

Alas, no. An instrument recently introduced requires just this kind of intellectual nepotism, yet without the necessary personal acquaintance. Given a subject, a handful of top names and a library stocked with complete runs of some 20,000 top science journals, the A-Z of the subject is potentially at hand. The fundamental idea behind the *Science Citation Index*, of which the first quarterly volumes for 1966 have now become available, can be summed up in the phrase: "What has happened since?" In other words, what has a man published, and who, in what publication, in any scientific field, has cited any of his works since they were published?

Each quarterly issue consists of three massive volumes, two for the citations and one for recent sources. The former provide under name (or journal if anonymous), patent number or corporate body, every citation during the quarter in more than 1,500 journals, together with the names of those responsible for the citation, where and when. The companion *Source Index* provides chapter and verse of all new sources published in the quarter, and gives names of authors, titles of articles, journal, volume and page number, etc. It is estimated that when the 1966 *Index* is complete, 3.4 million cited references will have been listed from 300,000 new source items. At an annual subscription of \$1,250 (educational rate) or \$1,950 (all others), the *Index* is likely to be accessible only to those research institutions which already have, or are likely to obtain, a computer. Thus now that the searching technique by way of citation is being widely accepted, the compilers of the *Index*—the Institute for Scientific Information, Philadelphia—should be investigating the possibilities of putting it on tape.

### Better Writing

THE report of the conference held earlier this year by what is known as the "Presentation of Technical Information Group" has now been published. The group seems to have recruited a company of speakers willing to say that scientific writing is bad and ought to be improved. It was apparently less successful in winning agreement about what should be done. Several speakers said that scientific appointments should go only to those able to demonstrate some skill in writing, but they were naturally somewhat reticent in suggesting how regulation should be imposed on the universities and the laboratories. The benefits of formal courses in language and writing for science undergraduates and postgraduates were extolled by some. Like most bodies that would change some aspect of society, the group seemed to think that the schools should be doing more, but there seems to have been some uncertainty about the need to encourage writing for self-expression in the schools. One opinion sent in after the conference was that "less emphasis could well be placed on self-expression and more on writing to supply information that somebody else needed to know".

Copies of the report may be had at 6s. from Mr. A. K. Parker, Godolphin Cottage, Gog Magog Hills, Babraham, Cambridge.

### Abstracts on Tape

WHAT can be done with abstracts of the literature embodied on reels of magnetic tape? The Chemical Society and the University of Nottingham are planning

a research programme to explore the usefulness in a British context of the abstract service based on a computer system which is now being supplied by the American Chemical Society. The intention is that magnetic tapes from the United States will be processed by a unit under Dr. Anthony Kent, previously a lecturer in zoology at Nottingham, who will be the director of what will be known as the Chemical Society Research Unit in Information Dissemination and Retrieval. The title is evidently intended to suggest that both the Chemical Society and the university have in mind a continuing programme of research and development, and a statement by the Society says that its aim is to provide in Britain a comprehensive and mechanized information service comparable in every way with that now becoming available in the United States.

To begin with, at least, the Society is financing the project out of its own resources. By doing so it will put British chemists much where British medical research workers now find themselves as a result of the experiments being conducted from Newcastle as part of the MEDLARS programme. A related but necessarily more complicated programme of development is now being undertaken by the Institution of Electrical Engineers, which is responsible for publishing *Physics Abstracts*. That programme, which is being carried out in close collaboration with the American Institute of Physics, is financed by a grant from the Office of Scientific and Technical Information.

### Virology Journal

THE Society for General Microbiology is to produce, and the Cambridge University Press is to publish in January 1967, a new journal called the *Journal of General Virology*. It will be edited by Dr. C. Kaplan of the Lister Institute of Preventive Medicine and Professor P. Wildy of the University of Birmingham. The Society for General Microbiology, which also publishes the *Journal of General Microbiology*, intends to divert virological papers to the new journal which will, however, not seek to publish clinical or epidemiological articles.

### Podzol Jubilee

DR. H. KLINGE of the Max Planck Institut für Limnologie writes on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication by P. W. Richards<sup>1</sup> of "Lowland Tropical Podzols and their Vegetation":

"Before Richards's paper, podzols had been recognized and described from areas with cool-humid climates in temperate regions and on tropical mountains. From tropical lowlands of Borneo, white or bleached sand soils with a coal black or dark brown layer at some depth had been reported and the peculiar physiognomy and floristic difference of the vegetation from the surrounding normal equatorial rain forest mentioned<sup>2,3</sup>. Richards, however, was the first to realize that these soils are widespread in tropical lowlands in the Guianas, the Amazon and in Malaya, where they are always associated with a physiognomically peculiar vegetation and with blackwater rivers.

"Tropical podzols, being unsuited to profitable permanent agriculture, are considered important to forestry<sup>4</sup> and have therefore attracted much interest. This is borne out by the appearance of about four hundred publications concerning tropical podzols<sup>5</sup>,