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Book Pricing Update / Cloth, Paper & Simultaneous Publications

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Book Pricing Update

Cloth, Paper and Simultaneous Publications — How Many and How Much?

by Celia Scher Wagner (Blackwell)

It has long been a truism of academic bookselling that libraries want hardback versions of titles whenever possible, and paperbacks only when paper is the sole format. Lately, with shrinking budgets, rising prices, inexpensive ways of binding paperbacks, and doubt about whether rebinding is even necessary, some academic librarians have requested the opposite service: paperbacks whenever possible, and hardbacks only when there is no alternative.

Some time ago, Blackwell North America began tracking the availability and price of titles in our Approval Plan which were published simultaneously in cloth and paper. The database now shows who is publishing simultaneous versions, how many there are, what the price differential is, and what sort of savings a library choosing "Paper Preferred" might expect to see.

To be covered on Approval, titles must be new monographs, published or warehoused in North America. The bulk of our Approval database (88%) is made up of titles originating in the United States and the United Kingdom. The remainder (12%) consists of titles published in various other countries (Germany, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, etc.) and distributed here.

Overall, in the American market, 26% of new monographs are published solely in paper. The remaining 74% are published in cloth. Some of the latter group, however, are announced as available (•) in both cloth and paper, so there are actually three categories:

Paper only: 26%
Cloth only: 66%
Both formats: 8%

The chart (at right) shows a more detailed breakdown.

• "Simultaneous" cloth/paper editions are defined here as those where the publisher announces that both versions will be available *upon publication*. Sometimes, paperbacks do not actually become available until after cloth publication, but for the purposes of this study, we have taken the announcements as factual.

U.S. and U.K. publishers have a lower percentage of paperback-only titles, and a higher percentage of simultaneous-format titles, than do publishers from other countries. Those "other international" publishers might offer simultaneous publications back home, but in the U.S. market most of their books are either paper or cloth, not both.

In descending order, by country and subject area, simultaneous cloth/paper editions occur in: U.S. Non-Science

(14%); U.K. Science (7%); U.S. Science (5%); and U.K. Non-Science (2%).

Tallying simultaneous editions by type of press, rather than by country of origin, proves to be quite interesting. The vast bulk of simultaneous editions are from University Presses, where 16% of all titles are paper only, 62% are cloth only, and 22% are simultaneous. Again, Science titles are not often simultaneous, but overall, the University Presses are leading the pack in simultaneous pub-

Percentage of New Monographs Treated on Approval

Available in Paperback, Hardback, and Simultaneous Formats

Country/ Category	Paper only	Cloth only	Simultaneous Paper/Cloth
U.S. Origin			
Science	24%	71%	5%
Not Science	26%	60%	14%
U.K. Origin*			
Science	27%	66%	7%
Not Science	24%	74%	2%
All Other Countries*	32%	67%	1%
Grand Total:	26%	66%	8%
<hr/>			
U Presses Only			
Science	16%	68%	16%
Not Science	16%	60%	24%
Total UP:	16%	62%	22%

*Distributed in the U.S.

lishing. In fact, while University Press titles as a group make up 24% of the new monographs in our Approval program, their simultaneous editions make up 59% of all the simultaneous editions covered. This is not surprising, as University Press titles are often aimed at two different markets: libraries, the traditional market for clothbound books; and scholars and/or students (especially those titles chosen for course adoption) traditionally a paperback market.

Percentages show how many simultaneous editions are being published. The next question, of course, is: How much can a library save with a "paper preferred" buying strategy?

The answer depends on the mix of titles that a library is buying in the first place. Consider the chart below. The first three columns show 1) the price of titles available only in paperback; 2) the price of titles available in hardback; and 3) the cloth price when titles are available in both formats.

There is a striking difference between the Science prices in the second and the third columns. For instance, the average price of a U.S. origin cloth title in Science is \$76. But not every cloth title in



Science has a simultaneous paper "twin." The cloth titles which have paper twins average only \$40. Another way of putting this is to say that the most expensive titles are usually not available in both

formats, or, even more bluntly, there is no inexpensive version.

The fourth and fifth columns show what the paper price is for titles published simultaneously in both formats, and what the difference is between the cloth and paper prices, for simultaneous publications.

The last two columns quantify what a library might save with a "paper preferred" buying strategy. No library buys every book, but a mythical library that did so would save 4.2% of the total budget, if a paperback were chosen over a hardback in every possible instance. A library buying only University Press titles could save a much larger percentage of the budget. Whether many libraries will want to switch to this buying strategy is still a matter of conjecture, but Blackwell will soon offer the option. Whether publishers can sustain their margins if the library market flocks to paper-preferred is also a mystery, and there have been predictions about how publishing will change if it must: either hardbacks will disappear, paperbacks will become vastly more expensive, or "simultaneous" editions will vanish. We shall have to check back in a few years for an update. ☛

Average Prices of New Monographs Treated on Approval

Country/ Category	Paper price	Cloth price	Cloth/ Simult	Paper/ Simult	Variance Simult	Total Variance	Percent Total
U.S. Origin							
Science	\$31	\$76	\$40	\$20	\$20	\$5,995	1.5%
Not Science	\$18	\$41	\$42	\$18	\$24	\$55,135	10.4%
U.K. Origin*							
Science	\$37	\$84	\$62	\$26	\$36	\$6,048	3.6%
Not Science	\$25	\$57	\$56	\$20	\$36	\$4,895	1.7%
Any Country*- U Press							
Science	\$25	\$57	\$50	\$22	\$28	\$5,649	8.8%
Not Science	\$18	\$44	\$44	\$17	\$27	\$40,178	15.4%
All Countries*- All Titles	\$26	\$62	\$50	\$25	\$25	\$73,299	4.2%

*Distributed in the U.S.