April 2000

Book Pricing Update-Ebooks and Publishing: Developing a New Business Relationship

Matt Nauman

Blackwell's Book Services, matt.nauman@blackwell.com

Dan Miller

Blackwell's Book Services, dan.miller@blackwell.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Nauman, Matt and Miller, Dan (2000) "Book Pricing Update-Ebooks and Publishing: Developing a New Business Relationship," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 12: Iss. 2, Article 25.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3075>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

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

by **Matt Nauman** (Director, Publisher Relations, Blackwell's Book Services)
<matt.nauman@blackwell.com>

Column Editor: Dan Miller (Manager, Approval Systems, Blackwell's Book Services)
<dan.miller@blackwell.com>

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.

Richard Werking <rwerking@nadm.navy.mil>

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.

Katina Strauch <strauchk@earthlink.net>

ProfilesEncouraged

Bryan M. Carson
Coordinator of Reference and
Instructional Services
Western Kentucky University

Born when and where: I was born July 8, 1965, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and grew up 50 miles north in Big Rapids, where my parents were teaching at Ferris State University.

Current residence: My wife and I are currently residing in Bowling Green, Kentucky. I am the Coordinator of Reference and Instructional Services at Western Kentucky University Libraries, and work with the Philosophy, Religion, and Slavic Studies departments.

Education: I started at **Ferris State**, then finished my BA in Economics at **Adrian College** in Adrian, Michigan. I earned my Juris Doctor from the **University of Toledo**, and obtained my Master's degree in library science at the **University of Michigan**.

Family: I am the youngest of three baby-boomer children. I have been married to the most wonderful woman since December 29 of this past year.

Summary of job experience: I started working in the law library during law school, and I was hooked! After a year of private law practice, I earned my library degree. My first professional library position was in the History and Social Sciences Department of the **Mid-Manhattan Library** (the central library of the **New York Public Library** branch system). Within the **NYPL** I also worked in Telephone Reference, as the Assistant Branch Librarian of the Castle Hill Branch, and as Electronic Resources Librarian for the General Research Division of the Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences (formerly known as the Research Library, the building with the lions). I also worked at **Hamline University School of Law Library** in St. Paul, Minnesota.

First job: Washing dishes and bussing tables at Casey McNabb's Restaurant in Big Rapids.

Fondest memory: Growing up in a small town with a loving family.

Favorite pastime: Reading, without a doubt.

Hobbies: Shopping for antiques, visiting museums, eating (my wife will agree with that one).

Last book read: *Nothing is the number when you die*, by **Joan Fleming**.

What would you like to be doing five years from now? I would like to be enjoying my job, learning more every day, and still being an effective librarian. It wouldn't hurt also if I got tenure!

Had I but world enough and time: I would become an architect. There is only one thing that prevents me from doing this: I can't draw a straight line to save my life!

Single most important piece of advice: Enjoy your job. If you don't enjoy what you are doing, find something else to do. Money doesn't matter as much as being able to get up in the morning and enjoy going to work.

Op Ed from page 36

the broker or agent, someone who knows how to facilitate smaller numbers of larger transactions.

But wait, isn't that what an organization like **netLibrary** already does? Yes it is, of course, and perhaps we will end up with two separate types of book vendors, one for print and one for e-books. Or, there will be two types but the lines will blur, as they learn to cooperate with one another, with the e-book vendor drawing upon what is the real expertise of today's traditional book vendor, the intimate knowledge of library customs, cultures, routines, and workflows, and the personal and organizational relationships and credibility hard-earned by the book vendor over the years. Or, perhaps these separate vendors will merge into one. We might see a significant level of production and demand for free e-books, where there won't necessarily be a commercial transaction at all. Perhaps the dominant model on campus will be departmental purchase of e-books, without library involvement. Or perhaps it will be consortial buying.

Or, perhaps all of these things will happen, maybe all at once, maybe in some kind of disordered sequence. Perhaps this will be a brand new area of publishing chaos.

We in the business of being vendors can't promise, today, to succeed at any of those more attractive possibilities, but I do know that all of us will be working as well as we know how to avoid that last one.

Book Pricing Update from page 34

ownership. The ebook providers have the least amount of influence over how subrights' questions are addressed. However, there is a need in the market for rights to all kinds of publications, including those with graphics or photos owned by third parties. Publishers will have to agree to cooperate and be fair in pricing for subrights. While the ebook companies are willing to work with publishers to iron out this question, it is our belief that publishers will have to lead the way.

There has been some concern amongst publishers that customers will demand cheaper prices for ebook editions. So far, this has not been an issue, perhaps because the increased utility of ebooks makes them every bit as valuable as the printed versions. An ebook arrives "shelf-ready" and is not capable of being lost, damaged, or stolen. Additionally, it provides a level of convenience and accessibility not previously seen in printed texts. Therefore, librarians have found the same price for the physical and ebooks to be a fair proposition.

We end by noting that customer demand will, ultimately, drive sales of ebooks. According to **Dennis Dillon** of the **University of Texas, Austin**, "The speed with which libraries are signing up with netLibrary speaks to the value libraries see in ebooks. The key to making ebooks work for all of us in the traditional publisher/library market is to find the middle ground that meets all of our needs."

(The author would like to thank **Dennis Dillon**, University of Texas, Austin; **Miriam Gilbert**, netLibrary; **Dan Miller**, Blackwell's; **John Pershing**, Hackett Publishing; and **Bob Rooney**, Taylor & Francis, for their generous help in writing this article.)