Bet You Missed It

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Bet You Missed It!

Abstracts from the recent literature by a growing few!!---compiled and edited by Mike Markwith (Faxon)---still no order, so don't look for it.

Who says Americans Don't Care About Culture?

Around the Ides of March, at a conference at the New York Public Library presided over by Vartan Gregorian, publishers such as Simon and Schuster, Random House, Doubleday and Bantam "agreed to publish the first printings of quality hard-cover trade books on acid-free paper." Barbara Goldsmith (link between preservationists and publishers) is credited with authorship of the "declaration." "Now, during the next year alone, acid-free paper production will double, and experts estimate that within three years virtually all trade books will be printed on it,” says Goldsmith. "This moral act of commitment will affect the entire future of our cultural heritage." On to computers?

Katina Strauch
College of Charleston

Will There Be Life After Journals?

This paper presents a broad-ranging discussion of the factors influencing changes in collections and services in science libraries. It discusses the balance between current and future needs in collection management, the use of various selection methodologies and tools, the effect of increases in journal prices on the distribution of library materials budgets between serials and monographs, and the impact that the cancellation of subscriptions has had on the publishing industry. The description of changes in services to researchers focuses on the advent of the high-tech library, including online searching, reference publications on CD-ROM, and publishing on demand.

This article is too general for either acquisitions or science librarians. Its strength lies in the provision of a broad analysis of the issues and problems facing science libraries. It is a suitable handout for those faculty members and researchers who want to know "why..." or "why not...?"

Julie Nilson
Indiana University Libraries


The arguments go back and forth in Britain as to whether to maintain the Net Book Agreement which carries with it the lovely phrase of "price maintenance." This arrangement essentially fixes the prices of books and disallows the option of discounting by booksellers. Those in favor of the Net Book Agreement contend that some specialty bookshops will close due to the lost sales from the higher volume dealers and that "poetry, first novels, short stories, and literary criticism are all at risk. World class writers might not reach print without the help of price-fixing."

Rayment and others contend that these arguments exaggerate the situation. He points out that the abolishment of Net Book Agreement did not harm the Australian book trade; in fact, according to one publisher, the result of killing the Net Book Agreement was a "massive non-event." Three questions are posed: Will books get cheaper if the Net Book Agreement is abolished? Will I be able to find the book I want? Where will I find the book I want? Rayment's forecast: "Although some prices could go up and the choice might narrow, little of significance will change."

Stephen Clark
College of William & Mary

Some other cites from Julie Nilson:


"What's Wrong With This Library?" by N. David Mermin, in Physics Today for August 1988, 9-11.

Bet You Missed It! . . . continued . . .

The Net Agreement:
One More Time
"A Growing Business With a
Dwindling Customer Base," by
Rachel Johnson in the Financial
Times for Thursday, April 6,
1989, 23.

The caption says "Rachel Johnson
explains the paradox of Britain's book
wholesalers." We've heard some of this
before. "Publishers produce beautiful
lovely books," says Timothy Melgund,
marketing manager of Heathcote Books,
a paperback wholesaler, 'but they are
shooting themselves in the foot by dis-
tributing so badly." . . . "Wholesalers
say that the service they offer makes
their price worth paying." . . .

This article is about the age-old ten-
sion between the publisher and the
wholesaler with the bookstore thrown
in instead of the library. Apparently,
in England, the smaller bookstores are
using wholesalers more than their larger
counterparts, who may only use whole-
slers to "top up stocks of fast-moving
titles." Some bookstores don't want to
go through wholesalers because it costs
them more money. "The obvious prob-
lem is their expense, which retailers con-
ider prohibitive. Even the major players
like Dillons do not relish paying a pre-
mium for fast service, which is vital for
the health of the small independents.

"Terry Maher, chairman of Pentos,
says that Dillons, which it owns, only
uses a wholesaler in an emergency; oth-
erwise Dillons relies on the publisher to
get books onto the shelves." As well as
lobbying for an end to the Net Book
Agreement, "the Pentos group is win-
ing itself a reputation for 'aggressive
credit management,' which in turn is
hurting the wholesalers. According to
the industry's publication, The Bookseller,
this amounts to taking longer credit peri-
dods than almost any other leading book-
seller." Still, the wholesalers are optim-
istic though the tension remains.

Katina Sirauch
College of Charleston

The Battle of the Budgets
"Budget Aids Education, Hampers
Libraries," by Howard Fields in
Publishers Weekly, January 27,

One of Reagan's last acts before returning
to his million dollar estate was to send
a budget to Capitol Hill. Several
items directly affect libraries and publish-
ers. While Reagan asked for "modest"
increases in most educational programs
of interest to publishers (vocational edu-
cation, block grants to the states, and li-
cency programs), he requested that federal
aid to libraries and subsidies for U.S.
Postal Service deliveries to non-profit
institutions be eliminated. The FY 1990
budget includes an increase of $15 milli-
on ($478.7 million in 1989) to assist
the 'block grants.' Congress, on the other
hand, has accepted the role of champion
for libraries. Ignoring Reagan's no in-
crease request for federal libraries,
Congress provided a $20 million increase
over last year's $101 million.

Chris Desjardais-Lueth
Brown University

To Net or Not to Net: Side 2
"British Book Industry Debates
Elimination of Ban on Discounts,"
in The New York Times, March
12, 1989.

In a state-sanctioned practice dating back
to the early 1900s, books in Britain
must be sold in retail shops at the price
established by the publisher. But now,
some of the 3500 bookstore owners in
the UK think this is a relic of the past.
The so-called Net Book Agreement may
be breaking down, as a large chain,
Pentos plc threatens to begin discounting
this year.

Supporters of the Net Book Agreement say that discounting will lead
to price wars, and ultimately, to a reduc-
tion in the number of independent stores.
They predict that the vast assortment of
titles, which is found in many larger indepen-
dent stores, would no longer
be affordable. The small "book
of distinction" would become more
difficult to publish. And British book-
selling would become like "the wasteland
of the United States."

Supporters of discounting say that their opponents blend "cultural elitism
and business pessimism" in their fear
of price competition. Cutting prices on
bestsellers would, in the view of Pentos
spokesman, stimulate public interest and
bring more browsers into the shops.

The Thatcher government has not yet
taken a stand, but it seems likely that
they will side with the discounters. There
is not much sympathy in the govern-
ment for what they see as price fixing.

England is the last English-speaking
country with price maintenance on
books, but Germany does have such a
system, and France reinstated it two
years after allowing books to be sold at
any price the retailer desired.

American book buyers do get a better
deal on bestsellers than do the British.
But on a broader range of books, the
British pay an average of 15% less than
Americans, even though the few bestsell-
ers are about 25% cheaper in the U.S. A
British economist says that book publish-
ing is an industry in the U.S. and in
Britain, it is much more a profession,
"still a kind of gentleman's occupation."

Barry Fast
Scholarly Book Center

B & T on the Block?
"Will Peter Grace Call it a Day?"
in Business Week, March 20,
1989, 146.

Peter Grace, the chairman of W.R. Grace
and owner of less than 1% of the com-
pany, is seventy-five and, some specula-
tors say, thinking of "selling the com-
pany which he has run for forty-four
d years. 'Grace, is an ideal LBO candidate
given its excellent gross cash flow,
steady and predictable growth, and the
option of spinning off unrelated busi-
nesses and nonperforming assets' says
Mark Gulley, a specialty-chemical
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continued . . .

amanly at Dean Witter Reynolds. For those of you
who don't know, LBO is a leveraged buyout, and...W.R. Grace owns
Baker & Taylor! Are you getting out
your checkbook?

Katina Strauch
College of Charleston

The Book Will Rise Again?
"Are Books Holding Their Own?
by Leonard Wood in Publishers

The results of the Gallup telephone sur-
vey conducted between October 24 and
November 21, 1988, to sample adult
entertainment activities are in! The ques-
tion was "to cite the entertainment activi-
ties" those 1,005 adults polled had pur-
sued the previous day. Some good news. .
some bad. Nine out of 10 Americans
watched T.V. (91%). Eighty-nine percent
had read something: 78% newspapers;
52% magazines; only 37% (i.e., less
than four in every ten) read a book.
That's the good news.

Asked when they had last read an
entire book, 50% replied last month,
but 4% (really 7 million people) have
never read a book from cover to cover. Maybe Reagan's $15 million for state
literacy programs will help?

Chris Desjarlais-Lueh
Brown University

Age: Where is Thy Sting?
"Stubborn Patriarch," by Claire
Poole in Forbes, February 6,

This one's about John Wiley & Sons and
its 78-year-old Chairman W. Bradford
Wiley. Started 182 years ago in 1907 by
Charles Wiley, it has published many
noteworthy, including Herman
Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and
Elizabeth Barrett Browning. However,
Poole reports, "Wiley clearly needs new
management and new blood. It is a good-
size company, with $241 million in rev-

ues in its last fiscal year (ended April
30, 1988). But earnings were down 60%
to $4.7 million, or $1.10 per share -- a
2% net profit margin, one of the lowest
in the industry. Bradford Wiley seems
determined to hang on. But a family
member confides to Forbes that the
company's independence will probably
end when the elderly chairman dies, if
not before. So, the vultures circle."

Katina Strauch
College of Charleston

Micro: Wave of the Future?
"Frankly We Always Prefer Ours
Simmered in a White Wine
Sauce," in the Wall Street Journal

Two researchers at the State University
of New York, Syracuse, have come up
with a way of eliminating insects from
books! Cook the books in a microwave
oven. One minute in the microwave can
rid the book of bugs. This method does
not work with books that contain theft
detection strips. Some leather bound
books shrink, and some glues melt.
Some libraries prefer to freeze their
infested books.

The researchers feel, however, that
the microwave solution is the least
expensive in most cases. "Besides, the
microwave can be used to heat lunches or
make popcorn."

Barry Fast
Scholarly Book Center

Mass Market Science . . .
"Accommodating Science: The
Rhetorical Life of Scientific
Facts," by Jeanne Fahnstock in
Written Communication for 1988,
vol.3, 275-296.

What happens to scientific information
as it travels from reports designed for
scientific peers to accounts aimed at gen-
eral audiences? Fahnstock examined the
rhetorical changes in information that
occurred between articles published for
two AAAS periodicals -- Science and
Science83. The changes are characterized
by the shift from forensic argument (that
which affirms the validity of past facts)
to that of science accommodation, or epide-
dctic argument (that which deals with
the celebration of science). While there
are important issues in the presentation
of information in the articles on bees and
bears -- the popular magazine presented
information in order to solicit wonder
and removed hedges and qualifications
that conferred greater certainty on
reported facts -- there are more serious
consequences in articles reporting on the
reputed mathematical inferiority of girls
to boys. These findings are important to
librarians as they weigh the relative mer-
its of sources of information to acquire
and access, i.e., all information is not
equal. As well, it provides an intellectual
base to make arguments for the acquisi-
tion of specific types of materials.

Alice Randlett
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

Your Bowling Ball is
Watching You!!
"Hey Guys, Let's Keep Bowling
Low-Tech," in The New York

American Libraries managing editor Art
Plotnik wrote an op-ed piece condemning
smart electronics in bowling alleys. As a
member of a blue collar bowling league,
Mr. Plotnik enjoys the leisurely pace of a
typical evening at the alleys. Brunswick
Corporation is threatening this with the introduction of video moni-
tors that provide an instant replay of a
player's bowl, as well as a display of the
ball's speed and trajectory. Now games
are being invented, as well, where pins
are set in a configuration different from
the normal bowling arrangement.

This high-tech attempt to relieve a
player's boredom is lamentable, because
boredom is part of the game. "Just
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continued . . .

because a thing can be done with microchips, must we always do it." Mr. Plotnik writes that Brunswick is bringing high-tech "heresies to the last lowly sanctuary of play.

Barry Fast
Scholarly Book Center

Business is Next to Godliness

The growing popularity of business books, now accounting for 1.8 billion dollars of publishing revenues, is discussed in this article. Sales of business titles in bookstores last year increased 20-30%. Publishers such as The Free Press have doubled sales in the last five years without increasing their number of annual titles due to the new appeal of business books among consumers. No longer are business books considered boring; they have now apparently become the "stuff of fantasy." With the exception of The Bible, some cookbooks, and some reference titles, it appears as if Iacocca: An Autobiography has become the best-selling hardcover of all time.

What accounts for this increased interest in business titles? The answer is partially "greed and fear." Consumers are craving books that hold out promises of quick riches, and others who have endured the 1970s energy crises and 1980s recessions are interested in learning how to hold on to their jobs. William Shinker, publisher of Harper & Row's trade division, calls it "anxiety." "Whenever in book publishing you can tap into anxiety, the chances are you will have a book that sells very well and could become a bestseller."

Rosann Bazirjian
University of West Florida

Tell Me Why a Hearse Horse Snickers Hauling a Lawyer's Bones?*

Nicholas Veleotes, President AAP, and others are concerned that state-operated universities and other institutions may be able to reproduce copyrighted works without permission or royalties. The 11th Amendment states, "...judicial power of the U.S. shall not be construed to extend to any suit in law or equity, commenced or prosecuted against one of the U.S. by citizens of another state of by citizens or subjects of any foreign state." In other words, states (individually or collectively) cannot be sued by persons (individual or collective) of another state.

In two separate suits last year, Appeals Courts found that no suit could be brought against a state or its institutions for infringement under the 11th Amendment. Congressman Kastenmeier and Senator DeConcini, heads of Copyright Subcommittees, promised to hold hearings on the issue early this year.

Chris Desjarlais-Lueth
Brown University

(For further discussion of this issue, see "The Nemesis" on page 13.)

*Quote from Carl Sandburg's poem "The Lawyers Know Too Much"

How to Succeed In Speed

Speed, or "time-based" strategy is the driving force behind many companies these days because "speed kills the competition." Quickly distributing products increases a business' market share because customers love getting their orders now. Although this article was speaking of such businesses as General Electric, Honda, and Hewlett-Packard, one cannot help but relate it to acquisitions and the desire of most librarians for speedy receipt of book orders.

Interestingly enough, this article by Brian Dumaine indicates that the business which makes speed its driving force will be more efficient because it will be forced to "do it right the first time." The business would also have more satisfied employees because they would feel that they are working for a more "responsive" and "successful" company.

Businesses are warned not to speed up operations simply by trying to do the same things only faster. That type of "stepping on the gas" will not work. A business must take the time to analyze and rethink its operations from scratch. So, book vendors are asked to remember Brian Dumaine's words, "speed is catching on fast."

Rosann Bazirjian
University of West Florida
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continued . . .

Let There Be Cats. Part 2

Cats obviously seem to catch the imaginations of news teams! This time there's a praying one in a Buddhist temple in Kuala Lumpur and the devout believe that it is "a reincarnation of a person who practised Buddhism in a previous life." But the temple is afraid of "sensationalism and emphasizes that the cat is also an everyday mother-of-three." So..have you hugged your cat today?

Katina Strauch
College of Charleston

The Charleston Advisor

Answers to questions from the last issue of Against the Grain

Regarding the purchase of foreign language materials by small colleges, says Jane Baldwin, North Carolina State University: Foreign language materials aren't hard to get if you know what and how to order. She also suggests that we form a group to discuss procurement of foreign materials for libraries. Is anyone besides Katina and Jane interested?

And about the contract regarding copying of materials, Karen Schmidt, University of Illinois, Urbana, comments: "Our legal counsel here on the Urbana campus advises us not to become entangled in these matters. We regularly cross this kind of statement out before we sign them. Some contracts even specify that the person signing will be held personally responsible for any copying (or whatever is forbidden). In any case, we will not agree to any indemnification clause. We have had only one problem so far, with a CD-ROM product. The publisher/producer protested at first, but later agreed."

And William M. Hannay of the Chicago law firm of Schiff Hardin & Waite in Chicago, Illinois, comments on the current state of the copyright law as it applies to libraries.

"The United States Supreme Court considered the general topic of library copying in the 1975 case of Williams & Wilkins Co. v. United States, but was unable to reach any consensus. Following lengthy debates in Congress, a special provision covering libraries was added as part of the 1976 Copyright Act. That complex provision -- Section 108 of the Act -- authorizes copying by libraries in a limited number of circumstances so long as there is no 'purpose of direct or indirect commercial advantage.' In general, I would not expect a provision in a publisher's contract that prohibits 'copying' to be interpreted as prohibiting the type of conduct authorized under Section 108. Nor would I expect it to be interpreted as prohibiting an individual from copying selected pages to use in research under the well-recognized doctrine of 'fair use.' Libraries should familiarize themselves with Section 108 and consult counsel in case of any doubt as to its applicability."

Are y'all paying attention??

Do you have any other Questions and Issues for the Charleston Advisor

And coming soon, I hope, a comment on "licensing agreements."

Some new issues:

Is anyone out there allocating serials money by departments and or allowing books and serials money to be divied up (is that how you spell it?) by departments? I know a lot of libraries do dividing up for book funds, but how about serials?

See what you get when you force me to use my own questions?