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Bet You Missed It

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Against the Grain

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Bet You Missed It!

Compiled by *Mike Markwith* (Yankee Book Peddler)
and
Katina Strauch (College of Charleston)

The Law of Increasing Returns//Book Publishing/The Dis-economies of Scale in *The Economist* for April 7, 1990, pp.25-28.

This article is worth reading every word of and every single sentence is quotable. The cut line says: "The moneymen have plunged into the world of books. But they are not finding it an easy place to make money in." The beginning sentence: "Few industries straddle the opposing interests of art and business as uncomfortably as book publishing." And the article goes on from there. After discussing pros and cons, the article ends: "... publishing is unlikely to become much more money-minded than it is now. . . Publishing will remain happily unprofitable for some time yet." What does the peanut gallery have to say to that?

Katina Strauch
(College of Charleston)

Out of Print, Out of Mind?// Selth, Jefferson P. "The Grass Was Greener in the Good Old Days: The 'Crisis' of Out-of-Print Books," in *Book Research Quarterly* 5 (4), pages 75-78 for Winter 1989-90.

Jefferson P. Selth is a librarian at the University of California, Riverside. Two years ago, he became concerned that some questionable statements about out-of-print books were being accepted as fact by librarians and other concerned individuals. Were books going out-of-

print more rapidly now than before the Thor decision? Did British books stay in print longer than books published in the U.S.? Selth questioned these assertions and undertook his own study to test them. He selected from the 1977 *Cumulative Book Index* all titles by authors whose names began with Bed. He then chose the first 100 of these that were also listed in *Books in Print* 1977/78 and *British Books in Print* 1977. Those titles were checked against *BIP* 1982/83 and 1987/88 and against *BBIP* 1982 and 1987 to find those still in print after five and ten years. He repeated the procedure for titles appearing in *CBI* 1982 and *BIP* 1982/83 and *BBIP* 1982. The results of his study reveal that books are going out-of-print at a slower rate than they were five years ago. Moreover, U.S. imprints are surviving in the marketplace for longer periods of time than are British imprints. Selth acknowledges that his study is a small one and he leaves the "satisfaction" of conducting a more exhaustive one to others. [See *Against the Grain*, v.1, no.2 for a discussion of some of these issues.]

Linda K. Carr
(Boston University)

Folklore and Fiction?// By Charles Trueheart. "The Messy Truth About Management" *Washington Post*, April 3, 1990.

Trueheart summarizes an essay by Henry Mintzberg in the March-

April issue of *Harvard Business Review*, "The Manager's Job: Folklore and Fact," which examines the misnomer of management "science." Folklore has us believe that the manager is a "reflective, systematic planner," while the reality is that a manager is actually "strongly oriented to action and dislikes reflective activities." Another folklore states that managers rely on a "systematic, well-aggregated flow of information" when, in fact, studies show that "most chief executives spend 78% of their time in oral communications that are random, inefficient face-to-face meetings."

So . . . what are your organization's folklore and realities?

Corrie Marsh
(George Washington University)

The Importance of Being Office// Flinn, F. X. "The Portable Office." *Fortune*, for February 26, 1990, p. 14-24.

This article emphasizes the importance of portable computers "on the road" (field automation) by stating that those businesses that utilize them improve communication, effectiveness, speed of information, and tend to increase sales.

The day when our book dealers begin arriving with desktops at sales calls is probably fast approaching. Wouldn't it be nice to ask about a particular book or problem order and be notified of its status while the sales representatives are still in our

offices? Or, wouldn't it be desirable to ask a question and actually see our vendors input that message directly to their respective Customer Service Managers right in front of our eyes? I had a visit from one book dealer recently, and when I asked a question regarding the status of our open orders he needed to place a phone call to the main office. It seemed somewhat archaic in this day and age.

Mr. Flinn states "When a sales force has instant access to current pricing, inventory status, customer history, competitive activity, and a method for transmitting orders within minutes of receipt, it can dominate a market."

The key to a successful business, especially in the book trade, is responsiveness to its customers' needs. The ability to communicate quickly is fast becoming the norm. As Mr. Flinn indicates, it is no longer acceptable to state that you will have a response to a client's question in 2-3 days. He states that 2-3 minutes is more like it.

One other advantage of the portable computer is that it allows for the more productive use of one's time while on the road. I would think that book dealers would appreciate this. This article does discuss cellular telephones and indicates that along with fax machines and voice messaging systems, some primary offices are becoming the automobile.

The article concludes that the 1990's will see tremendous growth in this area. The "portable office" promises to be "a source of enhanced productivity, responsiveness, and, in today's fast-moving highly competitive global markets, profitability."

Rosann Bazirjian
(Syracuse University)

Nothing Succeeds Like Excess?!! "Ingram Takes Stock for the '90's," by John Mutter in *Publishers Weekly* for April 6, 1990, pp. 70-73.

This is an interesting look at another side of bookselling. Apparently Ingram, which began "encouraging booksellers, particularly independents, to buy more titles but buy fewer copies of those titles" and reorder quickly from Ingram had a problem this Christmas when they underestimated and "were barraged with orders." And the world will continue to change. "In five or ten years Ingram will 'definitely be much larger, as more customers realize the benefits of dealing with wholesalers.'"

Katina Strauch
(College of Charleston)

What Price, Success? By Edwin McDowell. "Price of Literary Success: Several Books in One Deal" *New York Times*, May 7, 1990.

McDowell recognizes that while multibook contracts have been around for some time, they have now become more frequent. The multibook contracts are increasing with competition among publishers to keep their big-name authors. The authors are assured of the publisher's commitment to promoting their books and publishers are able to buy both hardcover and paperback rights, which provide several formats and markets in which to recoup their investments. "There is almost no way the publisher can lose money," states Aaron Priest, literary agent to the romance writer Johanna Lindsey, who recently signed a 10-book contract with Avon Books. The multibook contracts are paid out over the years

and publishers can cancel the rest of a contract when a first book fails, protecting them from huge loss. Other literary agents see this trend as a "glorified option deal" which favors the publisher since authors have no guarantee that their editor will continue and authors may short change themselves after inflation.

Corrie Marsh
(George Washington University)

East Needs West?!! "Starved for Books — Another Hunger in Eastern Europe," Editorial, Monday, May 21, 1990, *New York Times*.

"Eastern Europe needs books — so badly that even contributions from individuals can enlighten and liberate," says Leon Sigal in this editorial which points out that there is a dearth of Western literature in most Eastern European libraries. Apparently some are trying to rectify this problem. "Canada is donating paper to publishers," says Sigal. "But the U.S. Government pleads poverty." However, there are still some Americans out there helping. Mentioned in this editorial are two librarians of Romanian descent who have helped after the University of Bucharest library burned in the coup against Ceausescu and 500,000 books were destroyed — Opritza Popa and Doina G. Farkas. It's inspirational . . .

Katina Strauch
(College of Charleston)

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Our World and Welcome to It!!! By Constance L. Hays."TriBeCa Yawns Hello to Film Studio" *New York Times*, May 6, 1990.

Look at another world! This article describes the neighborhood excitement over Robert De Niro's new TriBeCa Film Center productions at 375 Greenwich Street. Local castings and a ground floor restaurant, the TriBeCa Grill, are beginning to attract attention. Locals are evidently trying to maintain their typical New York indifference to the goings on.

[And rumor has it that Scholarly Book staffers (located at 451 Greenwich St.) are starting to take two hour lunch breaks so they can line up for studio castings. Is the Book Center's president, Barry Fast, passing on recipes he has collected from librarians to the chef at the new restaurant? Let's keep our eyes peeled!]

Corrie Marsh
(George Washington University)

Abstracts of Science by Joyce L. Ogburn (Penn State University)

I have been taking Science for quite a few years now, and it is heartening to see so much attention now being paid to issues of concern to libraries and information professionals. Among these are journals pricing, handling of

scientific data, information policy, and electronic communication networks. When I first took this assignment I had no idea how much coverage Science would begin giving to these kinds of issues. As a result, I am behind in passing abstracts to Against the Grain. I will be working backward to catch up on the articles of interest for the past few years. The following abstracts are of some of the articles for 1990.

To Each His Own//AAAS Rides Electronic Wave, Joseph Palca, *Science* vol. 247 for 2 March 1990, page 1024.

AAAS will be collaborating with OCLC to produce a peer-reviewed electronic science journal. It is hoped that the journal will debut in 18 months. The journal is intended to complement existing print publications, taking advantage of the worldwide OCLC network and data delivery expertise and AAAS's experience with scientific publishing.

Keeping Up With the Harvards//Who Leads the [Ivy] League in "Citation Impact"? (Briefings), *Science*, vol. 247 for 9 March 1990, page 1183.

Not an article, but a chart which demonstrates who leads the ivy league in citations per paper. The winner? Harvard, followed by Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Univ. of Pennsylvania, Dartmouth, Cornell, and Brown.

They Said It Couldn't Be Done//Protecting Software (Briefings), *Science* vol. 247 for 23 March 1990, page 1415.

This news item quickly reviews

the need to update intellectual property laws as they relate to software. Many issues currently in litigation need to be resolved by the courts, but software technology is changing and developing, making agreement on terminology and protection issues difficult.

Networks, Networks, And More Networks//Getting Together Bit by Bit, Joseph Palca (Research News), *Science*, vol. 248 for 13 April 1990, pages 160-162.

Science is really following developments in electronic networks. This article covers the development of NSFNET, the proposed national science network. Among the aims of the network are high speed communication, sharing data and graphics through databases, and fostering collaboration among scientists. The hope is that network communication will revolutionize communication the way that the telephone and fax machine have. The network will be a national backbone, linking many existing local or specialized networks. The Executive Branch and the Congress are exploring how to move ahead with a plan for a national network. The Committee on Computer Research and Applications under the OSTP Federal Coordinating Council for Science, Engineering and Technology produced a report which recommended a strategy for high speed computing to link government, industry, and higher education. A second report outlined goals and budgets for accomplishing this task. The network is now called NREN (National Research and Education Network) and is essentially the NSFNET operating at a higher

speed. The next generation of NREN will be even faster. Projects are being formulated to test the capabilities of such high speed connections, including linking computers together to work in tandem. At the moment there are technical problems associated with the development of such a high powered network, but these should be overcome. The dangers of a national network, such as the intrusion of hackers or terrorists disrupting the data, are recognized, but the advantages are perceived to outweigh the possible problems.

If the Shoe Fits . . . //Gordon and Breach Impanels a Journal Jury by Constance Holden in *Science* vol. 248 for 20 April 1990, pages 298-299.

Monitoring the story of the Gordon and Breach attempt to set

the record straight on their journal prices, this article reviews recent developments. Latest on the horizon is a panel, established by Gordon and Breach, "to define and develop future criteria for future surveys that assess the relative cost-effectiveness of science publications." (See *Against the Grain*, v.2#2, page 34 ff.) Many suspect that this panel is supposed to gather evidence to support Gordon and Breach's litigation efforts, but G&B denies this claim. This latest effort is but one of a series of steps taken by Gordon and Breach to quieten attacks on the high cost of their journals. *Science* quotes Chuck Hamaker as saying, "I'm skeptical that anything Gordon and Breach does at this stage will take care of the damage that's already been created." Others agree, noting that by pursuing litigation and sending threatening

letters to critics of their journal pricing practices, G&B may be causing itself more harm than any price surveys have.

Big Network is Watching You!//Wiring the Campuses, (editorial) Richard C. Atkinson and Donald W. Anderson, *Science*, vol. 248 (4 May 1990): 529.

Atkinson and Anderson advocate formulating a national

plan for higher education to handle electronic communication. Planning also needs to be at the local

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level, and should include investing in proper equipment and fiber optical technology and supporting regional networks to connect to national ones. They cite NSF's development of a national network to link scientists and engineers as a way to start connecting scholars. They also call for the federal government to provide funding and incentives to campuses to encourage the growth of networks.

Bet You Missed it Minis

The Association of Research Libraries has issued a **Gordon & Breach Editor Briefing Package** dated March 27, 1990. This package includes a list of faculty

in ARL universities who serve on Gordon & Breach editorial boards, a brief overview of legal actions taken to date, and articles plus reports from the press.

LOGOS, The Professional Journal for the Book World, volume 1, issue 1, quarterly, 1990 is just out! The Editor, you will recall, is **Gordon Graham** (formerly Chairman of Butterworths). "LOGOS," says the publisher Colin Whurr, "will devote itself single-mindedly to the welfare of the book. It will be concerned with the global communications era, the information society, and multimedia corporations only insofar as they affect the book."

In this first issue are articles by (to mention only a few) Ernest Hochland (founder of one of Britain's largest specialist academic bookshops), Jerome S. Rubin (Times Mirror), Richard Abel

(Timber Press), and Peter Weidhaas (Director, Frankfurt Book Fair). Topics covered include: British bookselling, the printed book, the species publisher codex, the book trade in Latin America, progress of permanent paper in both the U.S. and the U.K. Check it out!

The Scientist Opinion for April 30, 1990 covers the February meeting of the AAAS (see **ATG**, v.2, no.2, April, 1990, p.11) including excerpts and pictures. It's worth looking at.

The **Society for Scholarly Publishing Letter** for January, 1990 had a commentary worth noting by Professor Philip G. Altbach Director of the Comparative Education Center at SUNY Buffalo entitled "Photocopying, Copyright, and University Overregulation." Says

Altbach: "Librarians must help to develop a system which provides more flexibility [for dealing with copyright]. Publishers must not just insist on the perquisites of copyright but also permit more adequate access to knowledge. I am not arguing for a return to the old days of widespread copyright violation, but rather for a better balance. For the moment, the pendulum has swung too far in the direction of those who control knowledge."

And there was an article in the *Wall Street Journal* (May 1, 1990, p.B1) about **Rupert Murdoch** who wants to prove that "global is better in books." Murdoch owns

Harper & Row, Harper Paperbacks, Harper Perennial, Basic Books, Collins Publishers, Grafton, Times Books, Zondervan, Scott Foresman, and Little Brown to name only a few.

From the **Newsletter on Serials Pricing Issues: Number 21, April 27, 1990:**

It looks like serials prices will be going up, up, up!! Regarding 1991 Subscription Pricing, Joel Baron (Faxon) states: "I am concerned about the potential levels of 1991 title inflation." For the non-USA publisher, Mr. Baron cites 8-10 percent increases for the year covering normal domestic inflation,

volume inflation, and page inflation. To that, however, must be added the general postal increases coming in 1991. "At a USPS briefing...[Baron] attended in Washington, they were talking about increases similar to those the publishing industry saw two years ago, and those were around 26 percent. In summary, the **price increases for non-USA titles in 1991** could look like the following:

Currency value
7-9 percent
Inflation (CPI, volume, page)
8-10 percent
Postage 2-4 percent
Range 17-23 percent

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