



Editorial

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Predicting the future has become something of an obsession in the world of information where a number of people have reached the status of gurus. A glance at a calendar of events reveals the extent of the growth in conferences, seminars, workshops, discussion groups, etc. The by-product of these is the ever-growing number of speculative articles published in journals. Computers have become an essential tool for collecting and analysing raw data from which predictions can be made.

On page 24 a letter from Daniel H Jones raises a very important issue. Do price predictions for journals become a self-fulfilling prophecy? If the publishers see that a norm has been established and librarians have been conditioned to accept this because it is what they expected, then nothing will change and prices will go on increasing well above inflation.

Although we are all concerned with serials in general, consumer magazines are a somewhat neglected area, mainly because they are very low priority in most library serial collections. It is an area where the prices go on rising, but the consumers, who are not worried by periodical prices indices, seem quite happy to go on paying more. Some recent figures published by the Periodical Publishers Association indicate that the problems bedeviling learned and scientific

journals are not apparent in the heady world of the newsstands.

There are 33% more magazines now than in 1985: 1,253 more business magazines and 360 more consumer magazines. There has been a 13% increase in magazine circulation since 1991 and revenue has increased by 114%. The average cover price has increased ahead of inflation and the profitability of magazine companies has been rising steadily since the recession bottomed-out in 1992. In the UK 81% of adults read a consumer magazine. One of the biggest growth areas has been men's magazines, where the number of buyers has doubled in the last three years to give sales of over £26 million per annum.

This is a market far removed, at present, from electronic journals, document delivery, etc, and may well be the last bastion of the paper journal - yet another prediction!

Because of the continuing growth in the number of pages of *Serials* and the constraints imposed by stapling, we have decided to change to perfect binding. One or two doubters on the Editorial Board were given ample opportunity to do destructive testing to prove to themselves that it really does hold together even after ill-treatment, so we do hope this will be a success.