



## Editorial

John Merriman

In June 1993 I was sitting at my desk wondering what on earth to write in my first editorial. Now, as I contemplate my last, I realise things have not changed much!

Perhaps a trawl through seven years of editorials might identify a few burning issues of the time.

Periodical prices have been a recurring theme. In 1993 much heat was being generated by librarians objecting to additional charges caused by publishers who could not announce their new prices by the first of September. The subscription agents carried out a campaign for timely pricing, and I believe that this is no longer a big issue.

Price increases continued to cause concern. It was argued that agents' price predictions became a self-fulfilling prophecy. If the publishers see that a norm has been established and that 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.

Takeovers and mergers in the publishing and subscription agency world caused frequent editorial comment. The purchase of the ailing Faxon company by a knight in shining armour in the form of Brian Ingleby of Dawsons sent shock waves through the serials world. No one

at the time could possibly have imagined that born again Dick Rowe would set up a new type of subscription agency, RoweCom, and not only eventually buy back Faxon but also the Dawson empire, a feat perhaps only equalled by Robert Maxwell when he routed Leasco to regain control of Pergamon Press.

The saddest time for me was the demise of Blackwell's Information Services, with the loss of jobs by many of my former colleagues. On the positive side, an experienced and highly professional group of 'survivors' joined Swets Blackwell, and I hope some of the old Blackwell spirit still survives.

A good many columns in *Serials* were devoted to the Pilot Site Licence Initiative for academic journals, which was to be the answer to the academic librarian's dreams when expensive journals became affordable. The money saved was available for other purchases and academics enjoy a reduction in the cost of knowledge. The initiative paved the way for the current panacea – the National Electronic Site Licence Initiative (NESLI).

A number of changes were made to *Serials*. The subtitle became 'The Journal of the Serials Community' to reflect its wider scope. After much debate, stapling was replaced by perfect binding. Probably the most important

milestone was an agreement with CatchWord to make electronic versions of *Serials* available to members.

It is appropriate for a few words of thanks to those who have made my editorship stress-free and enjoyable.

First, Jill Tolson, who persuaded me to take on the job in the first place – amazing what I will do for a couple of pints! She was a tower of strength on the production side, and also the secretarial duties. Always a pleasure to work with. Alison Whitehorn was a worthy successor during the difficult transition period and has been a tremendous help to me.

One thing I insisted on was that I should have a working Editorial Board, and not just names on paper. This has been the case, and many thanks to present and past Board members who

have delivered the goods on time.

Finally, a special word of thanks to Dennis Pilling, Deputy Editor, whose contribution to the success of *Serials* merits the highest praise.

I believe the time has come for a younger and more technologically aware person to take over. I am pleased to say that we have found not one but two!

I am absolutely delighted that two such leading figures in the information world should have found the time to edit *Serials*. Hazel Woodward and Helen Henderson are bursting with new ideas and, as it is said, "You ain't seen nothin' yet". *Serials* could not be in better hands and we are all looking forward to the 'Hazel and Helen Show'.

Au revoir.

*John Merriman*