

Electronic Information For Serials Librarians

Peter Walsh,
Kings's College London

Those of you with access to JANET may be interested in exploring the electronic sources of information on serials which are available free over the network. It is possible to "subscribe", through a JANET gateway, to a variety of e-mail based discussion groups or electronic publications on the US BITNET network. It is not necessary to know anything about how this works, but you do need to know about electronic mail, both to subscribe and to deal with the messages as they arrive.

Subscriptions to these services are controlled by a program known as a "listserver" on the computer where the list is based, and it is to this that you address your request to be added to the list (see below).

The discussion group / computer conference *SERIALST* (serials/list) was set up in 1990 and now has nearly 400 subscribers. It deals with all aspects of serials in libraries (except pricing which it leaves to the *Newsletter on Serials Pricing Issues* - see below). Over the last few months there have been discussions on a wide range of topics, from planned cancellations to the best type of shelving for current issues and studies of periodical use. Generally one member raises a subject and this elicits replies and comments from others. Some topics excite more interest than others do. The most memorable of the lighter discussions started with a librarian whose boss had decreed that the serials department should save stamps for a professor, and who enquired what indignities other people had had to put up with. The serious side to this was the advice on how to handle the situation.

The "list owner" of *SERIALST* is Birdie McLennan, Serials Cataloguer at the University of Vermont, but contributions to the list are not edited or checked for accuracy. They are automatically distributed to all subscribers by the listserver.

The *Newsletter on Serials Pricing Issues*, which had a prior existence in a printed version and is still also available in hard copy, is a true "electronic journal" rather than a discussion group. It is edited and produced by Marcia Tuttle of the University of

North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has an independent editorial board. It is published irregularly depending on the availability of news and actually deals with a broad spread of subjects around the pricing theme.

Electronic journals have not abandoned the habits of paper journals, however, and NSPI Number 37, April 1991, was followed in May by New Series Number 1. The reason for this relaunch was that the previous publishers, the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services, a division of the American Library Association, have turned the whole thing over to Tuttle to publish as well as edit.

They now produce *ALCTS Network News* (AN2) which also deals in part with serials and is also available over JANET. It contains advance copy of articles that will appear in the Association's printed newsletter.

— To subscribe to
Newsletter on Serials Pricing Issues,
e-mail the message:

subscribe Prices-L Firstname Lastname
substituting your own names, to
LISTSERV%UNCVXI@EARN-RELAY

— To subscribe to
SERIALST,
e-mail the message:

subscribe SERIALST Firstname Lastname
substituting your own names, to
LISTSERV%UVMVM@EARN-RELAY

- To subscribe to
ALCTS Network News,
e-mail the message:

subscribe ALCTS Firstname Lastname
substituting your own names, to
LISTSERV%UICVM@EARN-RELAY

Just how these addresses should be entered will depend on the mailer on your computer. I have found the following form to be effective:

```
CBS%UK.AC.EARN-RELAY::EARN.UVMVM:  
:LISTSERV
```

but you may need to ask for advice from your computer centre.

Note that you send your message requesting a subscription to a different address to the one you use if you are contributing an item for the list membership at large. How to do this will be explained in the introductory message you will receive when your membership is acknowledged (usually after only a few hours).

Those who would like further information on JANET should consult the *Guide for Libraries on JANET* published by Project Jupiter at Glasgow University Library. This also contains details of the availability of another twenty or so library oriented lists, although new ones are appearing regularly and there are now more than thirty accessible.

