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## The Nemesis Speaks-Chuck Hamaker

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# The Nemesis Speaks

against the grain

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(you may not always agree with him, but his energy is boundless and he never stops thinking!) **Chuck Hamaker (LSU)**

## Serial Price Increases

Developments in Serials are moving very rapidly. Planning and projects of the last two years are bearing fruit, not only in articles but in agendas. Even general media coverage is increasing. This is a summary of some of the more recent articles and ongoing activities. For reports of developments from various national conferences, take a look at October Ivins' (LSU) regular column in *Serials Review*, and get on the mailing list of Marcia Tuttle's (UNC-Charlotte) forthcoming E-mail and/or print newsletter for the PVLIR Subcommittee on Serials Pricing. (Will be available on EBSCONET, DATALINX, ALANET, BITNET, and others. Please send her your E-Mail address and network

Tuttle@UNC.bitnet. Datalinx=TUTTLE; ALANET=Tuttle)

Under Gayle Feldman's byline in the January 13, 1989, issue of *Publishers Weekly*, "Professional Publishing" is her article "The Serials Pricing Controversy: High Subscription Prices are Straining Publisher-Library Relations" (*PW* 1/13/89, 68-70). The cover of *PW* calls it "The Serials Wars." It is significant as the first major piece in *PW* on the problem. Feldman held extensive phone interviews with librarians, publishers, vendors, and ARL. She does a credible job of introducing a very complex situation to an audience that often is more concerned about foreign rights to Stephen King's latest novel than about developments in the academic community. The final word in the article is given to Robert Wedgeworth, "All of us have to look at what we can do that will balance the various interests involved, in order to ensure that the process of scientific communication does not break down." (p.70). Perhaps Feldman's article would have been stronger if she had tied declines in li-

brary book sales to pricing excesses for STM journals from the major publishers not, as Charles Ellis of Wiley suggests, to photocopying or ILL. Many librarians believe a prolonged feeding frenzy at the library budget trough by a few STM publishers is a fundamental factor in the present crisis. Feldman's article was to help prepare for February's AASP meeting in Boston, where Boswood of Elsevier will chair a session on Scientific Serials entitled "Plus ça change."

## Scientific Communication

Kim A. McDonald. "Science Panel Recommends Steps for Encouraging Open Communication of Research Results"

(*Chronicle of Higher Education*,

December 14, 1988, p. A5) is **must reading**. The article discusses recommendations issued

by the National Science Board, the policy-making arm of the National Science Foundation. A panel of six board members from *academe* headed by Frank H.T. Rhodes, President of Cornell, includes James J. Duderstadt, President, University of Michigan; Charles E. Hess, Dean of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, U.C. Davis; Charles L. Hosler, VP, Research and Dean, Grad. School, Penn State; Kenneth L. Nordtvedt, Jr., Professor of Physics, Montana State; James L. Powell, President, Reed College. Among other recommendations, the report calls on the federal government to: "Carry out a comprehensive assessment of the nation's scientific publishing and dissemination system. Such an as-

essment should look at the impact of the rising price of journal subscriptions and determine whether more effective ways to translate and disseminate scientific literature from other countries are needed." A basic assumption is "that maintaining openness generally has a superior social claim over other objectives deriving from economics or national security." The science board will meet "next month (i.e., January?) to draft guidelines, based on the report, that it will ask foundation officials to put into effect." *If anyone knows how to get a copy of the report, let Chuck Hamaker know -- please!!!*

## More On Serial Prices

Thanks to Bill Schenck (LC) for a copy of the *Chronicle* article and the next item:

Richard E. Rowbers, Chief, Science Policy Research

Division, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress has prepared a CRS report for Congress (88-264 SPR) "Research Journal Prices -- Trends and Problems" update September 13, 1988. The report asks the question which is at the base of all journal cancellation projects: what... "the consequences of significant cancellations will be to the Nation's research efforts." If broad scale access to research results cannot be maintained through informal means, i.e. electronic networks, meetings, exchanges of informal reports, etc., the report concludes "then greater concentration of collections by research libraries will reduce research productivity. Any further analysis of the

Nemesis: 1. The Greek goddess of fate and punisher of extravagant pride... (except for the sex, this sounds reasonable)

journal price problem should pay serious attention to this question." What can we say but amen! Thanks to Rowberg, and Bill Schenck, again, for the copy.

## Publishing Oligopoly

-- I'm sure you're tired of reading this stuff

-- but a letter

by Hamaker  
and Grinell in  
*Library*

*Journal*

(January,  
1989, p.8)

"The

Publishing Oligopoly" provides documentation for the increase, over time, in the strangle-hold some of the more expensive journals (and publishers) have on research library budgets. It's a follow-up to Dougherty and Johnson (*LJ*, May 15, 1988, pp. 27-29).

Robert Maxwell -- in addition to the 2.7 billion dollar purchase of Macmillan, Inc. -- has recently added BRS to the conglomerates' holdings. ORBIT, of course, is a familiar Pergamon product. The media mogul is getting mainstream attention in the U.S. See a poorly researched piece in *Time*, November 28, 1988, pp.82-84. It ranks (pun) with 20/20's coverage of the opulent gentleman.

As of September 1988, the Dutch newspaper *Trouw* reported that Maxwell owned 10% of Elsevier; the Pearson Group (*Financial Times*, Longman, etc.) owned another 15%. Elsevier in turn owns 33% of Wolter's Kluwer. Pearson Group has another stockholder of interest to the information community, Rupert Murdoch, who at last count included Harper among his holdings. Stock swapping (Pearson-Elsevier) and overlapping ownership, nesting as one friend called it, may become even more prevalent as the Common Market moves forward to EEC's dream of a unified Europe. Thanks to Lis Henderson (of LSU) for translations of recent articles from the Dutch press.

The effects of such developments, in terms of prices and information control and access, need to be examined and

## The Nemesis Speaks (continued . . .)

thought through very carefully. Copyright represents one of the largest government-granted monopolies that does not have a regulatory body. We don't want one, but does this concentration amongst the world's largest scientific publishers raise such a spectre? What dangers does information colonialism in the sciences represent? We know something of the problems created for research library

collections. The threat of government watch-dogs, which could be one solution proposed to fend off

some of the excesses (*sui generis* according to publishers who claim they have no control over growth of size, *ipso facto*, cost) is not a ghost to be raised lightly. Let's get down to some solutions before the sleeping giant of "official" involvement opens its eyes.

## European Serials

On other fronts:

some statements coming from various

sources on increases in cost of serials from Europe.

Tess Carey, President of

the Turner Subscription Agency, a Faxon subsidiary, and former Bowker exec. credited with introducing the no sales through vendors decision at ALA, (and wife of Michael Boswood, CEO of Elsevier, NY) has written "Serials Funds: A Surplus Predicted" *Bottom Line* (January 1989), pp. 5-6. "What we have now is an opportunity to plan for the future. Whereas professionals appear to be conservatively inclined about what new titles to add to the collection, they should be focusing increasingly on the issue of improving access to the information already subscribed

to and archived in the library. Librarians need to provide new services that add value for their clients. Instead of settling for presiding over a library of record (i.e., archiving what is already residing in the library), librarians should seek to enhance access to information regardless of where it resides." Besides the "added value" buzz word, this introduces the Faxon Index Service being developed to provide electronic table of contents. The other major recommendation is to "put those titles back" that have been cancelled. More significant, however, is the guess from an industry insider regarding future prices. "It is not unreasonable to expect that by 1991/92 double-digit inflation for European publications will be here again." Reaction from the peanut gallery: A tout is a tout. For plush publishers planning on getting fatter: Read my lips: don't bank those increases yet.

## Don't Worry Be Happy . . .

Another "Don't Worry; Be Happy"

bulletin from Dr. Wolfgang Berg, managing director of Brockhaus. REF: Journal subscription Prices 1989. "Brockhaus has received approximately 35 to 40% of (German)

Nemesis: 3. a formidable and usu. victorious rival or opponent...(who's keeping score) definitions courtesy of Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.

publishers' invoices for the period 1989 up to now (November, 1988). The price increase of these journals is below 5%.... If you consider a plus of 5% for your budgetary evaluation for German journals, you are on the safe side." Comment: And the dollar between October and November only fell 10%. (Thanks October Ivins (LSU) for a copy of this circular letter.) As of the end of January the dollar is about 109% above last January's levels. Watch the bouncing currency ball -- you can bet our European publishers do.

## The Nemesis Speaks

(continued . . .)

### Dougherty . . .

Richard Dougherty: "Are Libraries Hostage to Rising Serials Costs?" *Bottom Line* 2,4 (1988), 25-27. A provocative article from Dougherty reporting on Michigan's experience with targeting specific publishers for cancellation reviews and spending targets. He raises the question of developments that could bypass both libraries and publishers. Since Duderstadt had a major role in vetoing the targeting project, it is interesting to note Michigan's new president promised to "address this matter... cooperating with national efforts...while we endeavor to develop a broad strategy for dealing with rising costs." Dr. Duderstadt from his position within NSF has obviously taken Michigan's problems to heart, and is seeking national solutions, as noted in our second news item above. Maybe you failed in your targeting project, Dick, but you certainly did not fail in getting serious attention focused on the problem. P.S. Read the editorial in the new issue of *Journal of Academic Librarianship* (January, 1989) for some of Dougherty's observations on last year's Charleston Conference...

## Serials pricing update

1990 --- too early to tell??

Due to the fact that prices for journals are not set until late spring or early to mid summer, it is too early for many serials' vendors to give us a reading on serials pricing in the year ahead. This is further complicated by the fact that there is a new Administration in Washington and the ability of the American dollar to remain stable in European markets is, as always, unknown. More will be reported in future issues of this communication. In the meantime, please send me whatever information you all might want to communicate.

## Books pricing update

Celia Wagner and Doug Duchin (BNA)

Book prices rose steadily throughout 1988. From December, 1987, through December, 1988, the average book price rose from \$37.23 to \$40.85, a jump of 9.7%. Within that overall increase, the following figures show increase by Country of Original Publication.

For the year ending	Avg. U.S. origin list price	Avg. U.K. origin list price	Avg. other foreign origin list price
December 1987	\$32.40	\$39.71	\$57.82
June 1988	\$33.63	\$42.21	\$60.96
December 1988	\$34.56	\$46.43	\$65.28
annual percentage increase	6.7%	16.9%	12.9%

Publishing output appears to be about the same as last year.

Price activity varies between different subject areas. Law book prices, for example, fell slightly, to an average of \$43 per title, while Engineering titles held steady. The average Science title now costs \$62.02, with Mathematics the only area where prices average less than \$50. And the average Chemistry title has risen since July from \$88 to \$91.

*And...speaking of book prices... how about this??*

(from your editor)

In a memorandum dated November 19, 1988, a publisher who will remain nameless informed its accounts that there would be an 8% across the board increase on all of its titles as of January 1, 1989. How frequently does this happen in a given year? Are jobbers thankful that this publisher didn't take the other option of shortening the jobber's margin? Or did they -- indirectly?

## NOTE

Charleston Conference 1988 papers submitted for publication will appear in *Library Acquisitions: Practice and Theory*, vol. 13, no.2, late spring, 1989.

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