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Group Therapy/ Title Changes

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Group Therapy

Column Editor, **Rosann Bazirjian** (Syracuse University)
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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 problem for serial vendors as well?

VENDOR RESPONSE:

Submitted by **Phil Greene** (VP and Gen. Mgr., EBSCO Subscription Services)

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 publishers - 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 automated serials control systems.

In addition to causing additional library 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 attention 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** (Director 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 publisher 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 journal happens, the publisher/editor redesigns the front cover with the individual reader in mind. The relationship with the "old" journal is played down. The idea is to tell the

reader: "This publication is new/improved/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: Psychoanalysis* 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 Newslines" newsletter that goes to the library community, a column in the *PsycINFO* 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 second 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.☛