



Volatile Year for Magazines

A volatile year for women's magazines saw fierce competition among existing players for exclusive stories, photographs and readers.

The introduction of *New Weekly* by ACP, perhaps attempting to claw back market share lost to Time Warner's fast-growing *Who Weekly*, added yet another title to the congested market.

The biggest loser appears to be *New Idea*, which dropped a substantial 89,641 in circulation from September 1992 to September 1993. The response from Murdoch's Southdown Press has been aggressive, using its new printing technology to produce two editions of *New Idea* in the one week when Danni Minogue's celebrity wedding coincided with the NSW bushfires. *New Weekly* also responded innovatively in that week by bringing out its edition early on the Friday rather than the following Monday. It also endured criticism for using a dramatic photograph of the fires in which the foreground of a firefighter carrying a distraught child was superimposed on the background of another photograph of leaping flames.

Woman's Day, the market leader, gained 20,248 to 1,122,631 in the same period, while circulation for the Australian *Women's Weekly* remained virtually unchanged. *Who Weekly* has added 25,002 since its first audit figure of 182,448 in 1992. The circulation of *New Woman* at 138,416 rose by approximately 1,000 in the period. *Cleo* rose by 13,000 to 335,000 and *Cosmopolitan* by 13,000 to 330,000.

The audited circulation figures of the *New Weekly* are not yet available, but some reports attributed to it to a circulation of between 130,000-150,000, a long way from the stated aim of 500,000. The future looks more positive for *She*, ACP's latest entrant in the women's magazine market, which according to the publisher has averaged 100,000 over four issues. Overall, this crowded market seems to have made a net gain in readership, despite the hefty fall in *New Idea's*

circulation.

The May 1993 purchase by Murdoch's Southdown Press of Attic Futura, with its growing youth culture magazines *Girlfriend* and *TV Hits* reflected the view that this is an underserved market with substantial growth potential. *Girlfriend* has increased its circulation by 15,260 to 76,908 and *TV Hits* has increased its circulation by 13,516 to 127,764.

Time Warner's *Who Weekly* was launched shortly before the trial six issues of *Sports Illustrated* were released to test the market. While *Who Weekly* immediately circulated in a very promising manner, *Sports Illustrated*, in the six issues released, was slower to amass circulation. It was a puzzling start for a fully fledged version of *Sports Illustrated* in Australia, the land of fanatical sports lovers.

With the demise of *Sports Illustrated*, *Inside Sport*, first released in November 1991, increased its circulation by 15,994 to 75,386 and moved into the top 30 magazines. Perhaps Australian sports followers prefer specialist sports magazines.

Another new entrant that made a fast exit in 1993 was ACP's *National Enquirer*. Launched in September and promising no-holds-barred coverage of the private lives of celebrity Australians, it was suspended in December after managing sales of only 50,000 copies per week.

Four new titles, *Girlfriend*, *Inside Sport*, *Vogue Living* and *Women's Weekly* (English) pushed themselves into the lower end of the top 30 magazines in 1993.

Federal Publishing, with *Australian Country Looks*, *Australian Country Style* and *Gardening Australia* in its stable, is well placed to tap the enthusiastic response to 'lifestyle' magazines. *Australian Country Looks* is circulating at 46,538 since the inception of its bi-monthly format in September 1992, and *Australian Country Style* currently circulates at 64,000. *Gardening Australia*, which began publication in November 1991, has extended its circulation by approximately 17,000 to 100,000 in the past year, eclipsing its News Ltd rival *Your Garden* (77,747) which has lost more than 11,000 in the past year. □

Bruce Shearer

