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Book Pricing Update: Second Annual Title Trends Survey - The Great Beyond

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Book Pricing Update

Second Annual Title Trends Survey: The Great Beyond

by Celia Scher Wagner (Blackwell) (WAGNER@BNAMF.BLACKWELL.COM)

My friend Julie can sing the prepositions in alphabetical order, to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." The rhythm has to give a little, so it begins something like, "About, above, across, against ... " I don't remember if "athwart" is in there. (I was taught prepositions by a teacher who had us list ways a rabbit could go *vis a vis* a hill: along the hill, by the hill, down the hill ... I got a grasp of prepositions. Julie got a conversation-stopper.)

The preposition song came to mind when I discovered a lode of prepositional clichés in recent titles. Take "from hell", for instance. Please. These aren't the old fashioned gerunds-from-hell (such as "fleeing from hell"). They're those newly popular nouns-from-hell, conjuring up a melodrama: our protagonist, a child of Job, escapes the *Parents from hell* only to move in with *Roommates from hell*, and go on *Dates from hell* which always end in a ride (back to the apartment from hell) in a *Taxi from hell*. Ineptly apologetic, the dates from hell send *Flowers from hell*.

(Speaking of gerunds, what did we say before we said "gendering?" Lately, we've had *Gendering the nation*, *Gendering the reader*, *Gendering war talk*, *Gendering welfare states*, *Gendering the HIV epidemic*, *The gendering of melancholia*, and a number of others, including one I had always thought was relatively easy, *Gendering bodies* ...)

But back to prepositions. It's time we got beyond hell, and beyond gendering, for that matter, even if "beyond" is a high-traffic sort of place. In the past six years, 554 academic book titles began with "Beyond"—something, many of them beyond the same things. There are multiples of, among others, *Beyond blame*, *Beyond borders*, *Beyond words*, *Beyond conflict*, *Beyond death*, (countered by multiple *Beyond survivals*, and one *Beyond the grave*), *Beyond the stars*, *Beyond deterrence*, *Beyond Glasnost*, (and the related *Beyond Perestroika*, *Beyond the Cold War*, and *Beyond the Soviet Threat*). There are the Zen-like double occurrences of *Beyond success*, and *Beyond winning*, plus the worrisome Business-book doubles of *Beyond quality* and *Beyond the bottom line*.

I like the intriguing singletons *Beyond the fray* (not *above*?) and *Beyond beef*, which has nothing to do with *Beyond branding*, a book on product advertising. Has our fondness for the beyond gone

beyond the pale (2 occurrences)? There were three *Beyond reasons*, and five *Beyond the limits*. That's a tie for first place (remember — we are beyond winning!), with *Beyond belief*, also appearing five times.

At the end of the prepositional alphabet, titles beginning "With" or "Without" come in at 77 and 35, respectively, with few duplications. While there is no justice for all, both *With justice for some*, and

With justice for none appear in the list. There's even *With the grain*, to balance all that goes against.

"Within" generally follows "the fire." Daniel Day-Lewis has the fire within. St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross had it. Even Edward Emerson Barnard had it. What IS the fire within, anyway? No, seriously.

It's passion, that's what. Academic publishing indulges in passionate titles the romance market wouldn't touch. We have *A passion for: acting, antiquities, art, chocolate, daylilies, difference, government, jazz, justice (3), life (2), manufacturing, mushrooms, narrative, needlepoint, physics (2)* ... all the way to yachting. (Imagine the cover art if these were romance titles: in the foreground, Manufacturing, arrayed in an alluring creation; behind Manufacturing, and nibbling on his/her neck, stands ... ?)

We suffer *Binding passions*, *Burning passions*, *Driving passions*, *Pious passion*, *Primitive passions*, *Royal passion*, lots of *Ruling passion*, and even *Transuming passion*. As ever, the proclivity for alliterative titles gives us passions and peevs, passions for politics, pleasure and passion, passion and power, passion and prayer, passion and prejudice, and so on. The number of passion titles that have anything to do with romance or sex is quite small — less than 10% of the total.

Like any other word, passion begins to lose its meaning after the first hundred iterations. It starts to sound silly. Should a book about the Purdue Boilermakers really be called *Passion plays*? Even in a translation from the French, isn't *Glove of passion* a bit strange? Doesn't *Passionate hobby* seem like an overstatement? I don't know. I just know that when passion gets stale, it might be time to move on ... along ... beyond. 🐷

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regional offices, having good teams in place, certainly already having a strong position in the academic category, and then just a lot of hard work. But the seminars proved very helpful for everyone, and now with the pulling together of our information activities under EBSCO Information Services, we're going to do a number of regional field seminars with all types of library representatives because we have a good story to tell. We want people to understand more about our

subscription services, our document delivery services and our databases on CD-ROM and now, what is very important to us, the EBSCOhost.

I think getting people to give some of their time and come to see and discuss services and solutions in a meeting-type of setting, can be very helpful. 🐷

Well, y'all that's a nice segue into the Charleston Conference. See you there! — KS