

The Last of LIST?

Earlier this year (*InCite* 23 May 1986) Eleanor Whelan wrote of her reluctant decision to cease publication of *LIST*.

Mary Baker, Librarian at Arnotts has responded to Eleanor's letter, raising some points which clearly need a reply. Eleanor Whelan has answered her questions, and their letters follow:

Dear Eleanor,
I was disappointed to hear that TRIAD are now ceasing to publish *LIST* (its monthly current journal of library and information science) for a number of reasons.

My name is Mary Baker and I read about and attend as many of the activities organised by the Special Libraries Section of the LAA as is possible. I consider myself quite up to date with what's happening in the library and information world and endeavour to keep up to date all the time.

I had not heard of *LIST* until reading about it in your letter to *InCite* edition dated 23 May 86. *LIST* certainly sounds like a worthwhile publication which I'm sure librarians such as myself and others could surely be interested in and benefit from.

Maybe I have been blind to all the information about *LIST* or perhaps you have not marketed your product to its fullest potential. Other factors which librarians would consider is the price of your publication and its relevance to their needs.

As NSW Convenor for the Special Library Promotion Taskforce I am interested in marketing products and have had a tremendous response for the article on our launching that appeared in *InCite* on page 7 of the same edition that your letter appeared in. The response indicates that librarians are very interested in marketing, promoting and improving the status of their profession and service, which entails reading to keep up with what's going on.

I hope that the end of *LIST* is not final and that it may be born again with more obvious marketing and promotion so that we librarians can stand up and be LISTED.

Mary Baker
Librarian — Arnotts LTD

Dear Mary,
Thank you for your letter regarding *LIST*; you must forgive my cynicism but my experience with the *LIST* project has been that expressions of interest/support reached a peak before its birth and after its death but *LIST* was steadfastly ignored during its brief lifetime.

Let me summarise our marketing strategy for *LIST* from August, 1984 on two fronts:

Information providers —

We wrote initially to all groups/committees/bodies publishing journals and newsletters in the area of Australian library and information science to request their cooperation in the enterprise by supplying us with a copy of every issue of their publication. In return, we undertook to publish the contents listings, to provide 3 months' complimentary copies of *LIST* and to offer reduced rate advertising. Those who did not respond received two subsequent follow-up letters.

Subscribers —

Also from August, 1984, Triad staff systematically 'spread the word' about *LIST* at all professional meetings which we attended (and we were assiduous here); I personally mentioned *LIST* in every conference/seminar paper which I presented to a wide range of professional colleagues (including VALA, IMCA, Special Libraries Section, the Information Professional Conference LAA (Tas. branch), RMIT, ACCESS). In February, 1985, shortly before our launch date, we placed what we considered a judiciously med and prominently placed feature advertisement in *InCite* (which generated one response!) After its launch, we sent review copies to all

sources which we considered likely to actually publish an evaluation of *LIST*. The result? NIL! Specimen copies were freely distributed at all professional meetings attended and mailed to centres of education in library and information science (not only in Australia but also overseas), university libraries, state libraries and other potential institutional subscribers.

As you can appreciate, we are a small business and we had to follow a marketing strategy which combined maximum publicity through the professional groups/contacts and informal grapevine and minimum cost. To some extent, we regarded the *InCite* ad as a litmus paper test, particularly when we compared our experience with (say) the overwhelming response that ADDA had to its directory after advertising in *InCite*.

Quite frankly, those involved in the project have been sadly disillusioned by the apathy which has been evidenced by the lack of subscribers. I personally am equally disillusioned by the lack of support from one-third of the identified information providers in this area as well, because we aimed at comprehensive coverage (a major promotional feature).

I do appreciate your interest and expression of support, so I trust that the above saga is enlightening! I am enclosing a sample copy and subscription details of *LIST* for you to look at and I would be happy to receive any feedback/comments from you. I do not honestly see Triad reviving *LIST* in view of the experiences I have narrated: the number of subscribers hovered just below 30 and even when we switched from typesetting to producing *LIST* on our laser printer using INMAGIC it was still incurring a significant loss, given all the initial setting up costs.

However, I would be happy to correspond further on the subject and do genuinely thank you for expressions of interest.

E. K. Whelan
Director

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influx /ɪnˈflʌks/, *n.* flowing in, esp. of stream etc. *into* river etc.; or of persons or things (*into* place etc.).

information retrieval /ɪnˈfɔːməʃən riːtrɪvəl/, *n.* the recovering of specific information from data stored in a computer.

infra-red /ɪnˈfrɑːrɛd/, *a.* Phys. having wavelength just beyond red end of visible spectrum; of or using such radiation.

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