due to the highly multi-disciplinary nature of Leather Science and Technology and the impact that many of these basic sciences have on the fundamental aspects of Leather Science. Here it was seen that Science & Technology (57%) Biology (50%) Management Science (32%) rank high among the sections regularly. While the suggestion that reference to latest books should find a place in this abstracting service is acceptable, the practical difficulty of persuading publishers to cooperate in sending books for reviewing is a formidable task especially in view of the fact that this service has a very small and selective clientele when compared to other international services. The suggestion that project reports, surveys etc. are also to be included is very useful and necessary efforts will be made to implement this.

Range of periodicals covered - Adequacy: Information was sought on whether the number of periodicals covered was adequate. 50% feel that the number of periodicals is adequate while 25% feel that the number of periodicals covered could be larger.

Suggestions: 38 periodicals (as listed in appendix III) have been suggested for being added to the current list of periodicals abstracted numbering about 250. Further, it is felt that project reports and surveys should also be abstracted. Of the periodicals suggested for additional coverage it may be pointed out that a few of them are now being covered like, Journal of Molecular Biology, Biopolymers, Phytochemistry.

Time Gap: Respondents were asked whether they were inconvenienced 'frequently', 'sometimes' or 'rarely', by the time gap in the reporting of latest literature. 41% are not inconvenienced while an equal number find themselves inconvenienced only sometimes by this time gap and 7% frequently feel inconvenienced.

Suggestions: Preferences for the maximum time gap have been indicated as follows: 25% would like the time gap to be less than or equal to 2 months. 9% would like it to be anywhere between 3 to 5 months while 18% would like it to be between one week and one month. The most plausible suggestion is the one which the minority have suggested i.e., 3-5 months gap. This is actually being done now despite the fact that most of the international periodicals come by surface mail which takes nearly 10-12 weeks. Here, it must be mentioned that in 'Bibliographic analytique et signaletique' and in the 'Cuio Polli Materie Conciati' some of the abstracts are published much after they are published in C.L.L. and in fact there are quite a few reference to C.L.L. in these issues.

Adequacy of abstract content: While 84% find the abstracts content adequate 7% would like the abstracts to be more comprehensive and exhaustive.

Suggestions: One suggestion is that the abstracts should be more concise. 4 of the respondents feel that if the translated author abstracts are not adequate they should be enriched. It is felt that grammar and language editing is essential while another feels that the abstracts should be made only for subject specialists. One of the respondents feels that C.L.L. and L.T.S. should be such that together they are able to fulfill the information needs of the various scientists.

Quality of production: Respondents were asked to state whether they found the appearance and finish quite satisfactory. 73% think so against 7% who feel that there is much scope for improvement.

Suggestions: One of the suggestions has been that abstracts should be on one side of the paper and with perforation for tearing off and storage while a few others have suggested that papers of different quality could be utilized (1) for internal circulation and (2) for external distribution. The question of printing the abstracts on one side and perforating each of the abstracts for tear off and storage purposes is tied up with the question of economics of production and as it is, it has become quite a problem to make this service an economically viable project even at the present rate of subscriptions. Unless the number of subscribers increases and the economics of large scale come into play these marginal benefits would not be commercially feasible. As far as the quality of production is concerned constant efforts are being made for higher quality of printing with the limited available resources and the challenge of completing the jobs on
time to make this service as nascent as possible.

Indexes: The present system for C.L.L. is to issue every month an author, subject and periodicals index. It is also proposed to issue cumulative author, subject and periodicals indexes for each volume. Respondents were asked to state whether they found the provision of these indexes useful. 64% of the respondents find them to be so as against 16%. While 18% feel that subject index alone is sufficient, 9% feel that periodicals index alone will suffice.

Suggestion: A suggestion has been made that a comprehensive subject, author and periodicals index be issued annually and that for each month a subject index alone should suffice. Another suggestion has been that comprehensive annual indexes alone will be sufficient, to meet the readers' needs. It is seen that a predominant number of users find the provision of the contents sheet and indexes useful and that most of the users would like to have author, subject and periodicals indexes for each issue, besides cumulation of these indexes. A few suggestions to the effect that an author index alone is sufficient, or a periodical index alone is sufficient, or a subject index alone is sufficient do not reflect the opinion of the majority and when examined closely reveals that the implementation of such suggestions would decrease the ease of use of the readers.

Comparison with other abstracting services: Respondents were asked whether they made use of other abstracting services like Chemical Abstracts, Abstracts of the JALCA and JSLTC and Biological Abstracts.

Chemical Abstracts: 59% refer to Chemical Abstracts to supplement their literature requirements while 22% do not do so.

JALCA: 64% refer to JALCA as against 2% who do not.

JSLTC: 59% refer to JSLTC, 25 do not.

Biological Abstracts - referred by 32%, 43% do not.

They were also asked to state whether they made use of the above services for (1) scanning for information or (2) for literature searches. Only 66% refer to the above services for information purposes. 73% refer to the above for retrospective searches.

22% of the respondents find that the C.L.L. compares very favourably with the above abstracting services especially in Leather Technology. 16% feel that the C.L.L. covers subjects of penumbral interest to leather technologists at lesser depth and as such they have no other recourse but to refer to other abstracting services.

This criticism is valid to the extent that it is not really possible to cover these subjects in great depth as is done in encyclopaedic abstracting services like CA and BA, which have been specifically started to cater to in depth to scientists specialising in various subjects under the broad fields of Chemistry and Biology. C.L.L. is essentially meant for those engaged in Leather Science and Technology. Further it is felt by a few that JALCA covers a larger number of periodicals than C.L.L.

One reader feels that the standard of abstracting is neither technical nor practical and the reading matter is very little. He further comments that there appears to be a lack of continuity in subjects and says that cross references are not provided. Another reader remarks that the time gap of 3 months between the actual publication of the paper and the appearance of its abstracts in the C.L.L. forces one to refer to other abstracting services.

Part II - Leather titles service

Regularity of usage: 82% of the respondents reported that they use the awareness service regularly while 13% do not do so.

Purpose of usage: 85% of the respondents find it a useful source for Current awareness purposes while 10% do not find it to be so.

Sequence of arrangement of matter: The alphabetical arrangement is preferred by 85% of the respondents while 5% would prefer a different arrangement.

Suggestions: 57% approve of the arrangement of matter under broad subject wise sequence. It is felt by a few that an alphabetical index of periodicals covered in the issue is not essential. If implemented this would be a great dis-
LEATHER INFORMATION SERVICES

advantage to the majority of readers who are interested in referring to their preferred group of periodicals and would like to know with minimum effort if these are being covered in the issue.

85% say that the provision of the first author's address is useful for asking reprints but 5% do not think so. 54% find the provision of the first author's address useful for establishing support with the peers in their field for solving problems of common interest. 18% do not find it to be so.

Adequacy of papers reported - 74% find the coverage adequate while 15% find it to be inadequate. 5% of the respondents feel that important papers are not reported regularly; 39% feel that important papers are missed sometimes while an equal percentage do not find any important paper to be missing. The overall consensus regarding the adequacy of coverage of significant papers is satisfactory. It is quite possible that due to vagaries of judgement that a few papers considered important by some are left out. This is bound to happen in a highly selective awareness service.

Range of periodicals covered - Adequacy: The range of periodicals covered is found adequate by 54% of the respondents while 33% find it to be inadequate.

24 periodicals as listed in Appendix IV have been suggested for being covered in the L. T. S. As mentioned earlier under Part I, some of the periodicals suggested for additional coverage are already being scanned. Such as Journal of Molecular Biology, Phytochemistry, Hides & Skins Quarterly, Science etc.

Time gap: It is satisfactory to note that 70% of the respondents stated that they did not think the time gap to be much. 23%, however, felt that there was much delay involved.

Quality of production: 85% find the present format and finish quite satisfactory while one respondent does not think so.

Suggestion: A suggestion has been made that the design of the cover page should be improved upon. Another suggestion has been that a loose leaf binder should be provided to each subscriber for filing loose issues. This, while no doubt useful is a problem of financial viability. This can be thought of if there are a sufficient number of readers demanding this facility.

Comparison with other services: A heartening feature is that very few readers refer to other awareness services and find the L. T. S. adequate to meet their information requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Referred to by</th>
<th>Not Referred to by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chemical Titles</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Contents</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Chemical Papers</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index Chemicus</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biochemical Titles</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28% find the LTS very useful and say that it compares very favourably with other services. The rest have not indicated.

Other suggestions

The following individual suggestions have been received:

1. The LTS should be fortnightly service. LTS should include the announcement of new books. Translated versions of titles in foreign languages should be given. Name of the country of origin should be included immediately after the periodical. LTS should be suspended as a separate service and should be merged with CLL. Format of the publication should be reduced.

Short summary of findings

1. Regularity of usage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLL</th>
<th>LTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Purpose:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLL</th>
<th>LTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both scanning and search</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Areas referred to mostly -
   CLL
   i) Leather Science & Technology
   ii) Chemistry

4. Subject sequence:
   CLL
   89%

5. Range of periodicals covered:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLL</th>
<th>LTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Time Gap:
   | CLL   | LTS |
   | Promptness of reporting | 82% | 70% |

7. Format:
   | CLL   | LTS |
   | Satisfactory | 73% | 85% |

The survey has been of considerable value as it points out clearly the areas in which improvements should be made and will be of great help in the formulation of future editorial policies.

We are grateful to the Director, Central Leather Research Institute, for permitting the survey to be conducted and for publishing the findings.

APPENDIX - I

CURRENT LEATHER LITERATURE

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you regularly go through the "Current Leather Literature"?
   Yes [ ] No [ ]

2. What is the main purpose for which you make use of this abstracting service?
   Scanning [ ] Literature search [ ] Both [ ]

3. The Current Leather Literature carries the following main sections. Please tick the sections most used by you.
   (a) Leather Science and technology
   (b) Footwear and leather goods manufacture
   (c) Wool technology
   (d) Industrial economics
   (e) Plastics and polymers
   (f) Chemical technology (includes dyes, adhesives, oils and fats, surfactants, etc.)
Agricultural sciences (includes animal husbandry, poultry farming, field and industrial crops, fruits etc.)

Public health engineering (includes sewage and industrial wastes treatment)

Management science (includes organisation, planning, personnel management, production planning and control, etc.)

Medical and veterinary sciences

Science and technology in general

Mathematical and physical sciences

Chemistry (includes physical, experimental, coordination, inorganic, organic, proteins, collagen, colouring matters etc.)

Biology (includes Biochemistry, enzymology, biological techniques, microbiology, bacteriology, etc.)

Botany, and

Zoology

4. (a) (i) Do you find the subjects arrangement in the abstracting service satisfactory?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

(ii) If 'No', have you any specific suggestions to make?

(b) (i) A contents sheet, and subject and author indexes are provided for each issue. With the help of these do you find it easy to locate the subjects of your interest covered in this service?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

(ii) If 'No', could you give any specific suggestions.

(c) (i) Do you find the range of subjects covered in the Current Leather Literature

[ ] Adequate  [ ] Inadequate

(ii) If "Inadequate", have you any specific suggestions to improve upon it?
(iii) Please also state if any subjects covered are not relevant and if so specify them.

(d) (i) Do you find that the present range of periodicals abstracted adequately covers your reference requirements.

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

(ii) If "No" please list the periodicals to be further added for being abstracted.

5. (a) Are you very much inconvenienced by the time gap (about 3 months on an average) between the publication of a paper and of the corresponding abstract in the "Current Leather Literature".

[ ] Frequently  [ ] Sometimes  [ ] Rarely

(b) What in your opinion should be the maximum time gap, taking into account the time taken for receipt of the periodicals by surface mail, the processing time required for preparation of abstracts, editing, collation, etc?

6. As far as possible, papers are abstracted "de novo" by our panel of abstractors and edited and in all these cases exhaustive abstracts with necessary subject emphasis and orientation to meet the requirements of those engaged in the leather field is given. However in some cases, the author summaries/abstracts are found to be informative and are published as such to save time in reporting. In the case of foreign language papers with special emphasis on some of the Serbo Croatian languages, the author abstracts are as such reproduced (translated in English wherever possible).

(i) Do you find that the abstracts are adequate and meet your requirements.

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

(ii) If "No", have you any suggestions to offer in this regard.
7. At present the Current Leather Literature is being mimeographed on bond paper elegantly. This we find saves in cost and cuts down production time to the minimum.

(i) Do you like us to continue the present practice or not?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

(ii) If "No", what would you specifically suggest?

8. Each issue of the Current Leather Literature is being provided with comprehensive author, subject and "periodicals covered" indexes. In addition an annual cumulation of the three indexes would be provided.

(i) Do you find the provision of these three indexes with each issue in addition to annual indexes useful?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

(ii) If "No", would you prefer only

[ ] Author index  [ ] Subject index  [ ] Journal index

9. (a) Do you consult any of the following abstracting services, in addition to using the "Current Leather Literature"

(i) Chemical abstracts

[ ] Yes  [ ] No


[ ] Yes  [ ] No

(iii) Abstracts section of the Society of Leather Trades Chemists

[ ] Yes  [ ] No

(iv) Biological Abstracts

[ ] Yes  [ ] No
Do you refer to any or all the above enumerated services for

(i) Scanning new issues for information of your interest

   Yes   No

(ii) Literature searches on particular topics of your interest

   Yes   No

(b) How does your preference for "Current Leather Literature" compare with the other services enumerated above and consulted by you? While answering this question kindly give specific but brief reasons for your choice.

APPENDIX - II

LEATHER TITLES SERVICE (LTS)

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you regularly scan through the LTS?

   Yes   No

2. Do you find the LTS useful as a medium for making you aware of the nascent literature published in the fields of your interest?

   Yes   No

3. (i) Do you like the present arrangement of the matter in the LTS under the headings of each periodical which again are arranged in an alphabetical sequence, according to their letters?

   Yes   No

(ii) We propose to collate the matter in a broad subjectwise sequence according to the periodicals with effect from Vol.2 starting from July 10, 1969. A list of contents (subjectwise) and an index of periodicals covered in the specific issue will also be provided. Do you think this will be helpful to you? Suggest any alternative you have in your mind.

(iii) The addresses of the first authors, failing which, the addresses of the publishers of the periodical are given against each article/paper that has been included. Does this help you in:
LEATHER INFORMATION SERVICES

(a) Asking for reprints
   Yes  No

(b) Getting into a dialogue with the authors on
    any aspect of the problem
   Yes  No

4. (i) Do you find the papers reported in the service adequate?
   Adequate  Inadequate

(ii) From your experience do you find that important papers/items of information are not
     reported regularly?
     No  Sometimes  often

(iii) Do you think that the present range of periodicals covered in this service is
      Adequate  Inadequate

(iv) If "Inadequate", could you please give us the titles of such periodicals you feel should be added?

5. The periodicals covered in this service are scanned and the titles are published within
   about 10 days (at the maximum) from the date of their receipt. Do you find that there is
   too much delay?
   Yes  No

6. At present the "Leather Titles Service" is being mimeographed on bond paper elegantly. This we
   find saves in cost and cuts down time of production to the minimum.

   Do you like us to continue the present practice or not?
   Yes  No

   If "No", what other method would you specifically suggest.
7. (a) Do you consult any of the following current awareness services in addition to the “Leather Titles Service”?

1. Chemical titles
2. Current contents
3. Current chemical papers
4. Index chemicus
5. Biochemical titles index

(b) If “Yes”, how does the “Leather Titles Service” compare with any of the above services? Kindly indicate your observations briefly below.

8. Have you any other specific suggestions/remarks to make?

APPENDIX - III

Periodicals suggested for the C. L. L.
1. Phytochemistry
2. Tetrahedran
3. Tetrahedran letters
4. Journal on radio chemistry
5. Journal of Biochemistry, Japan
6. Agricultural and biological chemistry, Agricultural Chemical Society of Japan
7. Biological Abstracts
8. Biopolymers
9. Biophysics
10. Economic Times
11. Financial Express
12. Eastern Economist
13. Yojana
14. Clinica Chimica Acta
15. Analytical Biochemistry
16. J. Molecular Biology
17. Cell Biology
18. Journal of Ultra structure research
19. Biorheology
20. Science (AAAS)
21. Science Advance
22. Advancement of Science
23. British Medical Bulletin
24. German Medical Bulletin
25. Lancet
26. Journal of Food Technology
27. Food Technology and Packaging
28. Journal of Surgery
29. Planta Medica
30. Justus Liebig Annalen der Chemie
31. Adhesive Age
32. Phytopathology
33. Mycology
34. Contributions of Boyce Thompson Institute
35. Veterinary Bulletin
36. Macromolecular Science
37. J.C.S. Japan
38. Russian Journal of Chemistry
39. Reprint relevant abstracts from other international abstracting services for such periodicals not available with us.

APPENDIX - IV

Periodicals suggested for the L. T. S.
1. Journal of Molecular Biology
2. Cell Biology
3. Journal of Ultrastructure Research
4. Biorheology
5. Journal of Biochemistry (Japan)
6. Agricultural Biological Chemistry (Japan)
7. Phytochemistry
8. Tetrahedran
9. Tetrahedran letters
10. Journal of Madras University
11. Justus Liebig Annalen der Chemie
12. Clinica Chimica Acta
13. Analytical Biochemistry
14. Biopolymers
15. Gerontologie
16. Journal of American Geriatrics Society
17. Journal of Applied Microbiology
18. Biological Abstracts
19. Economic Times
20. Financial Express
21. Yojana
22. Eastern Economist
23. Hides & Skins Quarterly