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The Nemesis

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The Greatly Missed Nemesis

by Chuck Hamaker (LSU)

Editor's Note: For those of you who missed the 1990 Charleston Conference, the name of the column this issue comes from Gordon Graham who remarked sadly that Chuck was missing from the Charleston Conference attendees.

"No troublesome new competition is wanted" says Alfred Sikes, chairman of the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) referring to the big players who control distribution of the nation's airwave rights. In the article "Brink of a Revolution" *Newsweek* (Jan. 14, 1991) p. 6 he mentions some items of immediate concern to the publishing and library community that just might generate some cooperative efforts. "Can you imagine having available every book in every major library to read on your own personal computer terminal?... In fact, in Japan there are national policies aimed at giving each home access to virtually every library book in the world..." His point is that the shortage of available radio frequencies, particularly in the higher ranges, stops development of the networks that could provide home PC access. He mentions that this year (1991) FCC will be holding public hearings on "Networks of the Future" covering the full range of issues relating to the new technologies. His closing note is somber. "Today many companies with a lot invested in current technologies warn of commercial chaos if we compete with certain other companies. . . . (We) can move into the 21st Century with more productive regulations and a more competitive market for the

revolutionary new forms of communication." Read the article. I think the man needs some help in areas that, contrary to Nicholas Veliotis who is nervous about AT&T competition, could actually increase accessibility to the information that is our *raison d'être* etc. (on all sides of the business).

And our friend Gordon Graham is in the Dec. 21 issue of *Publisher's Weekly* (International supplement) p. S4. "The Myth of Global Pricing" discusses that most ephemeral of all ideals, a standard book price. Gordon Graham, as former CEO of Butterworths, and member of the board that oversaw all the Reed group's publishing activities (Bowker, etc.) gives an insider's quick tour of the problems and practices that created different list prices for the same book in different countries. It is well worth your while to read what could only be described well by an insider.

The same issue of *PW* (p. 8) notes that Elsevier has sold off the one third share of "rival Wolters Kluwer Group it had acquired as the result of a hostile takeover attempt." The purchaser—the New York investment bank Goldman Sachs. The sale reportedly brings Elsevier 720 million guilders (about 428 million dollars). P. 7 of this issue reports that the British Library Document Agency gets a royalty of 1 pound 10 (about \$2.15) for each photocopied article delivery to a corporate client (libraries and other non-profit groups are exempted).

Another almost serendipitous bit of information (this is a good issue) same page, different article: "one can reprint a book in seven to 10 working days" according to Charles

Heyward, president of Simon & Schuster trade. And a Paris appeals court has overturned the plagiarism award to Margaret Mitchell's estate levied on *The Blue Bicycle*, a French bestseller loosely based on the structure of *Gone With the Wind*.

Rustum Roy, Penn State University, professor of materials science made a headliner with the aforementioned issue of *Newsweek*. "Scientists," he says, with their belief in their God-given right to taxpayer dollars, are little more than "welfare queens in white coats." (p. 44). The question it seems to me is that with exponential growth in equipment costs, a 40 plus year history of government being the largest source for research funding, an R&D effort from industry that is puny—in fact parasitic might be the best word for companies that demand government research money and then sock it to the consumer who buys the government funded breakthrough. The question is where are the resources to support science? An ISI report also mentioned in this *Newsweek* article concluded that 45% of the papers in ISI's *Science* indexes published between 1981 and 1985 are not cited within 5 years of publication. Says the magazine, "The implication is that nearly half the scientific work in this country is basically worthless." Well, actually that report originates in some work that *Science* asked ISI to do, and the *Science* article indicates that 55% of the articles in SCI had never been cited—have things IMPROVED??—see Garfield, Eugene in *Science* v. 198 (1972) 471—for that number) The *Newsweek* article by Sharon Begley sparking all this is "Gridlock in the Labs: Does the Country really

continued on page 40

Nemesis

continued from page 21

need all those scientists?"

Stanford again: *Science* (Dec. 21, 1990 p. 1651) reports that the ABC news show "20/20" has been in touch — so you be in touch re: Stanford's overhead charges to the government (says *Science*: \$1,000 for a cedar lined closet: \$2,000 a month for flower arrangements at the president's home: inappropriate charges for supporting the yacht Victoria.) We may see it all in living color in our own living room soon.

Nature (348/20/27, Dec., 1990) p. 664 "Rebuilding NASA's Labs" by Christopher Anderson reported in advance some work done by ISI looking at NASA's research quality from the standpoint of citations to articles by NASA researchers. "Of NASA's eight largest laboratories, half saw a fall in citation levels from the 1970's to the 1980's." The ISI study will be published in *Science Watch*. But one NASA facility the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the "only NASA laboratory to be run by a university" showed a consistent improvement over the decade. The weakest research centers on the citation criteria were Johnson and Kennedy Space Flight Center where NASA does much of the space medicine research. I hate to sound like cold water, but has anyone checked how many copies of the journals specializing in space medicine were available worldwide. Although ISI "weights" for number of articles in a journal when constructing the JCR, and citations per article is the "standard," perhaps 200 copies of a specialized journal distributed worldwide might have as much to do with a light "citation" load as the "quality" of the research. How many researchers worldwide have access

to "space medicine" journals and articles?? If we start using SCI numbers with a vengeance, which is very likely, then publishers need to start being a bit less secretive about subscription numbers. That just might make all the difference in the world, not only to journal survival, but to researcher survival.

Since we are addressing global concerns in much of the above, *Publisher's Weekly* (Dec. 7) p. 14 asks the big one. Madalynne Reuter's article "MCA's Takeover Raises Questions on Autonomy" may just be a fright piece, but it is enough to make you worry about the future of publishing. "Last year, when Sony acquired Columbia Pictures, its chairman tried to allay American fears of cultural takeover. In response to the question—would his company be willing to produce a movie about the wartime role of the late Emperor Hiroshito—Sony's chairman replied at once that he would never interfere with such a production. In November,

according to the *New York Times*, when the same question was posed to Matsushita's Tanii, (MCA's new owner) he was "visibly agitated" and replied, "I could never imagine such a case, so I cannot answer such a question." MCA owns, in addition to the Yellowstone concessions everyone is upset about, the Putnam Berkeley publishing group.

And on to the more mundane: I was ill in November, and was in bed with a fever when all of you Charleston conference goers were enjoying South Carolina. I appreciate the phone calls and notes from many of you, and look forward to seeing you next year.

P.S.S. Ann Okerson and Kendon Stubbs have a major article that may just help publishers understand what's really going on in libraries scheduled for the February 1st issue of *Publisher's Weekly*. I've seen an advance copy and it is excellent. Make sure you get that issue. ☘