

DISCUSSION

THE CURRENT LIST OF MEDICAL LITERATURE

ON January 1st, 1941, volume 1, number 1, of the weekly list of current medical literature appeared, and it is potentially by far the most important index of current literature in any scientific field.¹

Of course the usual indexing and abstracting media are subject bibliographies, and are useful primarily as lists of the prior literature in given fields: as, for example, the *Quarterly Cumulative Index Medicus*, or *Biological Abstracts*. But, there has not been, until the *Current List of Medical Literature* appeared, an exhaustive, classified index to the current literature in any scientific field.

Certainly, the obvious value of this index, and the ease and economy with which it is issued, will mean the prompt appearance of similar indexes in other scientific fields where it is important to have complete lists of the articles occurring in the journals promptly upon their appearance. For example, the publishers of the present indexes and abstracts covering the fields of aeronautics, agriculture, anthropology, astronomy, biology, botany, chemistry, engineering, entomology, geography, geology, meteorology, natural history, ornithology and zoology could easily issue valuable indexes to the current literature in these fields by processes similar to that used in the preparation and publication of the weekly medical list. For that matter, what scholar, in whatever field, would not be pleased to see a weekly, or biweekly, list of all important articles appearing in the journals in his sphere of interest?

The *Current List* is planeographed on 24 pages, and is prepared from cards made primarily for the compilation of the *Index Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon General's Office*. The cards, representing about 1,000 titles, are withheld from the regular boxes each week, are classified under the 44 groups listed below, and are copied and the typed slips pasted under the proper headings on large sheets, and photographed for the planeograph process. Thus the cost of issuing the weekly edition of 1,000 copies is only \$75.00.

The present expenses are being borne by the Friends of the Army Medical Library, and somewhat more than 400 subscriptions have been entered. Certainly the other 600 needed subscriptions will be forthcoming promptly, or they might very well be if some important corrections are made in the classification of the titles in the *Current List*. It would be most unfortu-

nate to allow this potentially valuable index to lapse. No library with a responsibility in any of the 44 fields covered by the index can be without it, nor can any physician who reads the current literature in his field.

The subjects covered by the index, or, in certain cases, like biology and chemistry, the medical aspects of the subjects, are as follows:

1. Anatomy, Embryology, Morphology
2. Anthropology, Ethnology
3. Bacteriology, Microbiology
4. Biology
5. Cancerology
6. Cardiology
7. Chemistry
8. Dentistry, Stomatology
9. Dietetics, Metabolism
10. Endocrinology
11. Gastroenterology
12. Genetics, Eugenics
13. Gynecology, Obstetrics
14. Histology, Cytology
15. Homeopathy, Osteopathy, etc.
16. Hospital Publications
17. Hygiene, Public Health, Sanitation
18. Immunology, Infectious Diseases
19. Industrial Medicine, Insurance
20. Jurisprudence, Criminology
21. Medical History
22. Medicine, Clinical, Internal
23. Medicine, Laboratory, Diagnosis
24. Medicine, Military and Naval
25. Medicine, Tropical
26. Medicine, Veterinary
27. Neurology, Neurosurgery
28. Ophthalmology, Optics
29. Otorhinolaryngology and Phoniatry
30. Parasitology, Entomology
31. Pathology (general)
32. Pediatrics, Child Welfare
33. Pharmacology, Pharmacy
34. Physiology
35. Psychiatry, Psychology
36. Radiology
37. Societies, Miscellaneous
38. Statistics
39. Surgery
40. Therapeutics
41. Tuberculosis
42. Urology
43. Venereology, Dermatology
44. Zoology

¹ The *Current List of Medical Literature*. Washington, D. C.: Friends of the Army Medical Library, 1941. Weekly. \$5.00 per year.

The Army Medical Library receives more than 4,000 journals, about 2,200 of which are indexed in the *Current List*. The indexing includes also monographs,

transactions, proceedings, etc., but not books, which are listed separately in six or eight Supplements per year, and are classified in 44 groups which vary only slightly from those in the *Current List*.

The articles in the periodicals or journals are listed as they appear in the respective journals; that is, the journal itself, or the group of articles in a particular number of the journal, is classified under one of the 44 subjects shown above. This is the quick way to handle the classification, and perhaps it was felt that until more funds were available it was the practical way. But it is too rough a grouping to be serviceable. Unless a way is found to classify the individual titles of the articles, and not the titles of the journals, the *Current List* will fail to accomplish its purpose.

For example, one finds, in volume 1, no. 6, column 218, "An improved method of applying insecticidal dusts" under the heading of Anthropology, Ethnology. Obviously it was intended to place this title under Entomology, but the classifier misread the title of the journal in which the article appears. See also on the same page, "Weltkreis und Bevölkerungspolitik" under Bacteriology, Microbiology. "Vitamin K in obstetrics," in the same number of the index, column 255, is classified under Societies, Miscellaneous, whereas one might have expected to find it under the thirteenth class, or group, Gynecology, Obstetrics, etc., etc. Such carelessness reflects badly upon the excellent classification found in the *Index Catalogue*.

For a list of the journals received by the Army Medical Library, see the booklet issued by the library in September, 1940: "Medicofilm Service of the Army Medical Library; its purposes and plan of operation, together with a list of more than 4,000 abbreviated titles of medical periodicals currently received by this library."

One of the most valuable aspects of the *Current List* is the microfilming service which it offers. Persons and libraries will, of course, use their nearest medical library having a microfilm camera and other adequate equipment to secure copies of desired articles in the journals, having found the articles by means of the *Current List*. But, in many cases, it will be desirable to use Medicofilm Service, which will send 35 mm microfilms at the rate of 30 cents for articles of 30 pages or less, and 10 cents for each additional 10 pages or fraction. This, of course, is a low price, as compared with the charges of some of the other microfilm services. Medicofilm Service does not state in the booklet referred to above whether 16 mm films are available.

Unfortunately, Medicofilm Service states (v. 1, Supplement 1) that as a rule it does not reproduce recent books or theses or parts of books, "because this is an infringement of the Copyright Law." . . . This may

or may not be a correct interpretation of the law. Why should it not likewise be an infringement to film copyrighted matter in the journals? Also, microfilm copies do not violate the spirit of the copyright act any more than does an interlibrary loan.

Actually, this problem of copyright and microfilming is unsolved. No one knows the answer, but, meanwhile, the principal microfilm laboratories are proceeding to photograph practically anything desired for scholarly purposes, regardless of date or medium—journal, book, or manuscript. The publishers of the journals and books seem more likely to profit than to suffer by this circulation of selected articles or chapters. One hopes that the Carnegie Corporation's proposed report on this subject, now being prepared by a New York City law firm, will remove any such restraint as that which now limits Medicofilm Service.

The Supplements to the *Current List*, referred to above, are of little value, or, rather, are of much less value than they might be if they were classified lists of important new books in the 44 fields of medicine covered by these Supplements. Indeed, one might well expect the Army Medical Library to produce regular classified and annotated lists of new books in all fields of medicine.

Instead, these Supplements are no more than partial lists of recent accessions by the library, many of which books listed are not even remotely concerned with any aspect of medicine. Only those publications for which author cards have been prepared by the library staff, and only those theses which contain 50 or more pages, are listed. Also, the books and theses may be old or new. Their recent accession is the principal reason, the criterion, for entering them in the list—information which can be of very little interest or usefulness to any one.

But, in their own ingenious way, the friends of the Army Medical Library have stumbled upon the most useful kind of index in the field—a weekly classified list of all titles in the principal medical journals of the world; an index published at less than 10 cents per copy. Except for its weird cataloguing, or classifying—which can easily be corrected, the *Current List* is unique and invaluable, and ought to be followed, as said above, by numerous other similar indexes in the sundry fields of science, and perhaps in other fields of current literature; as the social sciences and the humanities, for example.

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YOUNG SAILFISH

A STUDY of young Pacific sailfish, *Istiophorus greyi*, has been completed, dealing with individuals which I took alive on the Eastern Pacific Zaca Expedition (1937–1938) of the New York Zoological Society.