September 1991

The Bookish Nemesis

Chuck Hamaker

Louisiana State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hamaker, Chuck (1991) "The Bookish Nemesis," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 3: Iss. 4, Article 16.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1207>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

The Bookish Nemesis

Books Books and Books et al

by Chuck Hamaker (LSU)

The competitive world of book vendors seems to be getting even warmer these days, and a primer, for me, from Ambassador Books while it contains nothing new for most of you, was very helpful. Libraries look at books in lots of ways, most commonly by LC classification or in acquisitions departments, country of origin, language, etc. But as any acquisitions librarian knows, standard "library" categories don't tell you what kind of discount the book will have or how difficult it will be to acquire. We also group books by fund code assignments—a nice internal procedure that is, again, meaningless outside the library context. What classification scheme is most helpful for a common language between librarians and vendors when talking about the books we order? Gary Herald's schematic in explaining discount structure and profitability to me was pretty straightforward and since I haven't had a look at books from this perspective for the last five years, hope you won't mind the refresher language. Reference titles generally (this just means the titles the reference department orders); STM titles, Science, Technology and Medicine; Scholarly books; University Press; and Trade. Each category carries different discount levels to the booktrade and intimately effects library discount. Does anyone use these, or similar categories to decide which titles to order direct, which to go to vendors for, or, as we usually do here do you just batch 'em all and let the vendor beware? How about it? Are we all talking about the same thing when we say reference? Or trade or scholarly? How do you know when a Prentice Hall title is one or the other? Often you may not know how it is treated until you see the bill. But let's get

some "standard" definitions for the order "mix" we send. I know we usually look at country of origin, whether the publisher is a direct or not, whether there are "special" deals. But beyond that I'm not sure, even though Joe Barker talks about a "matrix" of ordering decisions, whether vendors and librarians always mean the same thing when they use a word. Sure we think we probably know what short discount, net and trade mean, but knowing and predicting where each is applied is another thing Purchasing decisions

"We can play a active role in creating our own destiny, or we can let the future happen to us."

should be made for many reasons, and discount treatment is one of them. Anybody for better education? Gary intends to work out some customized reports with LSU that will help us gain some hands on understanding that I certainly need. Some of the approaches in serials analysis we've used look applicable to books. I'll let you know as we go just what I'm learning if you are interested. If not, say so or else.

From the Mundane to the MUNDO

Jerry Campbell has a way with words and I almost missed "It's a Tough Job Looking Ahead When You've Seen What's Dragging Behind," in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 17(3) for July 1991 (pages 148-151). Besides setting up a few strawmen to attack, he is asking the big picture questions that help

give a context to all the daily noise. "We can play an active role in creating our own destiny, or we can let the future happen to us." Jerry, of course, comes down on the side of actively creating the future, a tall task for a profession that has often been too content to sit at home and play with parts of the puzzle in the security of our libraries. "... we are wearing out the collections that we own and increasingly depending upon the information in materials that we do not own." The wart on this animal: "Great intentions and good salesmanship notwithstanding, commercial agencies do not share the same fundamental missions that are common to libraries. The long-term viability of this information is the legal responsibility of commercial agencies and suffers the obvious jeopardies associated with such organizations."

Ah, there's the rub, as we get in bed, so to speak, with publishers and "lease" their information. Who insures the long-term survival of information when it has no immediate economic utility? A recent case in point comes from the pages of *Nature* and is reported by Renzo L. Ricca in "Rediscovery of the Da Rios Equations" (v.352, no.6336, August 15, 1991, pages 561-562). In a paper published in 1906, in the July-August issue of *Rendiconti del Circolo Matematico di Palermo*, Louigi Sante Da Rios working in vorticity dynamics "investigated the dynamics of an isolated thin vortex filament as an object embedded in an infinite domain, entirely filled by a homogeneous, incompressible, inviscid fluid." The equations he derived from that study were last referred to in an article

in 1932. In 1962, the principles were rediscovered separately by F.R. Hama and co-authors, and again independently rediscovered in 1965. The work turns out to have primary importance in applications of the mathematics of non-linear systems in many fields of physics, chemical physics, and biological physics, and one application discovered by Da Rios, rediscovered and applied to the non-linear Schrodinger equation, is used in optics, acoustics, and signal transmission theory. Da Rios was about seventy years ahead of the application of his proofs. Can a commercial publisher wait 70 years for financial viability for a paper? I think the answer is obvious. As individual libraries, we can probably not insure the existence of that one paper needed 70 years from now either. But, we much work toward a system that will insure its survival in the paperless archive.

Copyright/Copypat

OK, so I cribbed the header from *Publishers Weekly* (August 16, 1991, pages 34-35). In the recent *Feist v. Rural Telephone* decision (see *Against the Grain*, v.3#3 for June, 1991, pages 32-33 also this issue, pg. 39), the Supreme Court reminded us that "the primary objective of copyright is not to reward the labor of authors but . . . to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts." Copyright "encourages others to build freely upon the ideas and information conveyed by a work." . . . "only the compiler's selection [the case was about reformatting a telephone directory] and arrangement may be protected; the raw facts may be copied at will." And just in case things seemed smooth sailing, Judge Harold H. Green on July 25 let the Baby Bells into information services. They had been barred from offering information services; they couldn't own them, create them, control them. They could only "carry" them for other creators. No longer true. Green remained doubtful of the wisdom of the move. "It would hardly make sense or be in the public interest to cancel an important part of an anti-trust decree forged after several dec-

ades of on and off litigation, and turn a key ingredient of the emerging information society over to corporations who not so long ago were involved in major violations of the antitrust laws, and who even now seem ready to engage in anticompetitive practices whenever the opportunity presents itself." (See *The New York Times*, Friday, July 26, 1991, page 1, column 4 and A8, column 4). But an appeals court decision last year left him little room to maneuver.

And more legal poppycock or what? A recent article on Patent protection and the U.S. Patent Protection Office suggests another role for the journal article. Many countries require a researcher or inventor to file for a patent before making any public information available. In the U.S., University scientists publish first and file for a patent later. "Under most foreign systems, the inventor loses the right to a patent if he or she publishes first, and must make a first official publication through the patent office." Some have suggested recognizing "publication in a peer-reviewed journal as a form of official notice" in the U.S., creating instant patent protection. In the U.S., property rights go to the person who proves that he or she conceived an invention first. All other patent offices "follow a simpler rule, giving priority to the person who first files an application." "... fixing the true moment of conception" is a tedious and often expensive process resulting in convoluted and often "pre-dated" rights. For example, look at Gilbert P. Hyatt, who twenty years ago tried to patent a basic microprocessor; the single chip computer was supposedly the invention of Texas Instruments, which has had the patent since 1977. Read "The Patent Game: Raising the Ante" by Eliot Marshall in *Science* for the 5 July 1991, pages 20-24.

We have received the latest issue of *LOGOS* (v.2#2, 1991) and it continues to have interesting articles. Noteworthy is the article by Ann Okerson, "Back to Academia? The Case for American Universities to Publish their Own Research." (see

Bet You Missed It, this issue, page 39).

Also, don't miss *PW*, July 12 1991, which has a good coverage article by Mark Sexton about the June Society for Scholarly Publishing annual meeting in Philadelphia. *Publishers Weekly* for August 2, 1991, also contains another good article about the AAUP meeting and university press concerns.

A while back, we hope you didn't miss the "Point of View — Research Libraries Must Abandon the Idea That 'Bigger is Better,'" by Richard M. Dougherty in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 19, 1991, page A32.

Also we hope you haven't missed the September issue of *College & Research Libraries* which is loaded with articles and an editorial regarding electronic information. See, for example, "Humanists and Electronic Information Services: Acceptance and Resistance" by Stephen Lehmann and Patricia Renfro, pages 409-413. And another "With Feathers: Effects of Copyright and Ownership on Scholarly Publishing" by Ann Okerson, pages 425-439. The Okerson article is the fourth in a series on scholarly communications and serials prices. You might also remember the article in the July *C&RL* on "Serials Pricing and the Role of the Electronic Journal" by Paul Metz and Paul M. Gherman, pages 315-327. It seems like electronic publishing is starting to consume a lot of paper . .

As we were going to press, we noticed the September 4, 1991, *Chronicle of Higher Education* with a spread on Vanderbilt's "The Electronic Classroom" by Beverly T. Watkins, pages A26-A27. We also note that "academic librarians who want the latest government information affecting libraries may call GovLine, a new telephone-message service offered by the American Association of Law Libraries." Phone is (312)939-7774.

That's it for this issue . . .