

PICK OF THE POPS

Imagine being able to say to a reader, 'Take this 220 page index to over 3,000 articles in 50-odd popular magazines and in one minute we can produce any article you pick; and if you are prepared to wait a further few minutes, we can make a copy of the article for you to take away.' Or, 'We have complete back files of more than 50 periodicals, which are indexed and immediately available for consultation or copying.'

This is what AACOBS has made possible with the first issue of what is to be an annual publication, *Pinpointer Popular Periodicals on Microfiche*.

PPPM (first issue covering 1981) is a microfiche package of most of the periodicals indexed in *Pinpointer*, the subject guide to popular periodicals published by the Libraries Board of South Australia.

The project began as the brainchild of Bill Linklater and Ian Douglas from Swinburne Library who convinced AACOBS of its viability. AACOBS funding enabled Margaret Wanklyn to be appointed as project officer and with the help of many other individuals and bodies the project was brought to reality. This included negotiating copyright with publishers of individual magazines, a task which was still not completed for half a dozen or so largely overseas magazines when PPPM went to 'press'.

Physically, PPPM 1981 consists of 24x reduction microfiche of the complete 1981 issues of 41 titles indexed in *Pinpointer* during 1981. Each magazine is reproduced complete from cover to cover, including advertisements. Each issue occupies one fiche. As the publicity material points out, a few titles are not included in this first volume. In addition to those titles which were still under negotiation with the publishers, the non-availability of complete sets of one or two other titles was an indication of the fleeting life-span of magazines of popular interest. (Incidentally, it would help the user to have the gaps in the few incomplete runs listed so as to save disappointment when searching the file.)

A recent survey of periodical collections and their use in Victorian public libraries found almost no significant holdings of back files, and extremely limited reference and information services based on periodical literature. There were a number of reasons for this — reasons which could be repeated in the majority of public and school libraries throughout Australia. They include: limited funds for periodical subscriptions, limited space for storage of back numbers, lack of indexes to stored periodicals, lack of public (and staff?) awareness of the potential of periodicals to answer information questions. Added to these were cost of staff time in following up issues not supplied, or lost by readers, in locating files of journals to support references derived from literature searches, costs of inter-library loans, user dissatisfaction when document delivery was slow, and the difficulty of living up to promised performance once a periodical reference service was advertised to public and students.

While PPPM does not pretend to solve all these problems, it would seem to be an excellent means of providing public and school libraries in particular with a wide-ranging and immediately accessible data bank of popular information in local and overseas periodicals. The advantages are:

- Compactness. (20 cm of microfiche per year compared with how many linear metres of shelf space?)
- Completeness. (Once its coverage is complete, its usefulness will be even greater.) *Practical Woodworking* was one journal not included which had a large number of tantalising articles indexed in *Pinpointer 1981*. (I understand from AACOBS that this is included in PPPM 1982.)
- Promoteability. (Combined with a reader-printer at the reference desk it could become a feature of a library's information service. A minor quibble on the promotion aspect is the lack of any reference to the PPPM package in *Pinpointer* itself.)
- Price. (At \$250 per set PPPM sells for less than the hard copy subscriptions. Discounts for multiple copies reduce the price to \$150.00 per set for 6 copies.)

As far as this reviewer is aware, PPPM is a unique publication in that it attempts to provide in one package all the journals in one general index. AACOBS and all those connected with the project should be applauded for their vision and their tenacity in bringing the vision to reality, and it is hoped that PPPM will be supported by the library industry so that its value to libraries and their users can increase as the file grows annually. *Pinpointer Popular Periodicals on Microfiche*. Canberra: AACOBS. 1982 \$250 per set. ISBN 0810-0594

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Hi-tech at LIBTALK

Over 200 librarians, library technicians and support staff from TAFE libraries throughout NSW attended LIBTALK, the annual conference of NSW TAFE Library Services in Sydney on 13 December last.

The first part of the program, at NSW Institute of Technology, included an overview of the progress of TAFE Library Services. More effective College Library Services will result from the automation of cataloguing in progress at the Division of Library Services' Cataloguing Branch. Iar Hutton, Second Officer in Educational Computer Developments, spoke on the use of computers for educational purposes in the Department.

Later in the afternoon the venue changed to Sydney Technical College, where a variety of displays and demonstrations included many of the new technologies applicable to libraries.

A tape-slide program showed how to use the Computer Output Microfiche catalogues which will eventually replace the card catalogues in all NSW TAFE College Libraries.

SPECIAL ISSUE

Issue no 12 of InCite will be a special issue dealing with children's books and library services. Articles and items of interest relating to this theme are sought. Advertisers wishing to take advantage of this special issue are advised to book early.



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