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Book Pricing Update — Paper Versus Cloth: Does the Dollar Difference Really Count?

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With diminished budgets and increased pressure to find areas of savings, libraries continue to take an interest in options for receiving paper as opposed to cloth editions of titles. Certainly, the cost of binding such titles must be factored into an equation for estimating savings, but at around \$5.00 per title, added binding costs simply argue for a healthy price differential between the paper and cloth editions before purchasing the paper version. Additionally, the publication date of paper editions must be proximate to the publication date of the associated cloth editions for most academic libraries to accept paper editions.

Some book vendors (including Blackwell's) have been offering a "paper preferred" option to their approval plans during recent years. In this system, paper/cloth editions qualify as simultaneous when the publisher announces that both editions will be available upon publication and when Blackwell's, for example, receives both in a narrow window of time. Additionally, libraries can specify a price differential between the cloth and paper editions, above which the paper edition will be supplied. To find out

where and how much simultaneous paper editions have been making a difference in total acquisition costs, we analyzed titles treated for Blackwell's North American Approval Program during the year July 1, 1997 through June 30, 1998. Looking at the broad subject areas of Arts/Humanities, Social Sciences, Science/Technology/Medicine, and General Works (excluding lower undergraduate textbooks and popular titles) and calculating the savings based on \$10 and \$20 differentials between paper and cloth editions, we found savings in a number of areas as noted in the chart below.

First, it is interesting to look at the number of simultaneous titles actually treated during the period studied. For all types of publishers (i.e., university press, trade, societal, etc.), 5,142 titles out of 32,139 titles treated (or 16%) were simultaneous. For university presses, 2,591 out of 8,396 treated (or 31%) were simultaneous. For trade presses 2,750 out of 23,669 titles treated (or 13%) were simultaneous. Looking at all publishers, you'll note that, with the price differential set at \$10, Social Science ranked first in

savings at a rate of 15.4% followed by Arts/Humanities at 13.2% and Sci/Tech/Med at 7.3% for an overall savings rate of 9.2%. Because the number of general works titles treated was small, the savings rate is not significant. When the cloth/paper price differential is raised to \$20, the savings rate drops, but only slightly, indicating that the cost difference between simultaneous cloth/paper editions is most often greater than \$20.

When only university press titles are considered, the overall savings rate, based on a \$10 differential, increases to 21.3% or 12.1% higher than the total savings rate for all publishers at a \$10 differential. At a detailed level, we again see that at a price differential of \$10 Social Sciences show the highest rate of savings at 27.8% followed by Arts/Humanities at 20.3% and Sci/Tech/Med at 15.4%. Again, the savings rate decreases only slightly when the price differential is raised to \$20. Of interest with regard to university presses is the fact that the highest rate of savings—27% in the Social Sciences—does not represent the greatest potential dollar savings since rela-

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ALL PUBLISHERS (5,142 simultaneous editions)						
Subject	# of Titles	Cloth: Total dollars	Cloth: Ave. List Price	Paper Preferred: Total Dollars at \$20 diff.	Paper Preferred: Ave. List Price at \$20 diff.	% Saved at \$20 Diff.
Arts/Humanities	12,047	\$537,680	\$44.63	\$470,941	\$39.43	12.4%
Social Sciences	9,080	\$504,066	\$55.51	\$428,945	\$47.70	14.9%
Sci/Tech/Med	10,983	\$904,374	\$82.34	\$874,983	\$79.89	3.2%
General Works	29	\$1,818	\$62.69	\$1,470	\$50.69	19.1%
Total	32,139	\$1,947,939	\$60.61	\$1,776,340	\$55.65	8.8%
UNIVERSITY PRESSES (2,591 simultaneous editions)						
Subject	# of Titles	Cloth: Total dollars	Cloth: Ave. List Price	Paper Preferred: Total Dollars at \$20 diff.	Paper Preferred: Ave. List Price at \$20 diff.	% Saved at \$20 Diff.
Arts/Humanities	4,683	\$200,250	\$42.76	\$162,220.00	\$35.17	19.0%
Social Sciences	2,278	\$111,937	\$49.14	\$81,642.00	\$36.46	27.1%
Sci/Tech/Med	1,424	\$86,642	\$60.84	\$73,683.00	\$52.22	15.0%
General Works	11	\$455	\$41.33	\$395.00	\$35.87	13.2%
Total	8,396	\$399,285	\$47.56	\$317,940.00	\$38.43	20.4%
TRADE PRESSES (2,750 simultaneous editions)						
Subject	# of Titles	Cloth: Total dollars	Cloth: Ave. List Price	Paper Preferred: Total Dollars at \$20 diff.	Paper Preferred: Ave. List Price at \$20 diff.	% Saved at \$20 Diff.
Arts/Humanities	7,573	\$349,045	\$46.09	\$318,022	\$42.21	8.9%
Social Sciences	6,909	\$403,612	\$58.42	\$353,626	\$51.56	12.4%
Sci/Tech/Med	9,169	\$777,483	\$84.79	\$758,902	\$82.94	2.4%
General Works	18	\$1,363	\$75.75	\$1,075	\$59.74	21.1%
Total	23,669	\$1,531,503	\$64.71	\$1,431,624	\$60.77	6.5%

Media Minder — Ambassador Media 1998 Resource Guide

Column Editor: **Philip Hallman** (Ambassador Book Service) <phillip@absbook.com>

Regular readers of *ATG* may have wondered what happened to the **Media Minder** column? Will the standard excuse “my dog ate the column” work here? How about “I was abducted by aliens”? Actually, the truth is not that much different. Like an imagined scene out of “Invasion of the Body Snatchers,” my “hobby” took over my life and prevented me from doing much else. Obviously, I’m not alone. Hobbies are big business, although a quick search on the Internet did not reveal any hits for my particular obsession—developing lists of videos relevant to academic coursework. It’s a bit esoteric, I admit, but I’ve been doing it for some ten years and, like most passions, I can’t seem to stop. Fortunately, I have an outlet to express myself, and in fact, my boss even encourages it during working hours, no less!

The *Ambassador Media 1998 Resource Guide* is the result of my favorite pastime. Worked on over the last two years, the guide is a 375-page (not including indices) book available in printed format and on the Ambassador Webpage (www.absbook.com). It is a compilation of lists of core non-print media in 26 academic disciplines intended for use in college and university classrooms and libraries. The best titles from the catalogs of all the major video distributors (**Films for the Humanities**, **PBS Video**, **First Run/Icarus Films**, **Filmakers Library**, etc.), along with a large number of small vendors that may distribute a single title or two, have been culled together into a single reference volume. While there are numerous catalogs devoted to the feature film or entertainment market, this is the first resource to be devoted to the educational market and to be arranged by academic disciplines.

As the Media Director for Ambassador Media, I am asked constantly for suggestions and recommendations from librarians who

wish to develop their media collections. Unlike the world of books, where reviews are plentiful and resources easily available, the media selector must be more resourceful when it comes to choosing materials. The impetus of this guide was to ease that difficulty. It is filled with some 6,500 video titles that are all highly recommended and good additions to any video collection. It features recognized classics like “Obedience,” “Dead Birds” and “The Long Search Series,” to new standards such as “The Civil War” by Ken Burns and “Still Killing Us Softly,” to titles such as “Penny Sisto, Fiber Artist” which most may not have seen or heard of, but which would make an excellent addition to an art/women’s studies collection. In fact, that is the most enjoyable aspect of putting together a work such as this—including little-known titles in the hopes that they will be seen and enjoyed by a wider audience.

The titles are selected by using the criteria most often applied to book selection: some have been included because they were well reviewed upon their time of release; many have been awarded prizes at various international film/video festivals; some are included because they are the only video to deal with a specific topic that is timely and important to academic research; others have been used again and again in college and university classrooms across the country for years and have become standard “texts.” Finally, some are included because I like them, and having worked with faculty from large research in-



stitutions and small liberal arts colleges, I feel that they would be of interest.

The *Guide* is organized and driven by subject arrangement. Most of the limited reference works available on video materials are organized in alphabetic order with an abbreviated subject index located in the back, if at all, and sometimes in a separate volume. If the user is not already familiar with the given topic, this sort of arrangement makes a difficult situation even more difficult. Generally, libraries order media materials for their collection based on faculty recommendations. If you hand a typical reference source over to a faculty member, you probably will get a blank stare in return. “You mean you want ME to look through THIS?” is what seems to be communicated as their eyes widen in disbelief. Actually, who can blame them? While it isn’t difficult, it is a pain in the neck to flip back and forth between the alphabetized body of the work and the index. Now, by using the

Media Resource Guide, the faculty member can concentrate solely on the section devoted to their specific discipline and hopefully the blank stares will be replaced by smiles. The *Guide* also helps the media selector as well. Each description clearly indicates the current price and purchasing source for each title.

Like the best Persian carpets, the *Guide* will never really be complete or finished. In fact, I have conceived of it as a living document that is updated and expanded yearly. Already I have started to compile the *1999 Media Resource Guide* which will feature subjects not covered in the first guide. But before that, I have to make sure that my dog doesn’t eat any more of my columns. 🐕

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tively few titles were published in the Social Sciences. Instead, greater dollar savings can be derived from receiving simultaneous paper editions as part of a comprehensive Arts/Humanities plan where the rate of savings is lower but more titles are published.

Looking at trade publishers, we see that the overall savings rate based on a \$10 differential, drops to 6.8%, or 2.4% lower than the total savings rate for all publishers and 14.5% lower than the total savings rate for university presses; so trade titles offer the smallest

simultaneous paper/cloth savings. Again, the savings rate decreases only slightly when the price differential is raised to \$20. The detailed breakout follows the trend set by all publishers and university presses: Social Sciences ranked first in savings at a rate of 12.8% followed by Arts/Humanities at 9.4% and Sci/Tech/Med at 2.5%.

Although the figures appearing in the chart provide guidelines for potential savings through a “paper preferred” approach to acquisitions, clearly the specific title mix a library receives on an approval plan will yield its own rate of savings. Looking at a small-to-medium size Blackwell’s approval plan for

a West Coast university, we find savings of 24% during the period July 1, 1997 through June 30, 1998 through use of the “paper preferred” option (with a cloth/paper price differential specified at \$15). This library’s approval plan is fundamentally a Social Science plan with additional minimal coverage in literature and history. Only upper academic level works from university and trade presses are allowed. Taking advantage of the rate of savings afforded by simultaneous paper editions in the Social Sciences, this library was able to save over \$45,000 during the academic year just ended—not an insignificant amount! 🐕