

Recently, I purchased a bundle of older magazines at an auction for a dollar. There were six issues of Aquarium Fish Magazine dating from August 1997 to January 1998. Why would I buy a bundle of seven year old magazines? Well, I had scouted the items on the next few tables and there was nothing I was interested in until five tables from then. Looking at these magazines was a good way of passing the time until the items I was interested in came up for bids.

There are always interesting articles to read, colourful photos and advertisements to look at. It is always fun to see some piece of equipment that you are currently using or an article on fish that you are keeping or have kept in the past. In one of the ads, a canister filter model called Prime from Renaissance was featured. I had never heard of it, but since the magazine is published in the U.S.A., maybe that make and model may not have been available in Canada. Later at home, I did an internet search and found that Renaissance International is no longer in business, but these canister filters are still manufactured by Hydor of Italy. PetsMART now distributes them under the Proquatics brand. I guess a lot of things can change in seven years!

Another thing I noticed in the fish store ads was the absence of website and email addresses. Today, virtually all ads contain this information. I am a curious type of person, so later at home as a test, I selected one page of eight ads and checked on those fish stores today. All are still in existence seven years later. Five stores have multi-page websites; one has a simple page with their logo, street address and phone number. Two stores have no web presence other than yellow page listings. I also found it interesting that a couple of the stores had moved to another location very near by or in the same plaza. One had increased their total capacity of display tanks from 6,000 gallons to 10,000 gallons, and their website is very large with lots of photos and product listings. I guess in this case it was "go big or go home".

Back in 1997, the internet was still a very new experience for many people. There was an article on using FISHNET to access messages and files about aquariums and fish keeping. You had to subscribe to the CompuServe service and receive a kit of software for either DOS, Windows or MacIntosh. Today it is so much easier using a browser and doing a Google search. In the January 1998 issue, the magazine announced its new website at www.aquariumfish.com. It boasted that as long as you had a personal computer, a modem and any browser software, you could read older articles, see an index of previous issues, ask a question and see new answers daily. There was also a "links" page to other internet resources. Seven years later, they have archives, Questions and Answers, many active forums of discussion, and polls that you can fill in and see the current results. There are lots of photos, species profiles, classified ads and lots more to contribute to Google's eight billion indexed pages.

In this bundle of six issues were articles discussing things that we continue to learn about today:

- cichlids and plants, how can they co-exist?
- keeping and breeding African Rift lake cichlids
- which South American and African fish can you keep together?
- filter considerations, lighting techniques, water chemistry, etc.
- are Rasboras the perfect community fish?
- the importance of regular water changes
- dietary requirements of various fish
- etc., etc.

These magazines get a second life educating, entertaining and promoting the hobby.

Give it a try at the next auction; spend a dollar or two and buy a bundle for fun!