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Bingo

Readers of journals of applied science are becoming increasingly accustomed to finding a card or coupon on which they are invited to indicate the advertised or described products and services about which they want more information. These cards are known in the advertising world as "bingo cards." *Science* hesitated for a long time to enter the bingo game, but finally decided to play. Each week on one of the back pages is an inquiry form on which the reader can check off the advertised products or the items described in the new equipment section on which he would like more information.

Science hesitated because there are disadvantages as well as advantages to the bingo game. The advantage to the reader is that it gives him a quick and easy method to indicate the things about which he would like to learn more. He can do it while he is reading, and does not need to remember sometime later to dictate a letter, or to write one himself. If there are several items in the same issue that interest him, one coupon takes care of inquiries about all. From the advertiser's standpoint there is also an advantage: he gets a quick and easy index of the amount of interest in the product he is advertising.

The principal objection is on the advertiser's side rather than the reader's, but some advertisers fail to recognize it. The bingo card invites a more casual, less sincerely interested inquiry than is received if an individual letter must be written. Advertisers are always interested in knowing the nature as well as the size of the circulation of a magazine in which they are contemplating placing an advertisement. Yet some of these same advertisers are content to measure the effectiveness of an ad by the total number of inquiries, regardless of their nature or quality. Perhaps, having already decided to place an ad in a particular magazine, it is advantageous to secure as many inquiries as possible; as a minimum, the list of prospects is increased. But some advertisers are more discriminating. Those who keep good count of all types of inquiries—individual letters as well as coupons—and who appraise their ads in terms of actual sales frequently report that, while *Science* produces a comparatively small number of inquiries, the ones that are received are of high quality and result in substantial sales volume. The less discriminating method of simply counting the total number of inquiries gives less credit to *Science* and less help to the advertiser.

Advertising is useful to the reader as well as to the advertiser. Many advertisements contain information that is of value to a goodly number of readers. There is also a financial benefit to the readers, for the advertisers share with them the cost of publishing the magazine. The cost this year of producing and sending 52 issues of *Science* to each subscriber will amount to about \$11. Annual dues, which include a subscription to *Science*, are \$8.50. If it were not for the fact that the advertisers will provide approximately \$4 toward the cost for each member, dues would have to be higher.

Every time an ad in *Science* leads to an inquiry or a sale it is advantageous to the readers to have the journal receive the credit. Whether he likes bingo cards or not, the reader can help himself by making sure that *Science* does get the credit. If he prefers to write a letter, he can help both himself and the advertiser by giving the "as advertised in *Science*" kind of identification. If he prefers to play the bingo game, the Readers Service Form (the proper name for the form on page 378) is there for his convenience.

—D.W.