

# Measuring Merit

## Canadians in the Science Citation Index

**G**reat scientists, like great musicians and great writers, are easily recognized by their peers. They are sought by the brightest students, honored with prizes, offered prestigious appointments; and everyone seems to agree who they are.

Are the virtuosi of science identified by subjective judgments of the value of their contributions, or is there some objective way of identifying them? Can scientific merit be measured?

A scientist's job is to produce information. This product flows to others through informal channels — gossip, arguments, discussions, telephone calls — and through formal ones — books, lectures and papers. Of these, research papers in scientific journals are, by longstanding convention, the most important. Some two million scientific papers are published every year,



by Séan McCutcheon