Bookshelf

Brian Cox

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The Serials Management Handbook: a practical guide to print and electronic serials management

Edited by Tony Kidd and Lyndsay Rees-Jones.

London, Library Association Publishing, 2000. ISBN: 1-85604-355-X. Casebound: £39.95

As someone who is relatively new to the world of serials, I approached this book with a great deal of enthusiasm to learn more about this world, and I was not disappointed. It proved to be an excellent read, helping to consolidate my knowledge of serials. By providing a valuable reference to the historical, practical, and challenging issues surrounding serials management from the perspectives of all players in the field, it certainly lives up to its title.

The volume comprises nine chapters, each written by different authors and focusing on a specific aspect of serials, both print and electronic. These range from the reason that serials were first produced, to their publication and purchase and moves on through their delivery options, their processing and management, their exploitation and usage, and finally their future, with the final chapter citing the Chinese proverb 'May you live in interesting times'. I think it can be agreed that this is most apt for anyone involved with serials work today. The first and last chapters serve to make one realise just how far the serials world has progressed over the past 50 years.

There is a concise introduction to this publication outlining the need for an up-to-date, general work on serials management. There is a general set of references after the introduction, as well as extensive lists at the end of each chapter,

with a good mix of both print and electronic references. The book concludes with a clear and concise seven-page index.

Each chapter is worthy of a review in itself but unfortunately space does not permit that. The specialist knowledge of each contributor is obvious on reading their work and they should be thanked for sharing their expertise and best practice with us. The editors are to be congratulated on the publication of a well balanced, informative, stimulating, and reassuring volume.

I strongly recommend this book to anyone involved in serials management, to both the novice and the expert. I only wish I had had this book to hand when I first became a serials librarian five years ago.

*Jayne Everard, Serials librarian,
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Trends in Journal Subscriptions, 1998

Edited by Anthony Watkinson

A survey of British serial publications commissioned by the Serial Publishers Executive of the Publishers' Association, December 1999, £50. The Publishers' Association, 1 Kingsway, London, Wc2B 6XF

The Serial Publishers Executive has commissioned and published surveys, like the present volume, for a number of years. The latest survey was sent to 63 British publishers of whom 51 responded, representing 1344 journal titles. While the importance of the UK scene is undeniable, the global nature of learned journal publishing, with most of the large society and

commercial publishers based outside Britain, makes these surveys less useful than they might otherwise be. Nonetheless, while one can question the representativeness of the sample or the honesty with which publishers are prepared to report their subscription numbers, this ring-bound report provides an interesting snapshot of the health of UK journal publishing in 1998.

The 1998 survey presents data on journals published, launches and acquisitions, prices, subscriber numbers, agent relations, renewals, other income, document supply, licensing and electronic publishing. The results can make for both surprising and depressing reading. The inexorable decline in subscriber numbers reported, with an average rate of attrition of 4%, will not alleviate the gloom on this topic among publishers. Despite the general sales climate, the trend noted in previous years, towards publishing more journals, continues and the respondents report somewhat higher rates of renewal than in the past. Almost half of the sample either had or were intending to make deals with consortia. On the topic of electronic delivery, a small majority were against any dealings with aggregators or on-line hosts, while most noted little usage of web versions and correspondingly little income, despite the large amounts of money invested in the on-line world.

The last remarks are perhaps the most telling when compared to the wider international scene where electronic usage of publishers' journals in the large multi-publisher or aggregator platforms are very high, perhaps reflecting the true value of the publications. The smaller UK journal publishers, whose replies constitute most of the results of the survey, will soon face a similar dilemma to the British Government over the EU and the Euro: are they joining in or remaining separate from the global players? Reading their replies to some of the questions in this survey suggests that, in 1998 at any rate, insularity still remains dominant.

Michael A. Mabe
Director of Academic Relations, Elsevier Science

Publications noted:

The Internet; a writer's guide, by Jane Dorner. London, A&C Black, 2000. 200p. ISBN: 071365192X. Paperback £9.99.

Electronic expectations: science journals on the Web, By Tony Stankus. Binghamton, N.Y.; The Haworth Information Press, 2000. 204p. ISBN: 078900836X. Casebound: USA, Canada and Mexico US$59.95; Other countries US$72.00. Paperback: USA, Canada and Mexico US$24.95; Other countries US$30.00 (Also published as Science and Technology Libraries, 18 (2/3). 1999.)

The Journal of Bibliographic Instruction for Electronic Reources, edited by Amy E. Knapp. Binghamton, N.Y.; The Haworth Information Press. Institutions: US$48 per annum; individuals US$36 per annum (These rates are for the USA. Overseas rates are higher.)