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Talk of the Trade

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Book 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%, while the 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 8%, from $33.97 to $35.00 on 488 titles. Humanities titles (excluding the Fine and 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 category of significant variations: 1,075 Law titles fell -4% — from $86.04 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, filling 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 -17%, from $108.04 to $90.03 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 $89.33, while 186 Agriculture titles rose 1%, from $89.13 to $89.60. While the price of 2,564 Computer Science titles rose 3% (from $25.85 to $27.55), 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/coversandeandcostindex.asp.

Talk of the Trade

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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 everyperson 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 longer).
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more) in all its guises. "It was one of the four or five greatest maga-
zines in America," says Morris Dickstein, professor of English at New
York University.

Dickstein says "the main influence of Partisan Review came from its
freewheeling intellectual style, which was exactly criticizing, jocular
and colloquial, modeled in sources as wild-eyed as Yiddish humor, Tal-
mudic debate, sectarian Marxist polemics, modernist insurrection, and
psychoanalytical unmasking. Versions of this style surfaced in journa-
l of different political stripes...[that] drew away talented writers and eroded
Partisan Review's natural constituency" over the years.

For 66 years the magazine was edited by its co-founder, William
Phillips, until his death late last year at age 94. Ownership then passed
to Boston University, and after polling a large group of intellectuals, BU
made the decision to suspend publication this past spring. Because Par-
tisan Review wielded such influence over the years, it spawned several
imitators that were better funded and published more frequently. Ac-
cording to Dickstein, "the uniqueness of the magazine diminished and
disappeared," becoming increasingly less relevant after the end of the
Cold War. In a sense, says Dickstein, "the magazine became a victim of
its own success."

Advice to the Lovelorn from Jurassic Park

Some people say that a second marriage is the triumph of hope over
reason. Whether or not you agree with this sentiment depends, I'm sure,
on your personal experience. But what can we say about a fourth mar-
rage? Author Michael Crichton recently offered some success tips for
wedded bliss: "You should want to spend a lot of leisure time together,
sharing the same interests...[if she wants to go shopping and you want
to go hiking, you have a problem]." According to Crichton's fourth wife,
Anne-Marie Martin Crichton, living with her husband while he was
writing was "like living with a body and Michael is somewhere else."
The couple recently divorced. Failing to follow his own advice cost
Crichton $31 million, as the blushing bride of 14 years got their 65 acre
estate in Bedford, NY (near the Clinton's, Martha Stewart, Ralph
Lauren and only 15 miles from the one-quarter acre estate of one humble
correspondent). their 20 horses, two tractors and an art collection (in
contrast, on our estate we have several cats, a lawnmower, and lots of fake
Columbian art, which may partly explain our continued marriage).

Crisis Looms as Academic Heavyweights Debate Theories of Literary Criticism

Critical Inquiry, the academy's most prestigious literary theory jour-
nal, convened a panel of scholars to discuss the recent demise of theories
in the humanities. After the French assault of the 1960s—deconstruction
and post-colonialism, and the earlier psychoanalysis, Marxist and struc-
turalism theories of the 1940s and '50s, the mandarins gathered in Chi-
cago to attempt an agreement on a new approach in this time of criticism-
crisis. WJT Mitchell, University of Chicago, according to the New
York Times, set an upbeat tone by declaring "We want to be the Starship
Enterprise of criticism and theory." From this high point, the discussion


IMHTBCO (In My Humble But Correct Opinion)

OCLC, Trademarks, and The Library Hotel

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When OCLC filed a complaint of trade mark infringement against New
York's Library Hotel over the hotel's use of the Dewey Decimal Classification®
system, word of the suit spread quickly through various online discussion lists. The library
community's response was swift and generally incredulous. How could a company claim
to own Dewey? How could it believe that a hotel's use of the Dewey system constituted
some kind of commercial threat? What was OCLC thinking?

OCLC responded promptly to the growing outcry, issuing a public statement that was sent
to a number of lists and individuals. OCLC explained itself by invoking the responsibility
of trademark owners to protect their trademarks

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