



## Editorial

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The 22nd Annual Conference and 4th European Serials Conference has come and gone, and was, by all accounts, a resounding success, with a record number of delegates (538) and exhibition stands (54). It was particularly pleasing to welcome so many from overseas (131). Not only was there a large delegation from European countries, but also representatives from the USA, Canada, Kenya, Australia and South Africa. The other good news is that we have gained 45 new member organisations, bringing the total membership to 628.

This issue of *Serials* is a bumper number and contains a selection of the conference papers and workshop reports (timely publishing!). More will appear in the November issue.

The hardworking conference subcommittee, led by Christine Fyfe, should be on a wave of job satisfaction, as should the UKSG staff: Jill Tolson and Alison Whitehorn. Work has already started on next year's conference - no rest for the wicked!

Once again shock waves are reverberating in the world of serials with the news that Blackwell's Information Services are to merge with Swets Subscription Service. As the former Director of Blackwell's Periodicals Division it is difficult to write dispassionately. After spending 34 years with a team of loyal and caring colleagues building up a business into one of the world's most respected international subscription agencies, it is a sad time for us all as we contemplate its demise. Is this the beginning of the dismemberment of a once-great family business?

As with all mergers and takeovers, the prospect of redundancies hangs over the staff, many of whom are long-serving, skilled people. We can only hope that by the time the dust finally settles

nobody will be without a job.

Loyal customers should not be forgotten. Once again, their choice of supplier has been limited. On the positive side, Swets is a highly professional company and respected market leader, who will no doubt provide an excellent service under the new regime.

On Tuesday 15 June I was privileged to be invited to the official launch of NESLI (National Site Licence Initiative). This was held in the impressive Terrace Restaurant at the British Library, St Pancras, London. Obviously an occasion for congratulations and compliments all round, it is pleasing to learn that the initiative is going well. More and more publishers are signing up. Perhaps what needs to be highlighted most is all the hard work put in by the teams at Swets and the Manchester Computing Centre - the nitty gritty end of the project. One rumour was dispelled: that the British Library did not serve red wine in case it was spilt on the new carpet!

It used to be said that the old curator-type librarian hated readers because they disturbed the books on the shelves. Times have changed and this is reflected by a new initiative from the Library Association - Workplace Libraries '99 - which positively encourages greater use of libraries and aims to raise the profile of over 10,000 information professionals who provide information management services to commerce, industry, government and the voluntary sector. To survive and thrive in today's increasingly competitive culture, librarians must shout about what they do and why what they do is important to their organisations. The LA is there to help. Do not delay, contact them today!