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Letters to the Editor

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Against the Grain

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Letters to the Editor

Hey, y'all, I'm starting to get letters to the editor and I'm so excited. Here are a few of them.

FROM: Peter E. Simon, Vice President of Database Publishing, R. R. Bowker. Dated July 30, 1990.

Following is a response to *Against the Grain* on comments made by Nat Bodian in a recent "If You're Hot You're Hot" column.

In a recent column in *Against the Grain*, Nat Bodian indicated that R.R. Bowker had abandoned the role of being "the publisher's publisher," and does not provide books for the publishing industry.

R.R. Bowker, which has been publishing since 1872, continues to produce annually the major titles for the book industry: the *Books In Print* family, *Literary Marketplace*, etc. In addition, Bowker keeps in print such classics as some of Nat Bodian's titles and are always interested in more titles. They will be published by Bowker when they are of high quality and of interest to the library and publishing markets. Currently, new editions of two important titles to the publishing industry, *Bestsellers* (which will cover 1895 through 1990) and the *Bookman's Glossary* (a 7th edition) are in preparation for publication. Also, through the Bowker magazine division, journals such as *Publisher's Weekly*, *Library Journal* and *School Library Jour-*

nal continue to provide essential coverage of the book publishing markets, as well as the library market -which we all agree publishers need to pay more attention to.

Bowker maintains ongoing contact with over 33,000 publishers in the United States via mail and telephone, and provides the best reference works possible to keep pace with the publishing output in the United States. Therefore, we take great pride in being "the Publisher's Publisher."

From Fred Gullette of Book News, Inc., in Portland, Oregon:

LRTS v.33, no.4, carries the St. Clair-Treadwell paper reporting

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on comparison of sci-tech book coverage on their plans by four jobbers (unnamed — alas!). Two were general approval dealers, two sci-tech specialists. A universe of 1992 titles was created by asking the four dealers to report which books, under the Texas A&M Library profile, they would send during a period of five months — January through May, 1986. Duplicates were eliminated. Each jobber was tested against the sample it had helped create.

The best dealer would have sent 60.3% of the books. A miniscule 4% of the universe was covered by all four.

Cambridge University Press (CUP) was described in detail. CUP had 57 sci-tech books in the study.

The best jobber offered only 66% of these 57 books, a poor showing for a highly respected and vigorously promoted, highly visible list.

By comparison, *SciTech Book News*, an annotated bibliography attempting exhaustive coverage of STM books, cited 107 CUP books in the same five months of 1988.

One must speculate that libraries relying upon approval plans are not demanding thorough coverage. (Why not? Are faculty less demanding? Is the administration easier going?) Or are these libraries content to maintain an active crew of selectors to glean the missed books? Or is the St. Clair-Treadwell study gravely flawed? (The immediately obvious flaw is its lack of any sampling outside

the vendor-built universe: a flaw that would tend to diminish the thoroughness of the coverage reported above.)

The study corroborates what Book News has been asserting to research libraries for 14 years; an exhaustive list of newly published STM books is an imperative adjunct to sci-tech approval plans.

And, last but not least, I got a letter from Karen Muller in which she takes me to task for not changing the Resources and Technical Services Division to ALCTS on the Publisher/Vendor Library Relations Committee complaint form published in *Against the Grain*, v.2#3, p.33. *Mea culpa.* ☛