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Book Pricing Update — Reference Publishing in 1997

by Dan Miller (Blackwell's)

Everything in the world is organized into hierarchies, structures, and pecking orders — this according to the subtitle of Random House's *The Order of Things*, a general reference work published in 1997. As a librarian, I could hardly disagree. What, then, can be said about the broad organization of scholarly reference titles published during the academic year 1996/97, specifically regarding new and subsequent editions of encyclopedias, dictionaries, directories, data books/tables, atlases and miscellaneous reference works? A glance at Blackwell's Approval Plan coverage for the year reveals that 1,097 such titles were published. Approximately 449 titles (or 41%) fell within Arts and Humanities, and 404 titles (or 37%) were Scientific/Technical/Medical. Two hundred and thirty-two titles (or 21%) fell within the Social Sciences and 12 titles were general reference works.

Arts and Humanities

Works in language and literature dominated this category with over 200 works published. In addition to the general dictionaries and encyclopedias we would expect to find in this category, targeted works were plentiful. Need some romantic inspiration? Check out *Words of Love: Romantic Quotations from Plato to Madonna* from Random House. Feeling less than Churchillian when delivering speeches or presentations? Pick up *Speaker's Lifetime Library* from Prentice-Hall. Does Armageddon appeal? Reference the *Encyclopedia of Apocalyptic Literature* from ABC-CLIO.

Fine Arts was the next most plentiful category in Arts and Humanities with over 55 titles published. General catalogs and encyclopedias of artists, craftsmen and movements were abundant, but, again, publishers also offered niche titles such as *The Oriental Rug Lexicon* from the University of Washington Press.

Philosophy/religion and history, each with approximately 50 titles, comprise most of the balance of Arts and Humanities. In the former category, works on Western religions proliferated; however titles such as *The Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy* from the State University of New York/Cornell University Press and *The Shambhala Encyclopedia of Yoga* from Shambhala Publications/Random House can also be found. In History, Scarecrow made a significant contribution with five new titles in their *European Historical Dictionaries series*, six new titles in the *Asian*

Historical Dictionaries series, and seven new titles in their *African Historical Dictionaries series*.

Scientific/Technical/Medical

With 153 titles, medical books comprised the lion's share of this category. An abundance of medical topics were covered, but 99 of the titles or 65% of all medical reference titles were high-end atlases. The balance of medical reference titles were mostly dictionaries and encyclopedias addressing diagnostic surgical techniques, largely for practitioners. Alternative medicine was represented by *The Alternative Medicine Resource Guide* from the Medical Library Association, *The Women's Encyclopedia of Natural Healing* from Seven Stories Press, *The Encyclopedia of Bodywork* from Facts on File, and *The Manual of Chinese Herbal Medicine* from Shambhala Publications. Cutting edge medical reference librarians will be pleased to know about Mosby's *Medical Surfari: A Guide to Exploring the Internet and Discovering the Top Health Care Resources*.

The Natural Sciences also weighed in with 153 reference titles, 36 of which were geographic atlases and 23 of which were in the Library of Congress QA classification for mathematics. A close inspection of the "mathematics" titles reveals that all but three were actually about computing or the Internet. The balance of Natural Science reference titles were somewhat evenly distributed among general science, astronomy, chemistry, natural history, botany, zoology, and human anatomy.

Technology saw over 85 reference titles published in 1997. Reference works in engineering accounted for over 20 titles, with an emphasis on electrical engineering. Eighteen titles were published in the area of chemical technology, of which only *The Complete Beverage Dictionary* from Van Nostrand Reinhold will be of interest to the lay person, with the balance of interest to chemical engineers. Home economics and building technology were the next most populous categories with 12 titles and 10 titles respectively. National or ethnic cuisine dictionaries accounted for most of the home economics titles. The balance of technology reference titles were somewhat evenly distributed among environmental technology, manufacturing, and handicrafts.

Social Sciences

Works in economics, business and finance dominated this category with over



75 titles published. Businesses and other organizations will be interested in directories such as *The Prentice Hall Directory of Online Business Information* and *The Coopers and Lybrand Multilingual Dictionary of Financial Reporting*. Other titles will be of interest to individuals, such as *The Best Mutual Funds to Own in America* from Dearborn Financial Publishing and *Standard and Poor's 100 Best Dividend-Paying Stocks* from McGraw-Hill. Who among us could not benefit from *Elsevier's Dictionary of Financial and Economic Terms*?

With 38 titles, anthropology was the second most prolific area of reference publishing in the Social Sciences. Although anthropology per se was represented by such titles as *The Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology* from Henry Holt and *History of Physical Anthropology* from Garland, over 25 titles in this category pertained to recreational activities and sports. It will come as no surprise to statistics-loving baseball fans that there was a market for seven new reference titles relating to baseball in 1997.

With 31 new titles, education comprised the next most prolific area of reference publishing in the Social Sciences. Parents navigating their way through the college applications process will be pleased to learn that ten of the new reference titles in education were directories intended to assist with the process, or to help obtain scholarships and other forms of financial aid. Library bibliographic science saw 20 new reference titles, mostly directories and catalogs. Political science saw 17 new reference works in 1997. Law contributed 11 new titles including two of particular interest to publishers and librarians: *McCarthy's Desk Encyclopedia of Intellectual Property* from BNA Books, and *The Multilingual Dictionary of Copyright, Rights and Contracts* from Blueprint.

General

The 12 general reference titles published in 1997 included the usual array of almanacs and directories. In this category I am again drawn to Random House's *The Order of Things: How Everything in the World is Organized into Hierarchies, Structures, and Pecking Orders*, as being emblematic of the value and richness of reference literature, and our enthusiasm for organizing and reporting on it. 🐱