Group Therapy/ Title Changes

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Group Therapy

Column Editor, Rosann Bazirjian (Syracuse University)
Hey y'all out there! Do you have any gripes or what?
So . . . everything perfect? If so, tell us about it.
Try LIBRVB@SUVM.bitnet or FAX (315) 443-9510.

Gripe:

Submitted by Ann Phillips (Supervisor, Serials Unit, Syracuse Univ.)
I would like to issue a complaint about serial and periodical title changes.
Very often, title changes are not properly or prominently noted on the front
covers of journals. In addition, we often do not even receive a letter from the
publisher indicating that there has indeed been a title change. This causes
much confusion when the issue is received in the library, and also wastes
precious staff time as we try to resolve the confusion. At times, these title
changes can even be missed and the issue considered to be a sample instead.
It might even be tossed out! If the format or visual display on the front
cover has significantly been altered, the problem is compounded. Why don't
publishers clearly indicate title changes on journal issues, and, isn't this a prob-
lem for serial vendors as well?

VENDOR RESPONSE:

Submitted by Phil Greene (VP and
Gen. Mgr., EBSCO Subscription Ser-
dices)

Title changes are definitely a major
"headache" for subscription agencies.
Often, the first indication we receive of
a title change comes directly from our
clients. While most publishers are aware
of subscription agencies and advise us
of any significant changes, many pub-
lishers - probably those most apt to
change their titles - do not advise us of
these changes.

Publisher changes in frequency and
split and merged titles are even more
problematical. In addition to causing
substantial revisions in our title file
Databases, these types of title changes
also have major ramifications for auto-
mated serials control systems.

In addition to causing additional li-
brary file maintenance, issues are
frequently missed or claims for no
longer published issues are processed.
This is expensive and wastes a lot of
time.

The suggestion that publishers
clearly indicate these changes, ideally
on the journal issue itself, is a good one
which publishers should pay more at-
tention to. In today's economic climate,
controlling operating costs is a critical
ingredient of success. Better publisher
attention to this concern would help us
all utilize our resources more efficiently.

PUBLISHER RESPONSE:

Submitted by Susan Knapp (Di-
rector of Publications, American
Psychological Association)

Why do serials change names at all?
When it is not for sheer capriciousness,
it is because the journal has changed.
The editor and publisher hope that this
new name more accurately reflects the
emerging publication to the reader. If
the change is seen as "minor", the pub-
lisher may not remember that librarians
define that differently — the notation
can be hard to find if it is buried on
Cover 2 or somewhere in the postal
regulations box that no one ever reads.

When a "major" change in the jour-
nal happens, the publisher/editor
redesigns the front cover with the in-
dividual reader in mind. The
relationship with the "old" journal is
played down. The idea is to tell the
reader: "This publication is new/im-
proved/changed. If you didn't like the
old one, if you thought something was
lacking, try this version. You should
begin/continue to subscribe/submit to
this journal."

If publishers do their job (which I
will admit is not always the case),
the first issue under the new name will
feature the name change in some way,
and the information will also go to
subscription agents and librarians.
However, there is no assurance that the
information is getting into the right
hands at the right time. (A counter-gripe:
why don't library staff have a uniform
set of titles so that publishers can know
to whom they should mail information?)

One of the APA publications is
changing its name in 1993. PsycSCAN:
Psychoanalytic Abstracts is becoming
Psychoanalytic Abstracts. Why? Because the
secondary publication has expanded and
broadened its activities to the point that
it is no longer like the other PsycSCAN
publications. The plans for informing
readers and librarians of this change
include boxed announcements in the
"APA Newsline" newsletter that goes
to the library community, a column in
the PsychINFO subscriber newsletter,
letters to major subscription agents,
notice on the front and inside covers of
the first issue, notice on the inside cover
of the first volume, and a possible sec-
ond cover overlay for the first issue
featuring the name change.

Will this be enough? There is no
guarantee, but periodic gripes from the
library community will help to assure
that publishers at least pay attention to
this important area — it certainly made
APA take another look at its plans.