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THE MEYERS CONNECTION

Lightning Rod or Peacemaker?

by **Barbara Meyers**, President, Meyers Consulting Services

Your Preferred Options WHEN JOURNAL TITLES MUST CHANGE

In the February 1990 issue of *Against the Grain*, the last page was a questionnaire soliciting responses from librarians to "a number of questions that publishers face in order to smooth a title-change transition." A very large thank you is extended to the nearly two dozen readers (22 to be exact) who responded via mail or fax. Your input is very valuable. It is not only being reported here, but will also be submitted to the newsletter of the Society for Scholarly Publishing so that the results will go to more of the folks who should see them — namely, journal publishers!

When asked when should the journal's title change be made all the respondents said that it should be done at the beginning of a volume because of binding according to most of the librarians who gave their reasoning for this answer.

Nearly all (21) of the librarians said that the title change can best be communicated to libraries by a letter to the subscribers address announcing the name change. An

equal number (15) said by an editorial in the first issue with the new name and by notifying subscription agents. A smaller number (11) suggested by an editorial in the last issue with the old name and even fewer (6) said by highlighting the title change in an annual publishers catalog. Other helpful suggestions included: a banner across the cover and highlight "formerly [old title name]" on the cover for several issues of the new title.

Of keen concern to publishers is how the numbering of volumes under the new title should be handled. Over half (12) of the librarians responded that the publishers should continue the old title's consecutive numbering, 8 librarians said to start the volume numbering over (with Volume 1), and only 3 said that the volume numbering does not matter in these circumstances.

Is it important for the publisher to cite in the masthead the former ISSN and title of the journal? More than half (14) of the responses were yes, only 5 librarians said no, and just 3 said it doesn't matter.

Eighteen librarians answered question five which read: "For important publication announcements of this type, how can a publisher **really** reach its

library audience when only the subscription address (the ship-to address without an individual's name) is available?" Their suggestions ran the gamut and are provided here in their entirety as each should be considered on its own merits as they relate to an individual publishing operation. They are:

Add "acquisitions librarian" or "serials librarian" to mailing label. Add "title change info" on outside of envelope. In my library, this would get to the audience it should.

Send to attention of the Head of Serials Dept. — no name necessary.

Mail received to ship-to address still receives attention. So if this is the only way, it is better than nothing.

The ship to address should get the information to the right people in the processing units.

Use all options listed in Question 2 from editorials to letters to notifying agents.

Not sure — be as specific as possible — "serials librarian" or something to try to direct the letter.

Address info to the Serials, Continuations, Periodicals, and/or Acquisitions Depts.

Place the information in the journal.

Add to shipping address ATTN: Serials Librarian or Order Dept., ACQ, or something similar which will get the person responsible for ordering materials.

I believe by highlighting the title change on the first and subsequent issues of the new title will best alert librarians.

By a special note on the cover of the first issue published.

Address the announcement to the Serials Librarian at the given address.

Address it to Head of Serials, put loose page in several issues - maybe they'll fall out and someone will see them.

Notice on cover announcing "Formerly ...."

Address it to the Department Head with the subscription address anyway. In most cases, they will see the letter.

I think announcements to ship to address will work. We read our mail.

Attn: Head, Serials Dept. Notify subs. agents. Who will inform customers?

ATTN: Periodicals Librarian

Send to ATTN: Serials Librarian

A form letter to accompany first issue of new title should suffice.

The last two questions of the survey shifted topics just a bit and focused on publisher's catalogs. Readers were first asked if catalogs describing journals had an impact on librarians renewal of current subscription and acquisitions of new subscriptions. Concerning renewals, more than half of the librarians (14) said catalogs have no impact, 4 said it maybe influenced their renewal decision, and only 1 said yes, catalogs do impact renewals. Catalogs have a more positive effect on the acquisition process. Five librarians said they do have an impact, over half (15) said that catalogs may influence acquisitions, and only 2 said that catalogs had no effect on the process.

The final survey question asked if librarians find publishers' catalogs of some value. Only 14 librarians responded with 6 saying yes they do, 7 responding that catalogs may be of some value, and only 1 saying catalogs do not have any value.

Finally, one of the respondents was a serials librarian at the University of North Florida who I had met at the 1990 FSU Library Conference run by Prof. Al Trezza each year. Vicki Thomas Stanton added a letter in which she shared with me her preferences on journal design and production as well. So that *Against the Grain* readers and others in publishing can reap

what benefits they might from her comments I'll end this report of the survey results with "Vicki's Golden Rules."

1. Use acid-free paper.
2. Leave adequate margins, especially the main margin.
3. Prefer folded signatures to square backed, glued pages.
4. Put masthead, issue #, ISSN, and frequency in a prominent place close to the cover.

I'm sure that there are many of you who have similar or other "Golden Rules" and I'd very much appreciate receiving them if you'd care to share them. I'll pass them along to as many publishers as I can just like these survey results. Just drop me a line or a fax at: Meyers Consulting Services, 1836 Metzert Road, Suite 1003, Adelphi MD 20783/ FAX 301-434-0126. Thanks in advance!

P.S. A "twenty-third" response from SUNY, College of Oswego arrived as this article was going to press. As the four staff members who responded can see, these late-breaking responses are very much in agreement with those reported here. Thanks for responding! 🐶