

The Magazine About Magazines

Masthead

Q&A

Heritage Minister

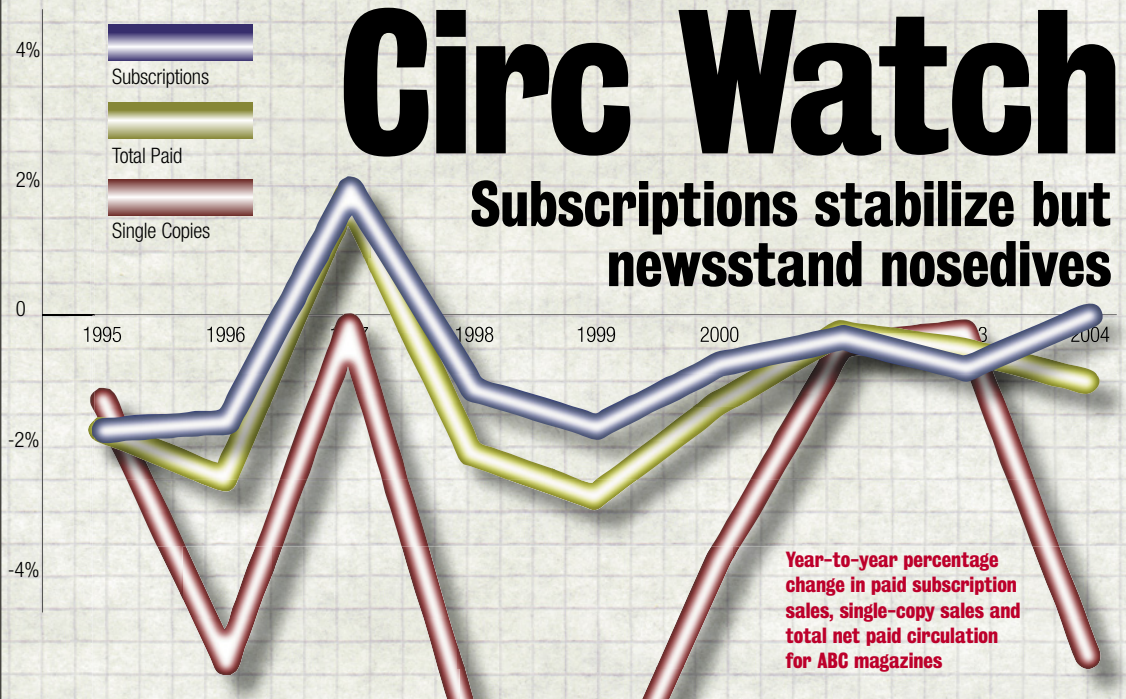
Hélène Scherrer



Q Why does the government value a strong domestic magazine industry?

A Magazines bring together communities of interest that help us connect across the vast distances of Canada. They help us explore our cultural diversity, and nurture our creative talent. They provide jobs to thousands of Canadians, and generate more than a billion dollars in economic activity each year.

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The uphill battle continued into its fifth year for the country's wary circulators. The latest ABC Fax-Fax data reveal that total paid circ at the nation's top 48 titles for which there is comparative data sank 0.99% in the last six months of 2003 versus the same period in 2002. Subscriptions were flat and, as the graph above shows, ABC-audited circulators took a pounding at newsstands, selling 5.3% (or 71,862) fewer copies. The culprit? One of them is surely clutter. Canadian titles occupy less than a fifth of available rack space and face stiff competition from a variety of foreign titles. The resulting riot of selection makes provoking a purchase difficult.

An even uglier picture prevails stateside where U.S. circulators were clobbered with a 7% drop in single-copy sales at the top 118 publishers, according to *Capell's Circulation Report*. Worse, the leading U.S. brands as a whole have been in decline for the past quarter century, *CCR* finds, with per-issue unit sales in the last decade alone dropping 36% or almost 17 million copies. Fact: North Americans just aren't making as many newsstand purchases as they used to.

Surprising, therefore, are the latest CCAB/BPA figures. For the six months ending last September, the largest 30 magazines show an amazing 20.1% spike in single-copy sales and a 3.3% gain in subscriptions for a very healthy 4.9% increase in combined paid circulation. While CCAB titles represent just 23% of Canada's audited paid circulation, their strong performance lends enough mass to cancel the industry's losses on the ABC ledger.

Taken together, the ABC/CCAB/BPA Top 78 reveal the following overall numbers: subs up 0.59%, newsstand down 2.6% for an overall paid gain of 0.07%.

The TV Guide effect. It can't be under-emphasized; 12 of the 20 largest magazines sustained losses. A direct comparison to their 2002 performance shows that those same top 20—veritable industry giants—saw their collective newsstand sales drop by 3.2%, subs by 1.8% for a total paid-circ loss of 2%.

Accounting for half of those losses is embattled *TV Guide*, which endured yet another withering year.

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Compare five years ago!

CCAB/BPA CONSUMER TRAC TOP 30

Magazine Title	Six months ending September 2003			% change vs. September 2002			Total paid as of Sept. 99
	Single Copies	Subscriptions	Total Paid	Single Copies	Subscriptions	Total Paid	
Homemakers	13,569	398,677	412,246	118.7%	-0.4%	1.4%	553,996
Todays Parent ⁽¹⁾	5,055	117,852	122,907	40.4%	-0.3%	0.9%	127,074
Madame au Foyer	3,356	102,841	106,197	179.7%	-0.2%	1.8%	135,092
Score Golf	0	88,095	88,095	0	1.2%	1.2%	4,151
Chickadee (including Owl Canadian Family)	1,713	83,448	85,161	3.8%	5.7%	5.7%	63,343
Ontario Out of Doors	6,039	78,705	84,744	8.8%	-2.2%	-1.5%	90,562
Ontario Snowmobiler	0	76,614	76,614	0	-0.7%	-0.7%	82,573 ⁽³⁾
Cottage Life	11,995	56,106	68,101	30.1%	5.3%	8.9%	58,381
Owl	1,137	64,223	65,360	1.8%	4.7%	4.7%	61,612
Chirp	1,226	63,331	64,557	-2.9%	10.6%	10.3%	54,202
TV Week Magazine	10,202	44,423	54,625	-29.1%	-5.2%	-10.8%	71,659
The Beaver	748	47,986	48,734	-27.4%	-0.1%	-0.7%	40,832
Pets Magazine	2,067	38,541	40,608	41240.0% ⁽⁴⁾	-12.5%	-7.8%	1,523
Dogs in Canada	917	35,682	36,599	13.1%	0.8%	1.1%	20,474
Downhomer	16,542	16,490	33,032	-8.6%	9.6%	-0.3%	32,353
World of Wheels	7,955	25,045	33,000	734.7%	44.6%	80.6%	49,165
Les Debrouillards	1,078	30,512	31,590	-24.5%	4.6%	3.3%	22,991
WeddingBells	30,148	0	30,148	10.0%	0	10.0%	26,369 ⁽³⁾
explore	6,589	23,412	30,001	1.1%	6.1%	5.1%	25,553
Today's Bride ⁽¹⁾	27,997	0	27,997	8.4%	0	8.4%	25,296 ⁽³⁾
Outpost	3,958	22,909	26,867	-14.1%	6.1%	2.5%	7,500
Cycle Canada	4,197	22,457	26,654	-3.6%	23.2%	18.0%	17,660
Saltscapes ⁽¹⁾	3,702	21,461	25,163	-16.4%	-1.8%	-4.3%	n/a
Geo Plein Air	5,108	17,325	22,433	-15.9%	7.6%	1.2%	14,161
Adorable ⁽¹⁾	15,573	5,992	21,565	-18.2%	-11.3%	-16.4%	17,305 ⁽²⁾
Gardenwise	5,514	14,657	20,171	20.5%	12.8%	14.8%	n/a
Up Here	778	18,421	19,199	57.5%	12.2%	13.6%	17,208
BC Business Magazine ⁽¹⁾	2,502	10,697	13,199	41.8%	0.4%	6.3%	8,853
Moto Journal	1,674	9,982	11,656	-15.2%	11.6%	0.07%	7,587
Velo Mag	3,831	6,793	10,624	-2.6%	2.1%	0%	n/a



(1) Six months ending June 2003; (2) Six months ending August 1998; (3) Publisher produced annual statement in March 1999; (4) CCAB reported single-copy sales of five copies for *Pets Magazine* in 2002, creating the unusual percentage increase

to post more positive results this year.

Both *Canadian Business* and *BC Business* also posted impressive newsstand gains, consistent with an upticking economy.

Making the effort. The most impressive gain in net paid in 2003 was the 80.6% jump accomplished by *World of Wheels*. Purchased about four years ago by Annex Publishing and Printing from Helpard Publishing, the 21-year-old bimonthly glossy "was long overdue for a redesign," says Niel Hiscox, president of Annex's auto and aviation group. "[Helpard made] no effort to pursue newsstand... Last year, for the first time, we started aggressively promoting one of the issues." A redesign debuted at the beginning of this audit period.

End rack acrylic pockets at Chapters produced astounding results. The magazine did so well, Hiscox says *WW* got rack positions that weren't even paid for. "At the end of the day, [the retailer] just wants to sell more magazines." Hiscox attributes the 44.6% jump in subscriptions to redesigned renewal forms and jacking renewal efforts from three to five times per year.

Conclusions. While the largest magazines struggled, smaller niche titles such as *Cottage Life*, *Cycle Canada*, *explore*, *MoneySense* and both wedding biannuals bucked the downward trend and posted strong results. It's the growth of these smaller, highly targeted titles that considerably softened the blow to overall circulation.

Such titles also show that success at the newsstand is possible. What's needed? Compelling editorial, investment in promotion and outstanding cover design. All circulators interviewed for this article stressed renewed desire to hone their classes of trade as well as locate new source lists for direct-mail sub drives.

The astounding success of Avid Media's *Canadian Home & Country* (formerly *Century Home*), a newcomer to the Top 48, has added roughly 75,000 units of paid circ to the pool. Lacking comparative data for 2003, *H&C's* strong performance had to be deferred for inclusion in next year's *Circ Watch*. The future bodes well on that count. **M**

ABC NINE-YEAR REVIEW

Year	Single Copies	Subscriptions	Total Paid
1995	-1.34%	-1.83%	-1.73%
1996	-5.4%	-1.7%	-2.5%
1997	-0.19%	1.9%	1.9%
1998	-6.6%	-1.2%	-2.1%
1999	-8.02%	-1.78%	-2.78%
2000	-3.8%	-0.81%	-1.34%
2001	0.49%	-0.4%	-0.24%
2002	0.29%	-0.88%	-0.5%
2003	-5.3%	-0.06%	-0.99%

FRENCH-ENGLISH COMPARISON OF TOP 48 ABC TITLES

	Subscriptions	Single Copies	Total Paid
Totals for English titles	4,669,914	667,354	5,337,268
% of paid circulation	87.3%	12.7%	—
% change vs. Dec. 31, 2002	-0.17%	-2.3%	-0.44%
Totals for French titles	1,645,910	604,798	2,312,302
% of paid circulation	73.1%	27.1%	—
% change vs. Dec. 31, 2002	0.23%	-8.5%	-2.25%
Total	6,315,824	1,272,152	7,587,976
% change vs. Dec. 31, 2002	-0.06%	-5.3%	-0.99%