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Tom Loughran
Blackwell's Book Services, tom.loughran@blackwell.com

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Books Pricing Update

Trends in Book Pricing by Subject Area - June 30, 2003

by Tom Loughran (Manager Approval Systems, Blackwell’s Book Services, 6024 SW Jean Road, Bldg. G, Lake Oswego, OR 97035; Phone: 877-270-4338) <tom.loughran@blackwell.com>

Each year, Blackwell’s reports on pricing trends in academic monograph publishing. We derive this data from the books that were treated on our academic Approval Program during the previous year. In the year ending last June, we treated 41,639 academic monograph titles with an average list price of $61.88. Excluding 1,697 reprints, the average list price of the 39,942 remaining new titles was $62.94. This represents a 2% price increase in the average price of an approval monograph from the previous year.

Trends in Pricing in the Humanities

Within the universe of approval books, 14,084 Humanities and Fine Arts books increased 3% in price, from $46.99 to $48.56. Art books (1,375 titles) fell 1%, from an average price of $51.37 to $51.04. Books on Architecture (493 titles) also fell 1%, from $54.48 to $53.88. Performing Arts books (1,072 titles) increased 2%, from $49.63 to $50.79. Music as a subcategory of Performing Arts rose slightly more than the price of an average new title — 4%, instead of the average 3% overall. Within Humanities there were also some significant deviations from the average: the price of an average History title rose 6%, from $48.35 to $51.19, as did Folklore and Mythology books, from $39.98 to $42.57. The price of the average Literary text rose 3%, from $25.39 to $26.11, while the price of a volume of Literary Criticism rose just 2%, from $55.88 to $57.15. Religion titles also rose 2%, from $50.52 to $51.52 and Philosophy titles fell 3%, from $63.58 to $61.99.

Trends in Pricing in the Social Sciences

The average price of 13,774 books in the Social Sciences (including Law) rose 1%, from $57.17 to $57.91. Again, within the broader Social Sciences, significant variations: 1,075 Law titles fell 4% — from $86.64 to $82.82. 1,266 Economics titles fell -1%, from $69.70 to $68.71. Also registering a decline, 270 titles in Military Science fell -17%, from $49.33 to $41.10. Books in Environmental Studies rose 4%, from $63.84 to $66.38, as did books in Education, from $48.51 to $50.53. International Relations titles held steady, rising only four cents on average, from $57.70 to $57.74. And Sports and Recreation titles fell -2%, from $38.27 to $37.54. Psychology titles rose 8%, from $60.92 to $65.69 and 83 Applied Psychology titles rose 11%, from $58.29 to $64.85. 109 Anthropology titles were up 4%, from $62.40 to $64.71. 1,266 Political Science titles stayed virtually the same, falling a nickel from $53.12 to $53.07. In another high publication area, 2,213 Business Administration titles rose 6%, from $54.97 to $58.14, while 184 Management titles declined -1%, from $54.55 to $54.01.

Trends in Pricing in the Sciences and Technology

Last year saw an increase of 3% in price of the average STM title, or one percentage point more than the overall rate. The average price of a book in the Sciences and Technology went from $82.82 to $85.64. At the bargain end of Sci-Tech books, 319 Nursing titles rose 1%, from $44.29 to $44.90. Overall, 996 Biology titles fell 1%, from $96.08 to $94.77, but within the larger category, 154 Human Biology titles fell 2%, from $92.98 to $91.42 and 130 Botany titles fell 1%, from $108.04 to $109.03 and 170 Zoology titles rose 3%, from $82.63 to $85.12. At the higher priced end of STM, 253 Chemistry titles rose 6%, from $138.71 to $146.92. Books in Medicine rose 2%, from $83.31 to $84.60. Astronomy titles fell -5% from $82.18 to $78.25. 39 Forestry titles fell 6%, from $95.47 to $99.33, while 180 Agriculture titles rose 1%, from $89.13 to $89.60. While the price of 3,564 Computer Science titles rose 3% (from $55.85 to $57.55), 822 of those titles in Personal Computing rose only 2%, from $38.93 to $39.63.

The price of the average Mathematics monograph fell -3%, from $83.45 to $81.34. 2,161 titles in Technology (encompassing all of the Engineering disciplines) rose an average 8%, from $105.52 to $114.17, as did the average price of titles in Earth Sciences, from $85.73 to $96.73.

For further price details of subject areas not mentioned, or of sub-disciplines of those listed above, please visit our Website at: http://www.blackwell.com/level4/coverageandcostindex.asp.

Talk of the Trade

by Barry Fast (Deltabooks, 186 Cross Street, City Island, NY 10464; Phone: 718-885-9563) <barry0112@aol.com>

Radar Debuts with Boldface Boors

One of my favorite oxymorons is “popular culture”, and the latest entry in the media world, Radar magazine, is devoted to covering this aspect of American civilization (another oxymoron?). This new magazine launched in May with a cover story on celebrity “Monsters”, people who have “distinguished themselves in the area of physical and verbal abuse, overwhelming arrogance, and by the imposition of a particularly nasty influence over the culture at large.” Michael Moore (Stupid White Men) made the cut for acting out his everyday blue collar routine from his $1.7 million apartment in Manhattan’s Upper West Side. He sends his daughter to a prestigious private school, while “unsuccessfully pressuring his writing staff at his TV Nation show not to join the Writers Guild.” He achieved fame and fortune with his pro-union activism, but apparently the only good unions are those in any business but his business.

Partisan Review Killed by its Own Success

Speaking of popular culture, we Americans tend to measure success in terms of numbers, the more the better. By other measures, however, a relatively small magazine (circulation never more than 15,000) was brilliantly successful, exerting a powerful influence on political thought and literary taste for at least half a century. Quoting from the New York Times, “From its inaugural issue in 1937, which included Delmore Schwartz’s short story, In Dreams Begin Responsibilities, a poem by Wallace Stevens, and contributions by Lionel Trilling, Sydney Hook and Edmund Wilson, to its heyday,” the 1940s to the ‘70s, “the journal published an astonishing range of landmark work.”

For many Americans, Partisan Review was their introduction to Abstract Expressionism, Existentialism, New Criticism, and the voices of talented young writers such as Norman Mailer, Robert Lowell, Elizabeth Hardwick and Susan Sontag. When many intellectuals were in the thrall of communism and apologists for Stalin, the Partisan Review gave a strong voice to American liberalism, providing a forum for political ideas that opposed totalitarianism (a word we don’t hear much any-