

September 1997

Book Pricing Update-Trends in Publishing by Broad Subject Area-1996/97

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Recommended Citation

Loughran, Tom (1997) "Book Pricing Update-Trends in Publishing by Broad Subject Area-1996/97," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 9: Iss. 4, Article 21.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2223>

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Janet Fisher



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Born: Austin, Texas, 1953

Current residence: Watertown, Massachusetts

Education: Bachelor's of Music, majoring in Piano Performance, University of Texas at Austin, 1977.

Job experience: Entered publishing via a part-time job while in college helping the editor of a small humanities journal (*Texas Studies in Literature and Language*). When it joined the newly formed journals department of **University of Texas Press**, I joined too, and worked for an additional humanities journal (*Research in African Literatures*). As time went on, and the department grew, my duties diversified and grew also. When I graduated from college, I became full-time at UT Press and moved from journals production manager to journals manager. (No, I did not drive everyone else out!) After ten years in that position, I joined **MIT Press** in 1989 where I am Associate Director for Journals Publishing.

Family and proudest accomplishment: Two daughters, ages 12 and 11.

Most recent goal: To get more exercise (my perpetual goal!)

First job: Baskin-Robbins Ice Cream Parlor

Fondest memory: Going to Italy last year

Favorite pastimes: Reading, playing piano

Hobbies: Sewing, walking, traveling, carpooling kids

Last book read: *Cloud Chamber* by Michael Dorris

Pet peeve: When people don't do what they say they are going to do.

Had I but world enough and time: I would go live in the mountains and never touch a computer

Single most important piece of advice: Be willing to start small.

Biggest surprise: How maternal I suddenly felt when I had my kids. 🌱

Book Pricing Update

Trends in Publishing by Broad Subject Area — 1996/97

by **Tom Loughran** (Blackwell) <loughran@bnamf.blackwell.com>



Annually, Blackwell reports on broad pricing trends in monographic publishing for the academic market. The following data represent single titles, even though each title may have been acquired by a number of libraries.

Trends by Broad Subject Area

Excluding reprints, and few libraries purchase reprints except on a selective basis, the following subject areas increased or decreased in overall numbers and average book prices, as noted:

Arts (including the performing arts) fell 1.8% from \$44.43 to \$43.53 on an increase of 856 titles -- from 2,329 in 95/96 to 3,185 in 96/97.

Humanities fell less than .02% from \$46.22 to \$46.13 on an increase of 1,734 titles.

Literature (including criticism) rose 5% from \$34.62 to 36.49 on an increase of 1,045 titles -- from 4,483 to 5,528. Within this category, literary texts almost held steady at about a fifty cent increase in average book price (\$23.47 to \$23.96), while literary criticism rose 6.6 %, from \$45.77 to \$49.01.

Law coverage increased by 317 titles, from 753 to 1,070, while prices rose a hefty 20%, from an average of \$63.16 in the 95/96 publishing year to \$79.64 in 96/97.

Library / Bibliographic Science (including books about books) rose in price 5.7%, from \$42.12 to \$44.70, while actual numbers of titles published fell by 4%, from 243 to 233.

Social Sciences, which made up just under 24% of all new titles published last year (11,519) averaged \$44.39 per volume. Compared with the output of the year before (10,159 titles), this represents a decrease in overall share of about 4%, while the average price rose a minuscule .03% from \$44.23.

Sciences / Technology / Medicine showed a 2.8% decrease in average price per title (from \$76.63 to \$74.75) on an increase of 3,266 titles -- from 11,717 in the 95/96 publishing year to 14,983 in 96/97.

Here are some details within this broad category. Total **Biology** books increased from 1,061 to 1,221. The price decrease was average for the category as a whole at 2.8%, or from \$89.77 to \$87.29.

Chemistry publishing numbers held steady at 315 titles, versus 310 titles in 95/96, while the average price per title rose 1.7%, from \$116.89 to \$118.97.

Books in **Physics** increased by an average cost of 1.4%, from \$100.63 to \$102.07, while, again, numbers held relatively steady, rising from 575 titles to 581 titles.

Mathematics books decreased at nearly the average rate for the broader category, from \$80.16 to \$77.97, or 2.7%, while numbers rose 217 titles, from 850 to 1,067.

Computer Science publishing increased a dramatic 58%, from 1,652 titles in 95/96 to 2,612 in 96/97. A good share of this was accounted for by the increase of PC computing titles, which increased 91% from 454 to 869. The category overall showed a modest price decrease of 1.2% (from \$48.91 to \$48.30), while PC computing showed an 8.3% increase in price per title, from \$33.35 to \$36.14.

Technology books, including the various engineering disciplines rose by 637 titles, from 1,982 to 2,619, or 32%, while the average price per title showed a drop of 1.9%, from \$90.18 to \$88.51.

Medical books, excluding nursing titles, declined in price by 5%, from \$74.48 to \$70.72. Following the trend, output increased 19%, from 3,409 titles to 4,063 titles. **Nursing** showed increases in both price per title and number of titles. Prices increased 5%, from \$37.28 to \$39.16, while output increased 23% from 326 to 401.

Readers of this column can expect expanded coverage of pricing issues. We have been collecting information on simultaneous paperback editions and will add this information to the column. In addition, as Blackwell's integrates its US and UK operations, we will begin reporting on the pricing of the complete spectrum of British academic publishing. 🌱