

livery of state agricultural publications by the National Agricultural Library and the state land-grant university libraries, such access is now a reality.

Author's note: No copyright is claimed on this article, which the author wrote as a part of her offi-

cial duties as an employee of the United States Government. The author would like to thank Idalia Acosta, Martha Hood, and Karl Schneider of NAL for their assistance in providing statistical data as background for this paper. ■■

Magazine Index Plus or Academic Index?

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A comparison of two major INFOTRAC databases.

For small university and college libraries with limited budgets, innovative technology is often prohibitively expensive, and choosing the best available database to fill the needs of the community often brings a dilemma. Aware of this problem, Information Access Company (IAC) offered an attractive alternative to institutions that could not afford the purchase of its INFOTRAC database: it marketed a smaller database, INFOTRAC II, which indexed about one-third of the journals contained in INFOTRAC and which IAC named *Magazine Index Plus*. Like its parent counterpart, *Magazine Index Plus* operates on a CD-ROM. The laser disk is updated monthly, and the journals are indexed as far back as 1983. It also covers the last 90 days of the *New York Times*. However, one of the major drawbacks of this IAC product for any academic library is the lack of scholarly titles. The majority of the journals indexed can be found in *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*. If this type of information can be useful to the first-year student getting acquainted with the research process, it

was its limitations for the senior, the honors student and even more so for graduates who will not find bibliographic citations to *People Weekly*, *Audio* or *Ms* appreciated by their thesis advisers. To address this need, the manufacturer is now offering a new database, *Academic Index*.

A twelve-month subscription to *Academic Index* or *Magazine Index Plus* costs \$4,000 a year.

This study is an attempt to examine both databases and determine which one is the better in an academic environment.

Methodology

First, the coverage of the journals included in *Magazine Index Plus* and *Academic Index* was closely examined.

Then, using a list of topics most frequently researched at the University of Indianapolis Library, 25 subjects were selected and searched in the February 1988 update of each database. The selection was done in such a way as to represent broad classi-

TABLE 1.

Number of citations found in each database for a particular topic, and the amount common to both.

TOPICS	MAGAZINE INDEX		ACADEMIC INDEX		CITATIONS COMMON TO BOTH INDEXES
	TOTAL CITATIONS	CITATIONS NOT IN ACADEMIC INDEX	TOTAL CITATIONS	CITATIONS NOT IN MAGAZINE INDEX	
Acid Rain (All Sub-headings)	213	51	179	17	162
AIDS (Disease)—Care and Treatment	62	6	61	5	56
—History	4	—	8	4	4
—Politics and Government	10	2	14	6	8
Apartheid—Economic Conditions	22	3	24	5	19
—Foreign and Public Opinions	31	6	31	6	25
—History	5	1	5	1	4
—International Aspects	7	—	11	4	7
—Moral and Religious Aspects	7	2	7	2	5
—Political Aspects	28	1	29	2	27
Divorce (All Sub-headings)	33	19	16	2	14
Feminism and Literature—History and Criticism	8	2	10	4	6
Fiction—Technique	99	94	6	1	5
Gifted Children—Education	26	10	25	9	16
—Psychology	6	3	8	5	3
—Research	1	—	4	3	1
Market Surveys (All Sub-headings)	36	30	31	25	6
National Socialism (All Sub-headings)	43	6	54	17	37
Organizational Behavior (All Sub-headings)	36	23	50	37	13
Organizational Change (All Sub-headings)	19	17	13	11	2
Organizational Effectiveness—Analysis	8	5	7	4	3
—Technique	9	7	2	—	2
School Discipline (All Sub-headings)	28	7	30	9	21
Women in Advertising (All Sub-headings)	8	4	24	20	4
Women in the Advertising Industry (All Sub-headings)	2	1	6	5	1
TOTAL	751	300	655	204	451

fications likely to be indexed in the new journals. Some topics—such as acid rain, divorce, school discipline, and market surveys—were searched in their entirety. Others were only searched under certain subclassifications. The main objective of the search was to find out 1) the amount of overlap and 2) the reason for certain large imbalances.

In a third phase the bibliographic citations were analyzed for discrepancies. It should be noted that since *Academic Index* includes some journals beginning with 1985 and others beginning with 1987, only the references dating from 1985 and found in *Magazine Index Plus* have been accounted for.

Coverage

Magazine Index Plus covers 405 journals beginning in January 1983 as well as the last 90 days of the *New York Times*. *Academic Index* covers 388 journals: 192 (49.5%) start coverage in 1987, and 196 (50.5%) start coverage in 1985. The *New York Times* is covered for the past six months.

However, it is interesting to note that 171 journals (44.1%) overlap with *Magazine Index Plus* (although the coverage is not as retrospective). Among the 219 new journals, only 10 were not covered by any major paper indexes. All the others are indexed in at least one of the following sources: 70 (32.0%) are indexed in *Humanities Index*, 67 (30.6%) in *Social Sciences Index*, 31 (14.2%) in *Education Index*, 17 (7.8%) in *Business Periodicals Index*, 17 (7.8%) in *Current Contents*, 5 in *PAIS*, 3 in *Historical Abstracts*, 3 in *Book Review Digest*, 2 in *Biology and Agriculture Index*, 2 in *Psychological Abstracts*, 1 in *CINAHL*, 1 in *Consumer Index*, and 1 in *Work Related Abstracts*.

From a closer analysis of the bibliographic citations, three points are noteworthy: the amount of citations in each database, their sources, and the reliability of the indexing.

From the table below, the search of the 25 topics provided a total of 1,406 citations: 751 citations were found in *Magazine Index Plus* and 655 in *Academic Index*. A total of 35.5% were duplicates, which comes as no surprise since we already know that 44.1% of the titles overlap in each database. Nearly 40% of the citations in *Magazine Index Plus* were not in *Academic Index*, and 31.1% of the citations in *Academic Index* were not in *Magazine Index Plus*. *Academic Index* seems to offer fewer citations.

If we examine the citations for Fiction—Technique, 99 were found in *Magazine Index Plus*, while only 6 were in *Academic Index*. However, 94 of those references came from *Writer's Digest* and *Writer*, which are not included in *Academic Index*. A similar imbalance occurs for Acid Rain. Seventeen of the 51 original citations in *Magazine Index Plus* come from either *Electrical World* or *American Forests*, which have also been excluded from *Academic Index*. A last example concerns the topic of Divorce. Most of the references come from *Red-*

book, *Harper's*, *Chatelaine*, and *U.S. Catholic*, all of which have been excluded from *Academic Index*. So we can see that some highly specialized journals have been dropped in *Academic Index* in favor of others not so relevant to the topic searched. However, besides those exceptions, *Academic Index* contains more original references for 13 topics, fewer references for five and the same number for three, which is not so bad if one takes into consideration the fact that many journals in *Academic Index* are covered only since 1987.

Finally, a comparison between the references included in the databases and the advertised coverage of the journals exposes a weakness inherent to all indexing services: lack of reliability. Under many topics, some citations appear in one database, but not in both as should be the case according to the list of journals to be included in both databases.

Take for example the topic of National Socialism. Two citations appeared in *Academic Index* but not in *Magazine Index Plus*, although one had been led to assume coverage of these journals in both databases. The first one referred to an article in *Time* (May 26, 1986) under the "Collectibles" sub-heading, and the second one to an article from *Life* (November 1986) under the "Conferences and Congresses" sub-heading. The reverse is also true. Under the same topic, two citations were included in *Magazine Index Plus* but not in *Academic Index*. The first article was by Michael R. Marcus in *American Scholar*, vol.57 (Winter 1988). The second one, on "Village Life in Nazi Germany" in *History Today*, vol.35 (November 1985), is even more puzzling since another article from the same issue has been included. In summary, four citations under National Socialism which should have been duplicated were not.

A last instance relates to the topic of Acid Rain. Although *Environment* should be carried by both databases, three citations dated 1987 are missing from *Academic Index*. One can assume that the lack of inclusion of a very recent article might be corrected by the next update. However, what can one think of the less recent missing references?

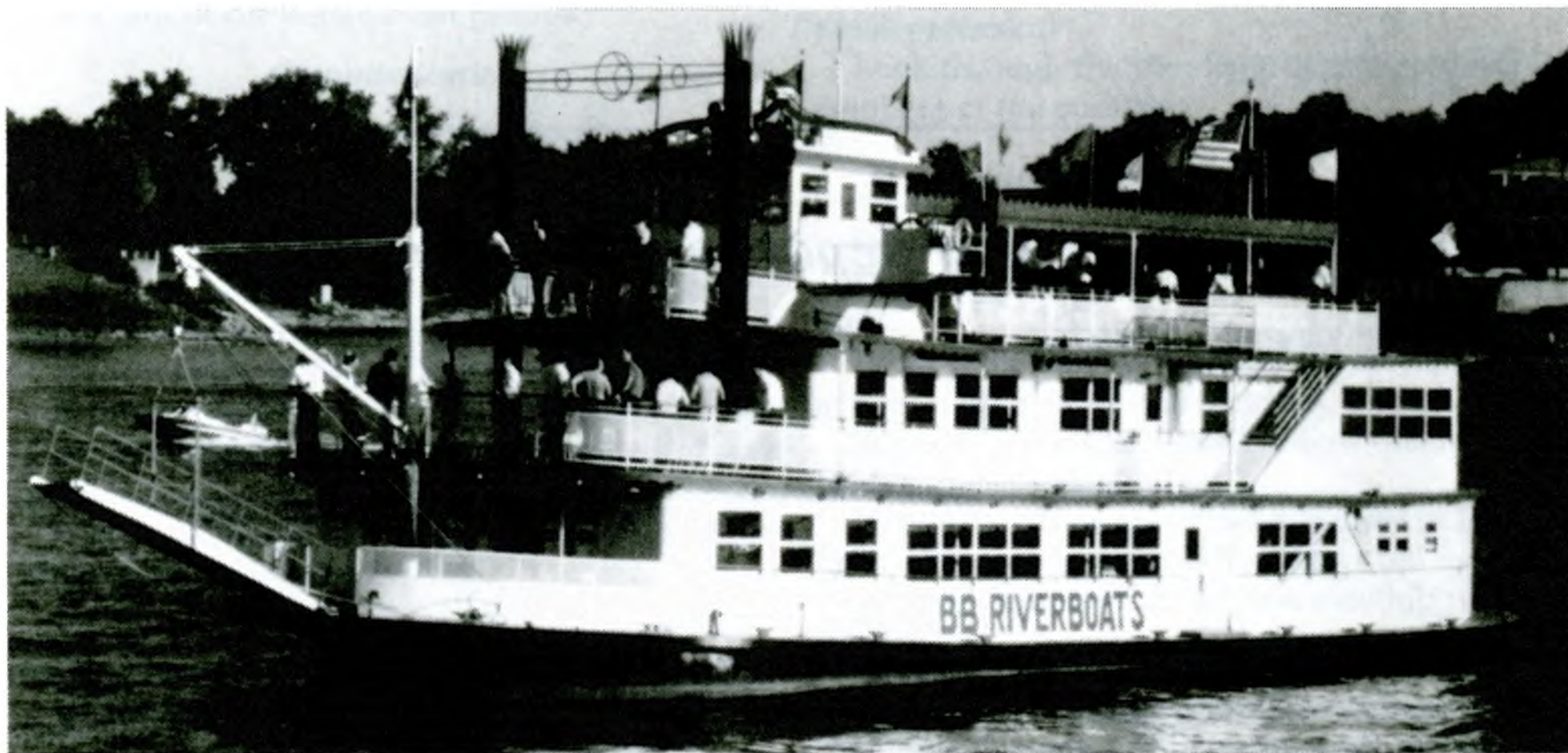
In view of the idiosyncrasies of each database, the question remains: which one is better for an academic environment? It is obvious that *Magazine Index Plus* is the winner in quantity. Is it also a winner in quality? The list of journals covered in *Academic Index* certainly proves it is the winner in that capacity. However, there is room for improvement in the selection of journals for *Academic Index*. Should *People Weekly*, *McLean's*, *Ms*, *Car and Driver*, to cite only a few, be considered scholarly in content? Should *Electrical World*, *Design News*, *American Forests*, *Business Horizons*, *Sales and Marketing News* be excluded although they contribute to the majority of citations for Acid Rain, Organizational Behavior, and Market Surveys in *Magazine Index Plus*? Since a major criterion of quality in research is peer review, should *Academic*

Index expand its coverage of refereed journals and restrict its coverage of non-refereed journals? Does *Academic Index* conform to Richard Carney's ideal when, in his article on INFOTRAC, he comments: "Whether a new product addresses a specific need and meets that need should be paramount in the evaluation process."¹ And since he believes that "no

¹Richard D. Carney, "Infotrac vs. the Founding of Technology and its Applications," *Database*, June 1986, p. 56.

single tool is capable of fulfilling all the needs of a reference center" and that "the question becomes one of evaluating the available tools and the impact each might have on the overall demands placed upon the reference center,"² why not refine the coverage of *Academic Index* and realize its potential as a better reference tool in an academic environment? ■■

²Carney, p. 58.



Cincinnati '89

Here are two additional ways to see and enjoy Cincinnati while at the ACRL National Conference in April 1989: one is a short bus tour during the day, the other is a boat ride on the Ohio River in the evening. Detailed information for both trips will be mailed to you as part of your registration packet in the late fall, so you may sign up for one or both in advance of the actual conference. Both are planned for during the conference, so even if you can't come early or stay over afterwards, you'll still have an opportunity to experience Cincinnati beyond its lovely downtown hotels, fabulous restaurant variety and shopping, shopping, shopping!

The bus trip is scheduled for Wednesday, April 5, from 9:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. The cost is \$20.00, which includes lunch. This will be an easy and convenient way to see some of the highlights of the Cincinnati and northern Kentucky area. Boarding downtown near conference hotels, you'll see and hear about Fountain Square and many other downtown buildings and landmarks, including Music Hall and the Union Terminal. In picturesque nearby Mt. Adams, see Rookwood Pottery, lovely Eden Park and a beautiful Ohio River overlook. Across the historic Suspension Bridge into

Covington, Kentucky, you'll see the restored Main Strasse area, with its many little gift shops, and also several noteworthy churches. Finally, at the new Oldenberg Brewery, you'll enjoy a show and lunch. Following a short tour of this fascinating "Old World" brewery, you'll return to the downtown hotel area by 12:30. (Registration is limited to 100 people for this event.)

The riverboat trip is planned for Thursday, April 6, from 6:30 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. The price of \$21.00 includes dinner on the boat. Board a BB riverboat in Covington, Kentucky, just across the river from downtown Cincinnati. This leisurely cruise on the Ohio River includes a delicious buffet dinner, music and the lovely scenery of both the Kentucky and the Ohio shores. An evening to remember, especially if you plan to attend along with a group of your favorite ACRL friends!

The ACRL Local Arrangements Committee hopes that you'll plan to enjoy one or both of these events as well as the other activities—both professional and purely for fun!—that will be available to you at ACRL in Cincinnati in '89. See you in Cincinnati!! ■■