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In Memoriam-Kathy Soupiset

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Book Pricing Update — ebooks and Publishing: Developing a New Business Relationship

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During the past year, the advent of ebooks has presented a great challenge for librarians, booksellers, and publishers. This is a brand new world and no one knows the long-term change ebooks will have on our working relationships. At Blackwell's, it is our belief that ebooks are here to stay and will become increasingly important to our customers. We want to be on the leading edge of this change.

To that end we have entered into a partnership with **netLibrary**, the largest supplier of ebooks to academic libraries. One aspect of our alliance involves assisting netLibrary in its efforts to enter into partnerships with publishers. While many have agreed to work with netLibrary, other publishers have been slower to get involved despite

the growing demand from customers. Discussions with publishers reveal a number of concerns about ebooks.

I want to address five of the most prominent issues in the hope of easing publisher concerns and enlisting their active participation in the development of new business practices.

Encroachment

The issue raised most often by publishers is that the sale of ebooks will encroach on print sales and drive up printing costs. Our belief is that a book sale is a book sale, whatever the format. While there is no long-term data available yet, customer feedback so far tells us that ebooks are being bought in addition to physical books for supporting distance education, reserves, and heavily used and out-of-print titles. There is also increasing demand for an ebook option within approval plans. **National Academy Press** put all of their titles online and sales have increased for both the print and online editions. It is possible that ebook sales will eventually encroach on print sales. However, at the rate that print technology is changing, it seems likely that such a development will not drive up print costs in the long run. Additionally, we are beginning to see publishers partner with print-on-demand providers to save on printing costs.

Change

Another issue is fear of change in the way business is done and the potential for loss of control. In such a time it is important for publishers to be involved and to lead changes as new methods of bookselling develop. It is also important to remember that the content of netLibrary's ebook is the same as the physical book and the publisher still owns it. The change is really in how the book will be sold and that will mean expanded opportunities for publishers. At a time when there has been a steady decline in the sales of monographs, ebooks represent an opportunity to revitalize and expand those sales since they make study and research more convenient, and they do not involve the overhead associated with shelf space. Just as Internet booksellers have expanded sales of backlist titles, publishers can expand sales through electronic publishing.

Royalties

Publishers are also concerned about how royalties will be paid to authors for ebooks. In any discussion of royalties, it is important to realize that netLibrary, along with most other ebook providers, is a distributor of books — not a licensee. Because ebooks could become a major part of the information environment, netLibrary and other ebook companies want to work with publishers to help develop royalty models that will work for all parties concerned.

Subrights

Yet another concern is the fact that many books being converted to electronic editions involve subrights and third-party

continued on page 38

In Memoriam Kathryn Soupiset

Kathryn Anne Soupiset, Head of Acquisitions at Trinity University from 1980 until 1999, died February 26, 2000, in San Antonio, Texas, at the age of 55, after a long illness. Kathy was born October 29, 1944, in Lexington, Nebraska. She is survived by her husband, Richard C. Soupiset, and her sister Barbara.

During her tenure as Head of Acquisitions, the Trinity Library added more than half a million print volumes, at an institution with only some 2,500 students and about 230 faculty. Active professionally on the national scene, she was the first compiler and editor of the "College Books Price Index" that has appeared annually in *Choice* since 1984 and in the *Bowker Annual* since 1985, handling that responsibility for nine years. The March 1993 issue of *Choice* recognized Kathy's work by noting that she "performed an essential and worthwhile service for academic librarians with grace and style." In 1995, Kathy received the Rhea Fern Malsbury Award, Trinity University's highest honor for service to the university by a member of the staff.

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I did not know **Kathy Soupiset** well, but I knew her work, and I remember her determination, conviction, and character. She was a wonderful person, sympathetic and caring to everyone, steady, dependable, and immensely capable. Words cannot express my sadness at learning of the death of such a kind and beautiful colleague. May we keep her in our hearts.

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