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The Timeless Nemesis

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The Timeless Nemesis

by Chuck Hamaker (LSU)

The Bowker/Ulrich Serials Librarianship award Deana and I received is primarily for the work we have done in helping further understanding the problem of European journal pricing. Since I consider the problems libraries are having with STM journals to go well beyond the "European" issue, I have focused for this *Against the Grain* on a primarily American publisher, John Wiley and Sons.

To understand the pricing behavior of Wiley journals I have divided the LSU list into 3 sections corresponding to some of Wiley's internal divisions. The Wiley-Liss titles they recently acquired, are not included in this analysis.

I. Wiley Scripta.

For 1992 the translation journals showed the most moderate price increases, but this is in sharp contrast to the 1990 and 1991 increases. The 8 titles LSU receives increased 21% in 1990, 31% in 1991 and 12% in 1992. In 1989 *Doklady. Earth Sciences Sections* cost \$610. For 1992 the 9 issues will cost \$1,400 for a cost per issue of \$155.56. This is the highest price per issue of any Wiley title examined. The 8 translation titles cost \$4,725 in 1989 and \$8,390 in 1992. The 12% increase from 1991 to 1992 was with no apparent increase in size, i.e. the number of issues in 1991 and 1992 are identical. At almost double the CPI, this is standard operating procedure, but a welcome relief from previous years. The titles produced 90 issues in 1989 with 103 predicted in 1992. 13 issues more since 1989, \$3,565 more. I don't think 13 issues growth warrant a cost increase of this size since 1989. The cumulative effect on the book budget is that buying this "growth" of 13 is-

su es deprives our library of about 100 new books a year.

II. Wiley New York.

For 1992 the price increase for Wiley's New York titles is an astounding 31%. Haven't they heard we are in a recession? With just 15 more issues than the 1991 list, the price increase is from \$9,693 to \$12,700. 15 more issues, \$3,007. When examined on a per issue basis, price is up 23.5%. In one fell swoop, 75 book purchases a year are deleted from our ongoing programs, all to support 15 more issues. In 1989 this list of titles received at LSU cost \$6,728 and generated 202 issues. For 1992 there will be 215 issues. The three year cost increases mean a permanent loss to book purchasing of 150 books per year. Are 13 issues, no matter how much "larger" they are, worth 150 books? I think not. If book publishers want to know why they are selling fewer books to libraries, it is mathematics like these that are destroying the book culture all over the world.

III. Wiley Chichester (UK)

The most interesting title in the LSU portion of the Chichester list is *Biopolymers* which did decrease about 19% in price. However, it also decreased in issues, going from 28 to 12. The effect was to raise the price per issue from \$56.25 to \$106.25, or an 89% increase in price per issue. Overall the LSU Chichester list decreased from 184 issues to 181 from 1991 to 1992 and the price increased 14.47%. In 1989 this list cost \$6945. In 1992 it will cost \$12,220. Issue production went from 138 to 181, so annually we are receiving 43 more issues. Book budget loss is \$5,375 for that period, and about 135 books, or 3 books lost for every extra issue from 1989 to 1992.

From 1991 to 1992, the cumulative effect is to increase our price for these titles by \$5,457, with an increase of 12 more issues in 1992 than in 1991. Maintaining this list will mean a permanent loss just this year of 136 book purchases, for each additional issue purchased. From 1989 to 1992, the impact of maintaining these titles is that we will have removed permanently 373 books from our annual book purchases. These 46 journals LSU receives from Wiley, produced 430 issues in 1989, and will produce 499 in 1992. Our purchase of issues from Wiley over this period increased by 69. Our decreases in books is roughly, over this time frame 5 books for every new issue. No level of "page" growth can justify this effect. From June 1988 to June 1989 Wiley, according to Yankee Book, published 908 books. I hope library purchases of Wiley books have dropped by at least 1/3 since then. If they have, then maybe they understand how directly they are affecting the system.

It is perhaps unfair to use this type of analysis just on Wiley. For companies like Elsevier and Pergamon, the effect on the book purchasing ability of the library is even more dramatic, the increase in issues no less unimpressive. I have used Wiley as an example because many people think the problem is "European" journals. In fact it is not just foreign titles that are destroying our library systems' ability to support books for users. It is the whole journal system with inescapable yearly price increases well beyond the economic support levels of libraries. The causes are well known. The question is pure and simple. How do we stop this system before it destroys libraries? It is in the best interest of publishers, libraries and scholars to find solutions to this — soon.

Just in case you wondered about the title, Chuck Hamaker doesn't wear a watch. -Ed. ♣