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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 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, 1998 through June 30, 1999 there was a 1.5% increase over the previous year in the average list price of academic and scholarly titles. Arts/Humanities titles (which accounted for 35% of all new titles) showed a 1% decrease, Social Science titles (which accounted for 34% of all new titles) showed a 1% decrease, and Sci/Tech/Med (which accounted for 31% of all new titles) showed an 8% increase. Which 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 Fine Arts, Performing Arts, and Architecture) decreased 3% from \$51.27 in 1997/98 to \$49.92 in 1998/99. The 98 titles treated in the Auxiliary Arts lead in this category with a 12% decrease, from \$58.59 to \$51.54. In Art Media there were 870 titles which had an average price of \$48.69, a decrease of 4% from \$50.81. Within Arts in general, only the Performing Arts saw an increase in the average list price of titles, continuing an upward trend from \$48.17 to \$50.30 (or a 4% increase).

The average list price of Humanities titles decreased 1%, from \$45.72 in 1997/98 to \$45.37 in 1998/99. In this category, the average list price of 414 Language titles showed the largest decrease, of 9%, over the previous year; these went from \$73.86 to \$67.44. The average list price of Religion titles remained fundamentally steady from last year to this year, at about \$46.50. History titles bucked the Humanities trend; the 1,254 titles treated in 1998/99 had an average list price of \$49.50, as compared with \$48.43 the previous year, representing a 2% increase.

Social Sciences

Social Science titles had an average list price of \$53.87 in 1998/99, compared with \$54.27 in 1997/98, represent-

ing a 1% decrease from year to year. A 19% drop in the average list price of 156 Sports and Recreation titles lead the decline; these went from \$46.76 to \$37.96. The 228 titles treated in Crime and Criminals also contributed to the overall drop in average list within Social Science; these went from an average list price of \$52.53 to \$47.49. The 1,071 Political Science titles treated in 1998/99 showed a 4% decrease in their average list price, going from \$51.87 the previous year to \$49.83. Similarly, the price of titles in Economics dropped 1% in 1998/99; 1,062 titles treated had an average list price of \$63.58 as compared with \$64.08 the previous year.

Where were the price increases in the Social Sciences? The 17 Bibliographic Science titles treated in 1998/99 saw a rather dramatic 21% increase in average list price over the previous year, going from \$34.68 in 1997/98 to \$42.07 in 1998/99. An increase was also seen in Anthropology; 110 titles treated in 1998/99 showed a 10% increase in average list price over the previous year, going from \$52.32 to \$57.52. The most significant area of Social Science price increase, based on the large number of titles published, was Business Administration where the average list price of 1,483 titles increased 4% again this year, going from \$53.81 to \$55.71. The average list price of 1,075 titles in Education remained steady from last year to this at about \$46.60.

How did the price of titles about books and librarianship fare? The 46 titles treated in Book Industry and Trade showed a 5% increase in their average list price, going from \$55.15 to \$58.01 from 1997/98 to 1998/99. Library and Information Science titles saw a 2% decrease in average list price going from \$51.17 to \$50.15. As mentioned earlier, titles in Bibliographic Science led the increase in average list price within Social Science titles.

Sciences/Technology/Medicine

Sci/Tech/Med titles had an average list price of \$90.35 in 1998/99 as compared with \$83.69 in 1997/98, or an 8% increase. The 98 Botany titles treated led the increase within

S/T/M; their average list price increased by a dramatic 29% over the previous year, going from \$93.54 to \$120.41. The most significant area of S/T/M price increase, based on the large number of titles published, was Computer Science which saw an 18% increase in the average list price for 1,354 titles; these went from \$57.69 to \$67.83. The average list price of 143 titles treated in Natural Resources increased 18%, going from \$59.90 to \$70.53. Astronomy titles continued an upward trend; the average list price of 139 titles treated increased 12% from \$98.55 to \$103.25 in 1998/99. Also, titles in Nursing and Pharmacy experienced an increase in their average list price from 1997/98 to 1998/99, going from \$40.37 to \$44.77 (or an 11% increase) and from \$104.89 to \$127.55 (or a 22% increase), respectively.

Was there any price relief in Sci/Tech/Med. Titles? The 2,416 titles treated in Medicine experienced only a 3% increase in their average list price, going from \$81.92 in 1997/98 to \$84.15 in 1998/99. The 22 Dentistry titles treated saw a 22% drop in average list price from \$82.38 to \$64.26. 185 Agriculture titles dropped 11% in average list price from \$92.33 to \$82.29. Similarly, 75 titles treated in Veterinary Medicine experienced an 8% drop in average list price from \$78.73 to \$72.13.

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 change over this period, adjusted for inflation, shows an 2.35% decrease, with Sci/Tech/Med titles leading the decline with a 3.53% decrease. Only Social Science titles show an increase (of 4.5%) in average list price, adjusted for inflation, during this period. Librarians struggling with the coming year's budget may find the aforementioned 1.5% increase (not adjusted for inflation) over the previous year in the average list price of all academic and scholarly titles to be the best near-term predictor of changes in book pricing.

FIGURE 1: Average Book Prices in the Arts/Humanities, Social Sciences and S/T/M

New Titles Only (reprints excluded).												Actual	Adjusted
Popular works and lower undergraduate texts excluded.												Percent	for
	88/89	89/90	90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	Change	Inflation
Humanities/Arts	\$33.74	\$34.66	\$38.86	\$41.63	\$42.29	\$41.73	\$43.17	\$43.27	\$45.89	\$46.93	\$46.49	37.49 %	-1.79%
Social Sciences	\$36.82	\$38.44	\$40.79	\$44.28	\$47.10	\$47.23	\$48.63	\$48.26	\$52.62	\$54.27	\$53.87	46.31%	4.50%
Sci/Tech/Med	\$66.90	\$68.80	\$72.32	\$78.61	\$81.64	\$80.72	\$79.13	\$80.56	\$81.38	\$83.69	\$90.35	35.05%	-3.53%
All Titles	\$45.88	\$48.14	\$50.69	\$56.13	\$57.86	\$57.42	\$57.26	\$57.92	\$60.68	\$61.52	\$62.72	36.70%	-2.35%