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Book Pricing Update — Trends in Pricing by Broad Subject Category

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Annually, Blackwell's reports on broad pricing trends in monographic publishing for the academic market as reflected in the titles treated for its Approval program. The following data represent single titles, even though each title may have been acquired by a number of libraries. This year, unlike past years, the consideration of trends is restricted to exclude popular works and lower undergraduate texts, since most such works are not of interest to academic libraries with Approval plans. As usual, reprints are excluded since few libraries purchase reprints except on a selective basis.

Overall, during the period July 1, 1997, through June 30, 1998, there was a 2% increase over the previous year in the average list price of academic and scholarly titles. The increase was fairly evenly distributed. Arts/Humanities and Social Science (each of which accounted for 33% of all new titles) showed a 2% increase and a 3% increase, respectively. Sci/Tec/Med (which accounted for 34% of all new titles) showed a 3% increase. What particular subjects within these three broad subject areas increased or decreased dramatically over the year? How did high demand subjects fare? Let's take a look.

Arts/Humanities

The average list price of **Arts** titles (including art, performing arts, and architecture) increased only 1% from \$50.66 in 1996/97 to \$51.27 in 1997/98. The 104 titles treated in the **Auxiliary Arts** lead in this with a 16% increase, from \$50.68 to \$58.59.

The average list price of **Humanities** titles increased 4% from \$51.29 in 1996/97 to \$53.17 in 1997/98. In this category, the average list price of 557 **Philosophy** titles treated showed the largest increase, of 10%, over the previous year; these went from \$58.71 in 1996/97 to \$64.32 in 1997/98. A corresponding drop of 10% in average list price was enjoyed by

44 **Folklore/Mythology** titles treated in 1997/98; these went from \$45.06 in 1996/97 to \$40.45 in 1997/98. A 4% increase in the average list price of 1,548 **Religion** titles treated in 1997/98 was consistent with Humanities as a whole, going from \$44.50 in 1996/97 to \$46.45 in 1997/98. 1,121 **History** titles treated saw a 2% increase over the previous year, going from \$47.25 in 1996/97 to \$48.43 in 1997/98.

Social Sciences

Social Science titles had an average list price of \$54.27 in 1997/98 compared with \$52.67 in 1996/97, or a 3% increase. Within Social Science, 128 **Sports and Recreation** titles treated in 1997/98 saw a rather dramatic increase in average list price over the previous year, going from \$36.31 in 1996/97 to \$46.76 in 1997/98 (a 29% increase). Another notable area of Social Science price increase was **Race Relations**; 454 titles treated in 1997/98 showed a 10% increase in average list price over the previous year, going from \$40.50 to \$44.55.

The average list price of 869 **Law** titles treated in 1997/98 decreased by 6%, from an average of \$82.46 in 1996/97 to an average of \$77.12. 207 **Library/Bibliographic Science** titles (including books about books) treated in 1997/98 rose in average list price of 7%, from \$47.51 in 1996/97 to \$50.69. The average list price of books about books decreased 3% from \$56.87 to \$55.15, so Library Science titles bore most of the increase in cost.

The price of titles in **Economics** dropped 1% in 1997/98; 1,052 titles treated had an average list price of \$64.08 as compared with \$65.02 the previous year. In contrast, 1,086 **Political Science** titles treated in 1997/98 showed a 9% increase in their average list price, going from \$47.80 in 1996/97 to \$51.87 in 1997/98.

Titles in **Education** rose in price by 6%. 1,081 titles treated in 1997/98 had an average list price of \$46.68, as compared with \$43.85 the previous year. Similarly, titles in **Business**

Administration

increased in price, going from \$51.77 in 1996/97 to \$53.81 in 1997/98; thus 1,481 titles treated saw a 4% increase in average list price.

Science/Technology/Medicine

S/T/M titles had an average list price of \$83.69 in 1997/98 as compared with \$81.42 in 1996/97, or a 3% increase. Notable categories within S/T/M included 1,730 **Computer Science** titles treated, the average list price for which increased by 7% over the previous year, going from \$53.96 to \$57.69. The 99 **Botany** titles treated in 1997/98 saw a 16% decrease in their average list price, as compared with the previous year, going from \$110.74 in 1996/97 to \$93.54.

The average list price of 1,932 **Technology** titles treated increased consistent with S/T/M as a whole, going from \$98.97 in 1996/97 to \$101.65 in 1997/98, or a 3% increase. **Medical** titles saw a 5% increase in price. The average list price of 2,935 **Medical** titles treated in 1997/98 was \$81.92 as compared with \$77.90 the previous year. The average list price of **Mathematics** books remained fundamentally steady — \$82.58 in 1997/98 as compared with \$82.80 in 1996/97.

The Long View

Figure 1 shows broad pricing trends in monographic publishing over the past ten years, restricted to exclude popular works and lower undergraduate texts. The total price increase over this period, adjusted for inflation, was only 1.86%, with the largest increase affecting the Social Sciences which increased by 10.28%. Of particular interest is the fact that, after inflation is factored in, the price of S/T/M titles actually *decreased* by 5.33%. The average increase during this time, unadjusted for inflation, was 3.82%, a figure which may be of use to librarians struggling with the coming year's budget. 🐻

Average Book Prices in the Arts/Humanities, Social Sciences and S/T/M

New Title Only (reprints excluded)

Popular works and lower undergraduate texts excluded

												% Increase Adjusted	
												Actual % Increase	For Inflation
	87/88	88/89	89/90	90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	1988-98	1988-98
Humanities/Art	\$30.98	\$33.74	\$34.66	\$38.86	\$41.63	\$42.29	\$41.73	\$43.17	\$43.27	\$45.89	\$47.05	51.87%	6.95%
Social Science	\$34.66	\$36.82	\$38.44	\$40.79	\$44.28	\$47.10	\$47.23	\$48.63	\$48.26	\$52.62	\$54.27	56.58%	10.28%
Sci/Tech/Med	\$62.26	\$66.90	\$68.80	\$72.32	\$78.61	\$81.64	\$80.72	\$79.13	\$80.56	\$81.38	\$83.69	34.42%	-5.33%
All titles	\$42.74	\$45.88	\$48.14	\$50.69	\$56.13	\$57.86	\$57.42	\$57.26	\$57.92	\$60.68	\$61.82	44.64%	1.86%