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Book Pricing Update / The Year in Book Pricing and Publishing - 1994

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Book Pricing Update

The Year in Book Pricing and Publishing — 1994
by Celia Scher Wagner (Blackwell)

Once again, it's time for the annual report on trends in academic pricing and publishing. As always, the figures reported below are based on the more than 34,000 new monographs, from scholarly, trade, and university presses, treated through the Blackwell North America Approval Program. To survey "the size of the literature," each title is counted once, whether it was purchased by one library, or by hundreds.

Broad trends in pricing and coverage

In the year ending June 30, 1994, the average price of all academic monographs was \$53.05, a 1.5% increase from the 1993 average of \$52.26. Excluding reprints (as most academic libraries do), the average price of a new title was \$53.85, a 1.6% jump from the 1993 average of \$52.98. The number of titles covered dropped about 1%, and totaled 34,111.

The modest overall price increase was not evenly distributed across the board, but varied markedly by country of origin:

U.S. origin prices rose 3%, from \$42.55 to \$43.82
U.K. origin prices fell 4.9%, from \$60.39 to \$57.42
prices of other titles fell 1.9%, from \$93.36 to \$91.63

This is the first time in many years that only U.S. prices have risen, while the nearly 5% price drop in U.K. titles was unprecedented.

University press prices averaged \$43.26, a 2.3% drop from last year's \$44.27. The average university press title cost less in 1994 than in either 1993 or 1992. University press output increased marginally, to 7,663 titles, or 22.5% of new academic monographs.

Broad trends by subject area

In Architecture and the Arts (Fine and Performing), prices dropped 1%, averaging \$45.98, down from 1993's average of \$46.57. Title output fell 3%. Humanities prices held steady at \$43.70, a rise of less than 1% from last year's \$43.57. Title output in the Humanities rose 3% overall, though there were fewer titles in Philosophy, Language, and Literary Criticism. Combining Humanities and the Arts (the former outnumber the later), the average price dropped a mere two cents, from \$38.82 to \$38.80. The number of monographs went up 2%.

Overall, Social Science prices rose 2%, averaging \$45.13, up from last year's \$44.06. Prices dropped significantly, however, in Law and in Military Science. In the less academic areas of Sports & Recreation and Popular Travel, output dropped, but prices rose more than 21%, with Travel titles now averaging over \$20. The number of Social Science titles dropped 4%, with the largest decreases in International Relations, Military Science, Applied Psychology, Race Relations, and Criminology.

In Science, Technology and Medicine (S/T/M), prices rose 2%, slightly more than the overall average, to \$76.82 from \$75.11. There were more titles in Medicine, and fewer in most of the Natural Sciences and Technology. Personal Computing

titles, overabundant in recent years, dropped off 19%, down to 728 from last year's 901.

Of all titles covered, one third fell into Humanities and Fine Arts, less than one third fell into the Social Sciences, and more than one third fell into S/T/M fields. If the total price of all academic monographs is considered, however, S/T/M takes up by far the largest share:

Humanities and Fine Arts accounted for 24% of all dollars.
Social Science accounted for 27% of all dollars.
S/T/M accounted for 49% of the total.

Other highlights of 1994

Twelve percent of all new titles appeared in subject categories where the average price was less than \$30, but such categories were few:

69% — Literary Texts (Novels, Poems, Plays, etc.)
17% — Personal Computing
13% — Travel, Sports & Recreation

Only 1% of the under-\$30 books fell outside of the above three categories.

At the high end, titles averaging over \$100 appeared in subject areas from Art to Architecture, to Law, and throughout the Sciences. Various Chemistry, Materials Science, and Engineering subject areas averaged over \$120, while some Geology, Technology and Medicine areas averaged more than \$150.

For the fourth consecutive year, about one quarter of new academic monographs were paperback originals (not simultaneous cloth-and-paper publications, but new titles available ONLY in paperback). The average paperback original cost \$26, down from 1993's average of \$27.

In Area Studies, predictably, there were fewer titles this year than last about the now disbanded Soviet Union, and more about the individual Republics. There were fewer titles about Japan and most countries of Africa, while there were more about South Africa, Australia, and the countries of Oceania. In an odd coincidence for a year when NAFTA was much in the news, titles about Canada increased 21%, while titles about Mexico fell 21%.

The march of time — long term and future trends

The chart on page 62 shows that while prices for academic monographs have risen over the past five years, they have not risen steadily. Some years, the increase was greater than 12%; other years it was less than 2%. When librarians ask us to predict future trends, we recall how unpredictable the past has been, and we often suggest that those with comprehensive

In Praise of Bookshops

Moe's Books (Berkeley, Calif.)
by **Tom Leonhardt** (University of Oklahoma)

(Note: This is the second of what will be a continuing series co-authored by **Tom Leonhardt** of the University of Oklahoma and **Jack Walsdorf** of Blackwell's, detailing their experiences visiting little-known and well-known used, rare, and sometimes antiquarian bookshops throughout the United States.)

At last count, there were nine independent book stores on or just off Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley. There is a directory called **45 Berkeley Booksellers: A Directory, 1986-87**, published and distributed by Sarkis Shmavonian Rare Books, 1796 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709. There was a modest \$1 price when it first appeared. It is an attractive 4"x9" booklet, designed and printed by Peter Koch and Associates and includes a map. A couple of the stores are actually in Albany and Oakland but for all intents and purposes, they are still in Berkeley's "proximate districts," as the booklet tells us.

The wealth of booksellers in Berkeley flourish because of the wealth of readers who buy not just for the need for a class or paper but to own that particular text. Many of the bookstores in Berkeley also provide tables, sometimes on the sidewalk, where one can sit with a new purchase and enjoy it while drinking coffee and nibbling on a muffin or

bagel. Perhaps others at a nearby table will argue the existence of God or whether a bird can be free of the chains of the sky.

For a selection of new books and books in German, I prefer **Cody's** but for serendipity I prefer **Moe's Books**. Moe and his store are an institution in Berkeley. They were a mainstay when I studied at Berkeley from 1968-1973, surviving and thriving during the riotous times. Moe's windows were not broken, to my knowledge, nor were Cody's.

Moe's has four floors. I can't give details about what is on each floor but I remember some of what is on each floor. The main thing is to visit Moe's when in Berkeley.

Just inside the door and up a split level are belles lettres, a mixture of mostly used but some new novels, essays, and criticism. I have found **Wright Morris** and **Christopher Morley** there and picked up a copy of **Witold Rybczynski's** *The Most Beautiful House in the World*, dust jacket and all, for a mere dollar. In the basement I have found sheet music, fake books, and hits of the 60's for guitar and piano, all at affordable prices. On the third floor there are volumes of history assorted subjects along with foreign language materials. On the fourth floor there is an offering of first editions and fine printers from the

Bay Area.

The floors are wooden and there are lots of posters and notices everywhere. There is enough atmosphere to go around no matter what your taste. You can alternately feel intellectual, beat (as in Jack Kerouac et al.) or hippie.

If you hang around the main entrance where books by local writers are available, you will get to meet and greet **Julia Winograd**, a local poet who was around for People's Park and other causes. Her books are for sale in Moe's and she regularly comes in just long enough to say hello, smile, and blow some soap bubbles your way to make you smile, too, and remind you where you are.

Moe's is on 2476 Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, 94704. Store hours are Sunday—Thursday, 10 a.m. — 11 p.m. and Friday, Saturday, 10 a.m. until midnight. The phone numbers are 510/849-2087; 849-2133. ☞

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collections take the five-year average as a safe guess. For the coming year, that would be a prediction that prices will increase a little less than 5%. No institution selects a random assortment of titles, however: a divinity school will notice when Theology prices skyrocket, but even a steep rise in the price of Chemistry titles will have little impact on a law library.

1994 marks the second year in a row for very modest price increases. After a 1.8% increase in 1993, the 1.5% increase this year was an unexpected boon. Can a third modest year be on its way? Stay tuned... ☞

Average book prices --

Percentage increase figured on previous year

	June 1989	June 1990	June 1991	June 1992	June 1993	June 1994	5-year Average
All books (%increase)	\$41.84 6.5%	\$43.64 4.3%	\$45.63 4.6%	\$51.32 12.5%	\$52.26 1.8%	\$53.05 1.5%	4.9%
U.S. origin (%increase)	\$35.61 5.9%	\$36.86 3.5%	\$38.32 4.0%	\$42.25 10.3%	\$42.55 0.7%	\$43.82 3.0%	4.3%
U.K. origin (%increase)	\$47.92 13.0%	\$48.79 1.8%	\$52.76 8.1%	\$58.50 10.9%	\$60.39 3.2%	\$57.42 -4.9%	3.8%
Other origin (%increase)	\$62.77 3.0%	\$71.55 14.0%	\$73.86 3.2%	\$82.20 11.3%	\$93.36 13.6%	\$91.63 -1.9%	8.0%