

Editorial:

Please Don't Stop Writing to Us...

By William P. Ancker

I would like to use this editorial to explain a hidden component of the English Teaching Forum: our decentralized distribution system. Here at the editorial office in Washington, DC, we edit and design the magazine, but we do not handle the distribution of our product. As a publication of the U.S. Department of State intended primarily for EFL teachers outside the United States, the Forum is distributed by American embassies in 116 countries.

Here is a complicating factor in our unique distribution system: each embassy decides how it will distribute the Forum locally. At some embassies, the magazines are donated to teacher training colleges, university departments of English, or teachers associations to be given away to individuals. At other embassies, the magazines are distributed by paid subscription through an intermediary, such as a book store. In a few places, the magazine is given away only at special events such as national conferences and regional workshops, so teachers may receive more than one issue at a time.

We receive a lot of correspondence from all over the world: on average five letters, faxes, and e-mail messages each day. Much of that correspondence is requests from teachers who want us to send them the Forum, which we cannot do from Washington. If you want to receive the Forum, and I am grateful that you do, please contact the Public Affairs office of the American embassy in your country.

If you already subscribe and have a problem, please contact the local distributor.

Finally, the Forum is available in the U.S. and in countries where the American embassy does not distribute it (for example, Canada, England, South Korea, and Australia) by subscription from Alta Book Center (info@altaesl.com).

While I'm on this sensitive subject of not being able to meet our readers' requests, let me add that many people who write to us ask for copies of textbooks, dictionaries, and other ELT materials. The most frequently requested item is the video that accompanies Diane Larsen-Freeman's well-known methodology book (see the explanation on page 55 of this issue). Unfortunately, our budget does not permit us to send materials to the deserving teachers and students who write and ask for donations.

It is gratifying that so many readers contact us. We are happy to hear your reactions to what we publish, both letters of praise and letters of criticism, as well as suggestions for improving the Forum and its distribution. Of course, your submissions are always welcome. Most of the authors whose articles you see in the Forum are themselves readers of the magazine. Please don't stop writing to us, but do keep in mind what we can and cannot do for you, our readers.