

SCIENCE

A Weekly Journal devoted to the Advancement of Science, publishing the official notices and proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, edited by J. McKeen Cattell and published every Friday by

THE SCIENCE PRESS

11 Liberty St., Utica, N. Y. Garrison, N. Y.
New York City: Grand Central Terminal

Annual Subscription, \$6.00 Single Copies, 15 Cts.

Entered as second-class matter January 21, 1922, at the Post Office at Utica, N. Y., Under the Act of March 3, 1879.

VOL. LVI NOVEMBER 3, 1922 No. 1453

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THE ABSTRACTING AND INDEXING OF BIOLOGICAL LITERATURE¹

WHEN Dr. Lillie asked me to discuss some phase of the general abstracts-indexes-bibliographies problem in one of these evenings I hesitated considerably before accepting because it appeared to me such a discussion would be rather foreign to the general character of these evenings, occupied, as they are, primarily with the results of biological or related research. However, it was rather because of this difference that I ventured to accept. I found a certain justification on the ground that if in the main these evenings are given over to the reporting of advances in knowledge, one evening might conceivably be profitably devoted to a consideration of whether we are preserving these advances in such a way that the greatest use may be made of them with a minimum expenditure of time, energy, and funds. We expend considerable funds and enormous amounts of energy and time in ascertaining new facts and publishing them *in extenso*. I believe it is pertinent to inquire whether we have established adequate means for so recording these facts that the greatest and most economical use is made of them and progress made as largely cumulative as possible.

No doubt some of you are wondering what special license I have to discuss this problem. I can answer only that I have none. My contact with the subject has been a brief one. I happen to be one of a number who for the past four years have been carrying some of the responsibility in connection with *Botanical Abstracts*, and as such have been impressed with the magnitude of the problem of properly recording our information and have become convinced that in a large measure we have not in

¹ An invitation paper given at the Marine Biological Laboratory, Woods Hole, Massachusetts, August 4, 1922.

Science

56 (1453)

Science **56** (1453), 495-520.

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