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Book Pricing Update

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Book Pricing Update

A Closer Look at the Arts

by Celia Scher Wagner (Blackwell)

This column usually examines overall trends in publishing and pricing of new academic monographs, as represented in Blackwell North America's database of new titles. For the next several issues, however, I will be narrowing the focus down to more specific subject areas, to see what changes have taken place in recent years. This issue's focus is **Architecture and the Arts**.

Publishing in the Fine and Visual Arts, Architecture, and the Performing Arts has undergone some subtle changes over the last five years. In contrast to the Sciences, the number of academic monographs in these Art fields has suffered a small decrease, resulting in a 10% drop in titles since 1990. (See figure and chart below left).

The overall decrease, though, simply mirrors a 24% drop in the number of titles in the Fine and Visual Arts and Art History. Architecture and the Perform-

ing Arts have seen greater publishing output, but because they represent a smaller pool of titles to begin with, and their growth was more modest, at 16% and 4% respectively, their rise could not balance the drop in Fine Arts.

Within the Performing Arts, the number of Music titles fell by 10%. This was not, however, reflected in a falling off of titles about either Elvis or the Beatles: 1994 had more Beatles titles, and twice as many Elvis titles, as any of the previous four years. Bear in mind that these are academic monographs, not mass market titles — the cookbook I spied on a local bookstore remainder shelf recently, **Are You Hungry Tonight?** (recipes ostensibly related in some way to Elvis), is not represented in the above numbers.

The most dramatic percentage drop in any one subcategory is the 46% reduction in the number of titles on the Photographic Arts. The most dramatic

rise, 57%, is in titles concerned with Cinema. This comes as no surprise to those of us who have noticed the flourishing of biographies, bibliographies, and bio-bibliographies of film stars over the past few years.

On the pricing side, the news is a little brighter for the Arts than for many other fields. List prices rose 19% in five years, compared to 22% for academic monographs in all fields combined. Again, though, the price increase varied by subject area. (See chart and graph below right)

Prices rose 25% in the Fine Arts, and 24% in Architecture, but only 7% in the

continued on page 86

Number of Monographic Titles in Selected Arts Subjects

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	Percent Change
Fine Arts and Art History	1115	1163	966	882	852	-24%
Art Photography	229	190	141	147	124	-46%
Art Theory	76	65	55	81	72	-5%
Architecture	326	335	311	381	378	16%
Performing Arts	909	923	896	962	941	4%
Theater	154	136	181	172	169	10%
Cinema	149	179	168	219	234	57%
Dance	33	35	28	35	27	-18%
Music	503	500	476	463	455	-10%
All Arts & Architecture:	2542	2627	2302	2362	2300	-10%

Average List Prices in Selected Arts Subjects

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	Percent Change
Fine Arts and Art History	\$38.66	\$41.72	\$45.62	\$49.34	\$48.38	25%
Art Photography	\$34.88	\$36.17	\$37.53	\$42.95	\$38.68	11%
Art Theory	\$35.88	\$33.60	\$39.75	\$35.51	\$37.42	4%
Architecture	\$45.26	\$46.98	\$49.58	\$58.12	\$55.99	24%
Performing Arts	\$37.92	\$38.77	\$38.78	\$40.82	\$40.62	7%
Theater	\$29.14	\$35.50	\$35.15	\$39.06	\$37.13	27%
Cinema	\$29.20	\$32.78	\$37.21	\$35.23	\$37.06	27%
Dance	\$30.24	\$28.09	\$34.18	\$39.60	\$37.33	23%
Music	\$45.05	\$43.74	\$41.63	\$45.57	\$44.91	0%
All Arts & Architecture:	\$38.71	\$40.49	\$43.09	\$46.57	\$45.98	19%
All New Academic Titles:	\$43.64	\$45.63	\$51.32	\$52.26	\$53.05	22%

**Monographic Titles in the Arts
1990 to 1994**

**Prices of Monographs in the Arts
1990 to 1994**

Book Pricing Update

continued from page 58

Performing Arts. Within the Performing Arts, though, there was yet another discrepancy: Theater, Cinema and Dance all saw prices rise more than 20%. Only Music showed a 0% price gain since 1990, but not because prices stayed flat for the intervening years — they dropped, they rose, and they ended nearly where they began.

The chart of price fluctuations is a particularly interesting one. Architecture started as the highest priced category, and

has remained there. The Fine and Performing Arts, on the other hand, started off with quite similar list prices, and then diverged sharply, with Fine Arts titles going up by \$10 over five years, and Performing Arts titles going up by less than \$3. Again, this reflected the steadying effect of prices in Music, and the fact that Music titles account for more than half of all titles in the Performing Arts.

Even more encouraging: prices in each of the "big" categories, and in all three combined, dropped between 1993 and 1994, allowing librarians to stretch their Arts dollars a little farther. ☺

Biz of Acq

continued from page 69

librarians will be happy to share their experiences and ideas for discarding. And again, bring it up for discussion at general staff meetings.

Deselection has far-ranging implications: on the institution's statistics, on scholarship, on the community served by

the library and on staff morale. The benefits gained by removing titles from the library (space, currency, ease of use) must be balanced by the uniqueness of individual titles and the effect on the long-range goals of the institution. Having a concrete basis for controversial decisions can deflect criticisms by taxpayers, faculty or administrators. How else to justify a smaller (in terms of statistics) but more dynamic and useful collection? ☺

On the Road

continued from page 83

ticket changes so I thought it was worth an attempt. It did work! I was able to get aboard that flight. While waiting for the delayed 9:00 a.m. flight from Helsinki, I talked to the soccer players and engineers from NASA, Goddard who were also ordered to return to our country.

Finally we boarded the flight and upon takeoff, there was tremendous applause and relief from everybody on the plane. We were headed for Frankfurt then and I would connect to New York and the NASA people were headed for Washington, D.C.

I finally arrived in New York later Tuesday afternoon, and called my family from Kennedy Airport. They were concerned because they hadn't heard from me, and asked where I was. I told them that I was back in New York. Needless to say, they were elated to hear the good news.

I hope to return to Moscow again during a less stressful time. However, this experience I will never forget. ☺

Book Review: Final Edit

continued from page 56

himself. In the course of trying to solve the murder while running his publishing business, he paints a vivid and informative picture of how many publishers in the world of New York City publishing function, live, love and deal with everyday publishing problems, not only on the publishing premises, but sometimes at the club and in the bedroom.

While **Final Edit** does an admirable job as a top-notch murder mystery for all lovers of this genre, it is loaded with enough factual and informative publishing insights that it might well be a primer on book publishing as practiced in New York, even down to the clubs favored by the publishing community and the types of drinks imbibed. It offers much about behind-the-scenes publisher activity, auctions, wheeling and dealing with agents, manuscript preparation and submission, working the ABA floor during a convention, and publisher financing problems.

If you love book publishing, or even have a modest interest in the subject, you'll find **Final Edit** loaded with an abundance of publisher know-how and wisdom about life on the Big Apple publishing scene. Don't miss it! ☺

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

69 ALPER	35 GREENWOOD
7 AMBASSADOR	27 INPUT CULTURE
87 AMERITECH	27 INTERNATIONAL BOOK DIST.
31 AMIGOS	2 JAEGER
5 ATG	41 MARY ANN LIEBERT
37 BAKER & TAYLOR	88 MIDWEST LIBRARY SERVICE
38 BLACKWELL	4 PUBLISHERS CONFERENCE
53 BLACKWELL NORTH AMERICA	73 PUVILL LIBROS
47 BLACKWELL NORTH AMERICA	49 READMORE
40 BOOK HOUSE	67 RITTENHOUSE
25 BRODART	45 SPRINGER-VERLAG
61 CHADWYCK-HEALEY	9 SWETS
39 COUTTS	22 UNCOVER
56 EBSCO	36 VCH
31 EASTERN BOOK	55 WILEY
13 ELSEVIER SCIENCE	3 YBP