

Editorial

WELL — there's nothing like being thrown in at the deep end to concentrate the mind. Taking over the Editorship of Serials one issue earlier than planned has certainly proved a challenge. I hope that the contents of this issue have been worth waiting for and I apologise for its somewhat late appearance.

Thanks to John Cowley for the material he was able to pass over and we all hope that he will soon be fighting fit once again. Thanks also to Jill Tolson for her sterling work in co-ordinating the production side which has allowed this issue to actually hit the streets, and also to all those who have helped with copy and advice.

That said, what have we got in this issue of Serials? Variety, certainly. From the 1991 Conference at York there are two glimpses of the future. **Alan Gomersall** considers the possibility that the traditional journal format is a dying breed and that a combination of electronics and economics may render it obsolete. **Chris Beckett** looks at new ways of transferring data to streamline communication between libraries, agents and publishers — hopefully to the benefit of all concerned. Certainly, some of the statistics he quotes on the amount of wasted effort lost in rekeying data generated by one computer into another seems quite appalling.

Sticking with advances in technology and their potential impact, **Janice Wrench** looks at how bar-coding of journal issues is progressing with the attendant benefits for check-in procedures. Looking at technology from another perspective, **Phil Sykes** of Liverpool Polytechnic considers the effects of its introduction on non-professional library staff and shows how its potentially detrimental consequences can be mitigated.

Albert Mullis of the British Library takes a look at the history of attempts to create a database of serials and the libraries which hold them, and considers whether networks of libraries can fill the gap with a data resource. **Professor A J Meadows** meanwhile ponders how effective the serial

actually is at communicating scientific research and assesses the benefits of the exponential growth in the number of serials published.

The sheer number of periodicals and the economic realities which face the majority of libraries have spurred **Tony McSean's** BMA library to closely question the value-for-money obtained from its journal subscriptions and he explains how the library's Bibliometric Study has allowed it to make more informed choices.

That paper is based on a talk Tony gave to a publisher/librarian seminar organised by the UKSG and two other recent seminars are also reviewed in this issue. The UKSG's Serials Administration and Management course comes under the spotlight in **Margaret Weaver's** piece whilst the thoughts aired and shared at the ALPSP/IOP Electronic Networking Seminar are exposed to a wider audience in another feature.

Finally, **Hazel Woodward** brings us excerpts from her diary of the IFLA Conference in Moscow which coincided with another event which took place largely in that city — the August coup. Here's a piece literally from the front line — move over Kate Adie!

All this alongside the regular *People* feature with its news of job changes, births etc; the reviews of the latest books on serials management; and **Arlene Moore Sievers'** view from America make the November issue particularly lively.

So, without more ado, I will pass you over to our authors and their fascinating contributions. However, I hope this won't be a totally passive experience for you and that you will be sufficiently stirred to take pen to paper — or finger to word processor — and send in your views on the issues surrounding serials management, news of developments being implemented in your organisations, or any other pieces you think your colleagues in the serials world would enjoy reading. □

Jonathan Barker