

drawn was in the election of a secretary; and here precedent was followed in the choice of a Democrat, though the convention was overwhelmingly Republican.

The convention was perhaps remarkable in one other respect: there was not a single reference, direct or indirect, to the prohibition controversy.

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**Social Science Abstracts—an Institution in the Making.**<sup>1</sup> “This article describes a sequence of the factors that led up to the establishment of an international coöperative effort in which more than 1,700 scholars participate. It analyzes the process of organizing a scientific journal which publishes 15,000 abstracts a year, based upon the systematic examination of about 400,000 articles contained in 4,000 serials which are printed in 26 languages. As a voluntary effort, *Social Science Abstracts* is of sufficient magnitude and stability to be regarded as an institution in the making.”

The origin of *Social Science Abstracts* was recognition of the need of keeping informed on the important contributions to the social sciences contained in the ever-increasing volume of periodicals and serials in the literature of many countries. Successful patterns of coöperative research to solve this urgent problem existed in the great abstracting services established in the physical sciences. *Social Science Abstracts* is indebted to these services for the many transfers of essential technique.

Contacts with European scholars were made in the summer of 1928. Meanwhile the collaboration of hundreds of American scholars was secured for the preparation of abstracts. The first issue of the journal was distributed in March, 1929. By December, a complete volume containing 11,093 abstracts had been published. Volume II for the year 1930 will contain over 15,000 abstracts.

In handling 400,000 articles a year, accuracy and system are essential. The office editors select the articles to be abstracted. In order to prevent duplication, the title of each article is cleared against a great central file before mailing to an abstractor. About 18,000 titles were mailed out during 1929. In a few cases (600), responsibility

<sup>1</sup> Abstract of an article by the editor-in-chief of *Social Science Abstracts* published in the *American Journal of Sociology*, November, 1930.

for an entire journal is assigned to one or more scholars. In all cases, careful selection of collaborators is a fundamental prerequisite to dependable abstracts. A systematic effort is made to maintain uniformly high standards in the selection of articles to be abstracted, and six office editors, as well as 1,800 abstractors, are urged to observe the criteria of selection outlined in the *Guide for Abstractors*. The processes of selection, checking, assignment, follow up, recording, editing, proof reading, and correspondence, as well as the business activities of financial management, bookkeeping, and circulation, take the full time of twenty persons on the central editorial staff. The office staff constitutes the center of a vast network of cooperative effort reaching out to 45 nations of the world and now (1930) embracing the collaboration of 1,300 specialists in 36 languages.

“Science has progressed by virtue of the principle of specialization, but this trend had led to divergences of such a marked nature that compartmentalism has developed to a positively vicious degree. The question is, how can the whole mass be drawn together? By what means will it be possible to integrate the work of critical specialists? *Social Science Abstracts*, in common with other great abstracting services, does this by printing the results of research in one specialty in close juxtaposition and in organic relationship with the results of other specialties. Thus there is no offense given to the sensibilities and habits of thought of the specialist, and yet the evils of compartmentalism are avoided. For the specialist may now read on the borderline of his subject and pick up new leads. He may delve into the literature of allied subjects and discover critical cross-lights on his own narrow interest.

These larger functions, dimly seen at the beginning, now emerge out of the detail of such practical and concrete services as time saving, the avoidance of duplication of effort, and the making accessible of materials, and so encourage us to believe that the abstract service will increasingly perform a valuable educational service. One assurance of this hope is the fact that with the present form and size of abstracts, the journal is a readable journal. Many of our subscribers say that they spend profitable evenings reading along the borders of their specialties, for they find that the abstracts as now written are interesting and amply reward time spent in browsing.”

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