Computerisation of Serials Control—A Practical Approach using a Personal Computer

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Serials consuming a major portion of library budget cannot be left unwatched resulting in gaps. The manual watch, claiming timely replacement for missing/unreceived issues may be slow or inaccurate and may lead to losses both in terms of service and stocks. It may be entrusted to computer for faster and accurate record keeping, issuing timely requests for replacements. A practical procedure along with computer program is given to utilise it, provided the library is equipped with a P.C.

1 WHY SERIALS PUBLICATION ?

Serials (Journals, Periodicals, Magazines) carry latest information about current activities of divergent fields of research and application. No one can afford to ignore the regular inflow of current information contained in these serials. Serials are brought out in limited number depending upon the number of subscribers (plus a few spare copies) who pay and register their copies at least for a year's publication schedule in advance. Costs of subscriptions to these, used to be quite high and are going higher year after year with the increasing price trend. Serials are normally brought out under a definite time schedule, brought out under a definite time schedule; quarterlies, half-yearlies and annual etc. A number of issues form a volume.

2 PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Serial librarian is supposed to :

1. Serve current issues.

2. Serve complete set (all the published issues of a volume) of each and every serial that are subscribed, exchanged etc.

These are essential to satisfy :

1. User's needs of a particular information provided in a serial that is subscribed in the library.

2. To clear the advances paid as subscriptions, membership etc. to enable the accounts section to adjust against the receipt in full what was expected against that advance.

3

To accomplish the goal the responsibility commands :

1. To keep a regular watch over the postal system for the receipt of issues of Journals daily.

2. To keep a proper record—what, when expected, received or not received, due/not due.

3. To send requests for due but not received numbers within the claim time to get a free replacement.

4. To keep the exact missing and unreplaceable issues record to enable the users know their non-availability.

3 PROBLEMS IN PERIODICAL RECEIPT

Periodicals are not brought out on a particular date by all the publishers. Moreover, these are sent by post air-lifted, air-mail or sea-mail and these systems have their own problems relating to the delivery time and misplacements. Normally foreign journals take 10-15 weeks to reach their destination if sent by seamail. Air-mail is speedy but is quite costlier. Publishers allow a very limited number of free replacements on the claims received within their time limit. Hence missing issues are to be immediately reported and claims lodged otherwise no free replacement could be ensured. Double payment for the same issue is neither permissible nor practicable.

4 PROCESS OF RECEIPT

Different systems of serial receipt control are in practice where a record is kept of,

1. Journal's name

2. Frequency of publication

3. Year
4. Volume } Subscription paid in advance

5. Issues due

6. Issues received

7. Addresses of the publisher/supplier entered on record card (s).

Periodically, say once a week or once a fortnight or a month, these records are checked one by one and records having missing (unreceived issues which are already published) issues are kept for sending reminders. The whole activity is quite cumbersome and time consuming. It is a repetitive type of activity and so chances of oversight cannot be ruled out.

5 COMPUTER'S APPLICATION

For speedy, accurate and handling large data at ease and will, computers can be applied to this activity. Small computers — personal computers, PC-AT can be used fruitfully. It can keep several files, make use of any or many at a time, posting of any new added record to any of the files accurately and its retrieval properly. It works on a set of instructions (Program) in a computer language.

51 Development of computer program

For a practical application, a computer program is developed in BASIC language and used to get desired results.

52 Input preparation specifications

There will be following files :

1. Computer program

2. Input data file

3. Input letter file

4. Output file

5. Abstract record — Direct printing

1. Computer program is to be fed through a BASIC compiler and can be obtained on request.

2. Input data file will contain the following information :

   1. Sl. No.
   2. Addresses of the publisher/supplier
   3. Name of Serial
   4. Frequency
   5. Set number
   6. Year
   7. Volume
   8. Issues

The format will be Sl. No. 1 in first line, Sl. No. 2 next four lines, one line blank, Sl. No. 3 in one line a comma, frequency letter (M = Monthly) a comma and set number — how many sets, volumes are recorded under this Journal. In next line year a comma and volume number a comma and then issue numbers separated by a comma. The issues not due are marked by a minus (—) sign like —2, —3, and the missing by a 0 zero. As soon an issue is received it is recorded on its number deleting the (—) sign. For example a subscription is paid for X Journal for Vol. Y for N numbers, to start afterwards. To record it, open the input file, mark the Journal year, volume and issue numbers with (—) sign. See Appendix 1.

If an issue is due but not received, it is replaced by 0 to show as missing. The computer will automatically issue a reminder (when asked to do so) requesting for a free replacement. It will have two responses — the issue is being replaced or cannot be replaced. In

later case, put a mark to avoid further reminders.

3. Letter File : This is also another input file that will have text of the reminder letter (sample given in Appendix 2). For various levels, different letters may be designed and file names specified — like J. LTR, J. LTR1, J. LTR2.

4. Output file : It will be generated by the computer itself after executing the program. It will issue reminders where it is needed.

5 It will also generate records to keep as office copy without printing letters provided the printer is on. This can be used as despatch copy as it will have address and missing record with date of issue. (Appendix 3)

53 Program specifications

The program is user friendly. It will ask a few questions before execution.

1.	Enter input data file name	J. Dat
2.	Enter input letter file name	J. LTR
3.	Enter output file name	J. Out
4.	Range of search year from	1987 to 1990
5.	Range of search Sl. No. from	1 to 4

54 Why range of search

It gives an opportunity of scanning serials record for more than one year at a time and so also from any serial number to any greater serial number at one search.

55 Input/Output through word star

Preparation of data, editing and regular recording of receipt of journals, in input data

file, letter in input letter file and printing of out file with editing (if any) will be done using a word star processor. Daily entry in data input file using find command to locate the Sl. No. will be helpful for quick access to a Journal received that day.

6 CONCLUSION

The program can be used for any number of Journals of any frequency for any number of years etc. Samples are appended with a view to provoke professionals to come forward to utilise this program.

APPENDIX—1

1

Periodical Division,
Pergamon Press,
Headington Hill Hall,
Oxford 0x3 OBW, England.

Computers and Structures, BM, 5
1986, 23, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6
1987, 24, 0, 2, 0, 4, 0, 0
1988, 25, 1, 2, 3, 0, 5, 6
1989, 26, 0, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
1990, 27, -1, -2, -3, -4, -5, -6

2

Society For Experimental Stress Analysis
14, Fairfield Drive,
Brookfield Centre,
C.T. 06805 (203) 775-6373, USA.

Experimental Mechanics, Q, 4
1987, 27, 1, 0, 0, 4
1988, 28, 1, 2, 3, 0
1989, 29, 0, 2, 0, 4
1990, 30, -1, -2, -3, -4

3

American Concrete Institute,
Post Box no. 19150,
Detroit, Michigan, 48219,
USA.

Concrete International, M, 3
1987, 9, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; 0; 9; 11; 0
1988, 10, 1, 0, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; 0; 0; 0; 10; 11; 0
1989, 11, 0, 2, 3, 0, 0, 6, 7; 0; 9; 0; 0; 12

4

American Society of Civil Engineers,
345 East, 47 Street,
New York 10017,
USA.

Journal of Structural Engg. Div, M, 4
1987, 110, 1, 0, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12
1988, 111, 0, 2, 3, 4, 0; 6, 7; 0; 9; 10; 11; 12
1989, 112, 0, 0, 0, 4, 5, 6, 7; 8; 0; 0; 0; 0
1990, 113, 1, -2, -3, -4, -5, -6, -7; 8; -9; -10; -11;
                                                    -12

APPENDIX—2

Subject :—*Request for replacement copy for un-received issues.*

Dear Sir/Madam,

We have subscribed to your following journal (s) for our library but we have not received the issues mentioned against them so far.

We have been watching regularly with the postal system and also have written to you timely for non receipt of this. We could neither get the original despatch nor a replacement as yet. Should we presume that it might have lost in transit.

It is essential to have a complete set of journals in the Library for a proper use and because of the position explained above, our volume is lying incomplete.

We therefore, request you to send us the replacement immediately to enable us to serve our readers. Please inform your action by air to avoid further reminders.

Looking forward for an early favour and cooperation.

Thanking you,   Yours faithfully,

(Library Officer)

APPENDIX—3

Periodical Division,   12-02-1990
Pergamon Press,
Headington Hill Hall,
Oxford ox3 OBW, England.

    Computers and Structures

1987	24	1	3	5	6	
1988	25	4				
1989	26	1				

Society For Experimental Stress Analysis,
14, Fairfield Drive,
Brookfield Centre,
CT. 06805 (203) 775-6373, USA.

    Experimental Mechanics

1987	27	2	3
1988	28	4	
1989	29	1	3

American Concrete Institute,
Post Box no. 19150,
Detroit, Michigan, 48219,
USA.

    Concrete International

1987	9	8	10	12		
1988	10	2	8	9	12	
1989	11	1	4	5	8	10	11

American Society of Civil Engineers,
345 East, 47 Street,
New York 10017,
USA.

Journal of Structural Engg. Div

1987	110	2						
1988	111	1	5	8				
1989	112	1	2	3	9	10	11	12