Current Contents Online: A New Way of Keeping Up to Date

If you are feeling overwhelmed by the information explosion, there is a new tool available to keep abreast with the latest articles in your field of study. Current Contents with Abstracts is now available to you from any networked workstation. The Current Contents information service lists articles taken from the tables of contents of more than 2000 scientific and technical journals. Previously available only in print form, the Current Contents database is now accessible online as a feature of RiceInfo, Rice University’s campus wide information system.

The Current Contents service is composed of a variety of databases published by the Institute for Scientific Information on different fields of study. The broad subject areas covered by the database accessible on RiceInfo include engineering, physics, chemistry, earth sciences, biology, environmental science, and other applied sciences. Current Contents with Abstracts is updated weekly with more than 7000 new citations. Additional coverage of the arts, humanities, and social sciences is available through the print versions of Current Contents in Fondren Library.

How Current Contents Benefits the Researcher

The sheer number of scientific journals makes it difficult to stay informed with any field of research on a continuing basis. Since Current Contents is updated every week and includes the table of contents information for journals less than a month old, a quick check of the database enables researchers to find the most recently published articles in their areas of interest.

The database can be searched by keyword, phrase, or combinations of keywords. The citations and abstracts found in the database may be saved to file or printed.

This “snapshot” of the latest publications on any subject automates much of the tedious work required to canvas a new topic. The abstracts promote the researcher’s ability to identify the articles most useful in supporting research.

The information is accessible when and where needed by the faculty member or student. Current Contents with Abstracts is available round-the-clock. Researchers do not need to spend time walking from lab or office to Fondren.

(continue p. 2)
Library in order to access the desired information.

Accessing Current Contents with RiceInfo

*Current Contents with Abstracts* is one of the options available in RiceInfo. RiceInfo is accessible from VM/CMS accounts and many UNIX accounts simply by typing "riceinfo." (Some of the UNIX systems do not recognize the "riceinfo" command—type "gopher" instead.)

Background

*RiceInfo* and the Current Contents database represent experiments in making information resources accessible across the campus.

The Current Contents database project was designed in the Fall of 1992 and brought online in January 1993. The present plan is to retain Current Contents data for six months to a year (depending on available disk space on the host computer) and then delete older citations in order to keep the database current and reasonably sized.

"...introduction of network access to journal indexes [is] the first step toward 'the library of the future'"

Fast and Effective

Rice faculty and students, interviewed about access to *Current Contents with Abstracts* over the campus network, express enthusiasm for the system. Drs. George Phillips (Biochemistry) and Robert Curl (Chemistry) both describe the introduction of network access to journal indexes as the first step toward "the library of the future."

Neither faculty member can spare time from the lab or classroom for frequent visits to Fondren Library to review the journal literature in his field of research. *Current Contents with Abstracts* through RiceInfo provides access to this information when and where it is needed.

Colleagues in Phillips' research group use the system routinely. Phillips brings pertinent citations to the attention of his graduate students and, returning to his office, often finds "printouts of relevant citations left on my desk by my students."

This ready access to recent publications in a field promotes collaborative research efforts and promotes awareness of the inter-related research occurring at Rice.

Curl has sent a memo to all his department members encouraging them to use the system.

Integrated Information System

Both Phillips and Curl commented on the utility of *Current Contents with Abstracts* in association with other RiceInfo resources. The online catalog for Fondren Library is easily accessed through RiceInfo, for example, allowing researchers to determine local ownership of the articles abstracted in the Current Contents database.
The Ricelnfo implementation group is developing simple mechanisms to allow document delivery requests of materials found in Current Contents with Abstracts.

Graduate student Michael McMahon (Electrical and Computer Engineering) points out the value of the combined Current Contents database when working in such interdisciplinary areas as bioengineering. The inclusion of abstracts, in particular, benefits his ability to scan the literature of several disciplines to locate material of value to his research.

McMahon compares Current Contents with Abstracts on Ricelnfo favorably against the TexSearch system available through Baylor—with the definite advantage of easy and immediate access.

Rice researchers are accessing Current Contents with Abstracts on Ricelnfo using a variety of equipment on campus. The faculty and students interviewed here are using Unix and Macintosh (with the TurboGopher software that is available free from the Mudd Consulting Center), and find the experimental software approach meets their needs for information.

Dr. Michael Gustin (Biochemistry) has accessed the indexes through his VM/CMS account and transferred results to UNIX and personal computer applications for later use. Each of the researchers recognizes the early-development stage of electronic access to Current Contents with Abstracts and expressed ideas for additional ways of searching and using the abstracts.

Tell Us What You Think

Fondren Library is currently planning for an expanded portfolio of electronic journal indexes. This portfolio of journal indexes will likely include indexes to the literature of the humanities and social sciences, and will provide support for the needs of undergraduate students as well.

The interface is being refined on an ongoing basis and we would like your feedback on ways it could be improved.

Additional ideas for upgrading the utility of the Current Contents database are under consideration, and will be implemented in stages. One suggestion that has been made, for example, is to separate the data by week or by month in order to facilitate searching the database by specified period.

The Ricelnfo development group will use your feedback to further enhance the utility of Current Contents with Abstracts and to improve access to additional journal indexes planned for the beginning of the Fall 1993 semester.

For technical questions on accessing Current Contents call the Mudd Consulting Center at 527-4983. For help with searching or other information about the Current Contents database call Fondren Reference at 285-5113.

Martin Halbert
Head of Networked Systems
halbert@ricevm1.rice.edu

and

Kerry Keck
Coordinator of Collection Development & Electronic Information Resources
keckker@ricevm1.rice.edu

Sample Record from Current Contents with Abstracts on RiceInfo

YEAST 93 : STRATFORD M : YEAST FLOCCULATION - FLOCCULATION ONSET AND RECEPTOR AVAILABILITY
Authors: STRATFORD M
Title: YEAST FLOCCULATION - FLOCCULATION ONSET AND RECEPTOR AVAILABILITY
Journal: YEAST
Volume: 0009
Issue: 1
Pages: 00085-00094
Date: JAN 93
ISSN: 0749-503X
Document type: ARTICLE
Reference Count: 31
Genuine Article Number: KL282

Abstract: Flocculent strains of brewing yeast brew and ferment as single cell and flocculate in the stationary phase of growth. The switch from single-celled yeast growth to multi-celled aggregation, flocculation onset, is of....

Keywords Plus (TM): SACCHAROMYCES-CEREVISIAE, CELL-WALL, POLYSACCHARIDE, POROSITY, MANNANS, FLO

Author's Keywords: YEAST, FLOCCULATION, ONSET, RECEPTORS, COFLOCCULATION, CONCANAVALIN-A

Address for reprints: AFRC, INST FOOD RES, NORWICH LAB, NORWICH RES PK / NORWICH NR4 7UA / NORFOLK / ENGLAND
Current Contents with Abstracts on RiceInfo

Database Description

Current Contents with Abstracts, published by the Institute for Scientific Information, lists the tables of contents from over 2,000 scientific and technical journals. RiceInfo offers access to three editions of Current Contents: Agriculture, Biology & Environmental Sciences; Engineering, Technology & Applied Sciences; and Physical, Chemical & Earth Sciences. The database is updated weekly. The lag time between journal publication and availability on RiceInfo is several weeks to a month.

Accessing Current Contents

To search Current Contents with Abstracts, connect to RiceInfo and make the following menu selections:
- select library services.
- select Current Contents bibliographic search.
- select search Current Contents.

After making the final selection, the statement enter keyword(s) will appear at the top of your screen.

To learn about the database select about Current Contents.

Searching Current Contents

Keyword Searching

To search a one-word topic, type that word in the space provided after the statement enter keyword(s). To search phrases or topics which combine several concepts, the Boolean operators OR, AND, NOT and ADJ must be used.

Boolean operators MUST BE CAPITALIZED when searching Current Contents with Abstracts on RiceInfo. Subject terms may be entered in either upper or lower case.

Use OR to broaden a search.
EXAMPLE: disposal OR cleanup
This will retrieve citations that use either term “disposal” or “cleanup”.

Also, use OR to search for variant spellings or word forms.
EXAMPLES: color OR colour
dump OR dumps OR dumping

Use AND to combine several concepts or narrow the search.
EXAMPLE: remediation AND groundwater
This will retrieve only those citations which use both terms “remediation” and “groundwater”.

Use ADJ to search for a phrase. Words in records retrieved must appear together and in the same order typed.
EXAMPLE: hazardous ADJ waste

Use NOT to exclude elements from a search.
EXAMPLE: disposal NOT cleanup
This will retrieve citations with the word “disposal” but not the word “cleanup”.
WARNING: articles that use both words, disposal and cleanup, will be lost. Use “NOT” sparingly.
## Searching Current Contents  cont'd

### Complex keyword searches
Different Boolean operators can be combined in complex searches. Parentheses are used to indicate what part of the search statement should be executed first.

**EXAMPLE:**  
(disposal OR cleanup) AND sludge  
Articles will be retrieved when the term sludge appears in the same document with either “disposal” or “cleanup”.

**EXAMPLE:**  
remediation AND (hazardous ADJ waste)  
Articles with the word “remediation” and the phrase “hazardous waste” will be retrieved.

### Journal title searches
To get a list of articles that have appeared in a specific journal, do a search for the ISSN number of that journal. All references include this number.

**EXAMPLE:**  
0304-3894  
Articles from the *Journal of Hazardous Materials* will be listed.

### Searches that limit by author
To locate an article on a topic by a specific author, combine the author’s last name with a subject keyword.

**EXAMPLE:**  
hoffman AND groundwater

### Searches that limit by date
To limit your retrieval set to a month or months, combine the 3-letter abbreviation for the month with your other search terms.

**EXAMPLE:**  
groundwater AND mar  
Articles dealing with groundwater and published in March issues of journals will be retrieved.

## Locating Articles
To find out if Fondren Library has a journal, search LIBRIS on RiceInfo. Search by journal title using the full title, not the abbreviation used by *Current Contents with Abstracts*. For materials not held by Fondren Library, contact the Interlibrary Loan department at ext. 2284 or order reprints from the addresses at the end of *Current Contents with Abstracts* references.

## Getting Help
For technical questions call the Mudd Consulting Center at 527-4983. For help with searching or information on the *Current Contents with Abstracts* database call Fondren Reference at 285-5113.
Did You Know...

Approximately one-third of the books added to Fondren Library are acquired through approval plans (whereby categories of material are sent to be reviewed before purchase).

Fondren Library has begun tape-loading records for North American approval books. The tapes arrive weeks in advance of the books. You may now find these titles in LIBRIS a month earlier than previously.

Rice faculty and students may request rush processing of any book that has a "temporary location number" in the LIBRIS record. Books that have arrived but are not yet cataloged should be available in a day or two; approval books will be rush processed upon arrival.

Rice University faculty and students have access via the Internet to the Blackwell North America database of recent North American imprints. The database indicates whether a book will be sent to Fondren Library and may be searched by subject.

Inquire at Reference (x5119) for passwords.

A vending machine, containing a variety of personal and office supplies, is now available near the Reference Desk.

Fondren Library has recently joined the Research Libraries Group. Membership provides enhanced access to the collections of other RLG libraries.

Obtaining Articles From Current Contents

Your electronic search of Current Contents with Abstracts is complete. You have identified an article you would like to read. At this point several options exist for obtaining a paper copy of that article.

Does Fondren Library Have This?

A menu item exists within RiceInfo that allows you to search LIBRIS to determine if Fondren Library owns the particular journal or journals in which you are interested. To search LIBRIS, go back to the main menu for RiceInfo. Choose Library Services again. At the next screen choose LIBRIS. At this point simply do a title search of the catalog using your journal titles.

You will want to check the library holdings of each journal to be certain the library owns the particular issue or issues you need. Holdings of journals are checked by typing "ho".

Articles Delivered to Your Desk

Faculty and administrators may use the services of Fondren Express, Fondren Library's document delivery service, to obtain copies of material located through a Current Contents with Abstracts search. Fondren Express retrieves material located in Fondren Library and elsewhere, and delivers it to your office. A small fee is charged for this service.

You may send your request through campus mail, drop it off in Fondren Library, fax it to Fondren Express (523-4117), use the Fondren Express request form through RiceInfo, or send an electronic mail message directly to the Fondren Express staff (express@ricevm1.rice.edu).

The normal turnaround time for delivery of material is two working days from the time of receipt of the request. More information concerning the services of Fondren Express may be obtained by speaking with the Fondren Express staff at campus extension 2869.

When Fondren Library Doesn't Own It

In those instances where Fondren Library does not own the material you located through your Current Contents with Abstracts search, the staff of the Interlibrary Loan department is available to help both faculty and graduate students obtain copies of journal articles and books. Interlibrary Loan retrieves material not owned by Fondren Library at no charge. Materials are then available for pick up in the Interlibrary Loan department.

Interlibrary loan requests are made in person in Room B38 of Fondren Library, or electronically using the interlibrary loan request form available through RiceInfo. A commercial rapid delivery service has been added to the Interlibrary Loan resources and is expected to speed delivery of interlibrary loan requests.

The type of resources available to Rice scholars as well as the way these resources are accessed will continue to expand. Reference librarians at Fondren Library are eager and ready to help you navigate the sometimes confusing world of information retrieval.

Barbara Stewart
Government Publications/Reference
stewart@ricevm1.rice.edu
RiceInfo Brings the World to Your Desktop

Have you needed to find out how late the Circulation Desk was open on a Sunday night but couldn’t remember what telephone number to call? Now there is a way to find out the library’s telephone number and hours via your computer. It’s as simple as logging into RiceInfo.

RiceInfo is the University’s campus wide information system (CWIS), set up as a way for computer users to access information about Rice quickly and easily. Instead of having to hunt for the campus directory or a course schedule, users can call up RiceInfo and have immediate access to the information.

What’s Available?

Resources on RiceInfo include:
- Rice Campus Directory
- GSA Yellow Pages
- course schedules
- University and departmental policies
- and the library’s online catalog (LIBRIS) to name a few. Since RiceInfo is rather new, users can expect to see expanded offerings available soon.

While it’s helpful to Rice users to have LIBRIS easily accessible, it’s not the only library catalog available on RiceInfo. Now you can find out what the University of Houston, Texas A&M, Yale and other libraries have by simply accessing RiceInfo and checking out the Library Services menu.

Other off-campus information is available on RiceInfo. You can access Current Contents (discussed in this issue), electronic books and journals, and weather information through RiceInfo.

How Do I Use It?

To use RiceInfo, the user must connect to the campus network. Micro-computer users may need to obtain free gopher client software from the Rice Consulting Center. RiceInfo is also available on the microcomputing lab menus and, very soon, through any LIBRIS terminal in Fondren Library.

Once you have logged onto your Ownnet or VM account and typed RiceInfo (or gopher) at the prompt, you select an item on the first menu, hit the enter key, and you’re on your way.

Barbara Halbert
bsh@ricevm1.rice.edu
Assistant to the Archivist

Wired Historians

RiceInfo and Other Network Services Invaluable to Two Rice Faculty Members

“I’ve been surfing through the libraries at the U.T. Library, the A&M Library, and the Harvard Library,” says Dr. Albert Van Helden. He’s been using RiceInfo, Rice University’s CWIS system (see article above). Van Helden and his colleague, Dr. Paula Sanders, recently shared their thoughts on information technology developments at Rice.

Searching Remote Libraries

Van Helden and Sanders first learned about RiceInfo from a Rice Thresher article earlier this year. Sanders was immediately hooked: LIBRIS and other library catalogs could be searched on the system.

Van Helden was not sure that this new service would be useful to him until a library staff member gave him a quick demonstration. He then started using it to search a variety of research libraries. He is currently reviewing the page proofs for a book and finds the ability to search other library catalogs extremely useful, especially for checking the accuracy of citations for items that are not in LIBRIS.

Sanders searches remote library catalogs on RiceInfo in order to learn about new publications in her field. When she finds materials of interest she can request them through the Fondren Library Interlibrary Loan department.

Networking on the Network

Both historians make use of network technology to stay in touch with their colleagues around the world. Van Helden uses electronic mail whenever he’s working on a project with somebody else.

“I routinely exchange messages with people in Australia and Europe,” he said.

Sanders uses electronic mail in planning conferences and co-authoring publications. She is planning a seminar to be held at Princeton University and finds it essential that all participants communicate electronically. She said, “I love technology because in a field like mine, medieval Islamic history, if you’re outside of the Northeast you can feel very isolated. I don’t have anybody here working on what I’m doing, and if I have a question about a piece of text, I send a message off and I have an answer the same day.”

When compiling an analytical index to a collection of manuscripts, many of which are located at Cambridge University, Sanders was able to receive information from a curator there within several hours of making a request.

Computer networks are aiding scholarship in a growing number of ways.
Wired Historians cont'd

According to Van Helden, the Guide to the History of Science now includes the e-mail addresses of scholars and monthly updates can be obtained electronically. Electronic preprint exchanges are becoming increasingly important, especially in the sciences, where the traditional modes of preprint publication and dissemination are now considered too slow.

Coming Attractions

Sanders and Van Helden were looking forward to several services that have recently been added to RiceInfo, including interlibrary loan forms for requesting materials online. They also eagerly anticipate the networking of all offices at Rice, increasing the ease of communicating with colleagues in other departments.

Jane Segal
Bibliographic Instruction Librarian
segal@ricevm1.rice.edu

Sanders and Van Helden discuss the impact of technology on humanities research

Fondren Library
Rice University
P.O. Box 1892
Houston, TX 77251-1892

ELIZABETH BABER
DATABASE MANAGEMENT