

November 2002

Book Pricing Update -- Broad Trends in Pricing and Coverage

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Recommended Citation

Loughran, Tom (2002) "Book Pricing Update -- Broad Trends in Pricing and Coverage," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 14: Iss. 5, Article 24.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3773>

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Books Are Us

by Anne Robichaux (Professor Emerita, Medical University of South Carolina; Consultant, Majors Scientific Books) <awkr772@charleston.net>

AKA Your Editor: This column is supposed to cover fiction about people like us — librarians, publishers, vendors, booksellers, etc. All contributions are welcome. — AR

Jan Karon's newest book in the Mitford series, *In This Mountain* (Viking Press, 2002) mentions a young woman, Earlene, who "used to be a librarian but the flour company offered a benefit package you wouldn't believe." On a happier note, the town of Mitford has a Happy Endings Bookstore, Father Tim loves books, and his wife Cynthia is a writer of Children's Books, but if there is a librarian or a library, I've missed it.

Harry Potter fans reading this undoubtedly caught the description of the librarian in J. K. Rowling's fourth book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Scholastic Press, 2000). Harry asked "the irritable, vulture-like librarian, Madam Pince, for help" with no further discourse on whether or not Madam Pince was helpful.

The Giant's House, a Romance by Eliza-

beth McCracken (Dial Press, 1996, ISBN 0-385-31433-7; paper, Avon Books, July 1997, ISBN 0-380-73020-0) not only features a librarian who tells the story, but the author herself is a librarian who left the profession to write full time. McCracken worked in libraries from the age of 15, earned her M.L.S. at Drexel in 1992 and subsequently worked in a public library, in between selling a collection of short stories prior to the publication of this, her first novel. In his review (*Library Journal*, July, 1996, and <http://www.mindspring.com/~mazmanian/new.profile.mccracken.htm>) Adam Mazmanian notes her love of libraries, librarians, and working in libraries.

The novel takes place in the 1950's on Cape Cod, and features Peggy Cort, the director of the Brewsterville public library, her interest in James Carlson Sweatt, an "over-tall" boy, and the friendship between them that develops into an unlikely romance. While Peggy has some of the common stereotypes of librarians — she is unmarried, reclusive, frugal, passionate for order — she is also imaginative, warm, compassionate and

non judgmental. She states "I am a librarian, and you cannot stop me from annotating, revising, updating. I like to think that — because I am a librarian — I offer accurate and spurious advice with no judgment, good and bad next to each other on the shelf" (p.5). She protests that "people think librarians are unromantic, unimaginative" and explains that "we are people whose dreams run in particular ways — the idea of a library full of books, the books full of knowledge, fills me with fear and love and courage and endless wonder" (p.8).

Mazmanian notes that the character of James Carlson Sweatt is based on Robert Pershing Wadlow, who holds the *Guinness Book of World Records* for height (see <http://www.altonweb.com/history/wadlow/>). He quotes McCracken: "There are certain pictures from my childhood that are just burned into my brain from the *Guinness Book of World Records*. Perhaps it shows that I was going to become a librarian since my favorite book as a child was basically a reference book."

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Book Pricing Update — Broad Trends in Pricing and Coverage



Trends in Book Pricing for the year ending June 30, 2002

by Tom Loughran (Manager Approval Systems, Blackwell's Book Services, 6024 SW Jean Road, Building G, Lake Oswego, OR 97035; Phone: 877-270-4338)

Each year, Blackwell's reports on pricing trends in academic monographic publishing. We derive this data from the books that were treated on our academic Approval Program during the previous year. In the year ending this last June, we treated 40,444 academic monograph titles with an average list price of \$60.49. Excluding 1,742 reprints, the average list price of the 38,815 remaining new titles was \$61.79.

The distribution of titles by country of origin, and the average list price by country (including reprints), are as follows:

Country	# of titles	% of all titles treated	Avg. List Price
U.S. origin	24,629	60.5%	\$53.93
U.K. origin	10,345	26%	\$64.70
Other origin	5,470	13.5%	\$82.10

Countries accounting for "Other origin" titles included Netherlands (1,636 titles), Germany (1,437 titles), Canada (589 titles), Singapore (288 titles), Australia (327 titles), New Zealand (51 titles) Switzerland (230 titles), Japan (69 titles) India (162 titles), Sweden (56 titles), Denmark (85 titles), Italy (72 titles) and Austria (66 titles). An additional 34 countries contributed to this total with fewer than 50 titles each.

Last year we treated 10,171 university press titles, or 25% of all titles. The average list price of all university press titles was \$49.08. Again, excluding reprints, the average list price of the remaining 9,493 new university press titles was \$50.15.

In broad subject areas the number of new titles treated (excluding reprints), and their average list prices, broke down as follows:

Broad Subject	# of titles	% of all titles treated	Avg. List Price
Arts/Humanities	13,329	34%	\$46.99
Social Sciences	13,055	34%	\$57.17
Sci./Tech./Med.	12,359	32%	\$82.82

The average list price for a scholarly book in the Arts and Humanities last year represents a two percent increase over the average price of the year before (\$46.27). The average for a book in the Social Sciences also increased two percent, from \$56.05. Prices for an average title in the Sciences, Technology and Medicine fell one percent from last year's average price of \$83.56.

In the next "Book Pricing Update," we'll investigate how prices in individual subject areas of these broader categories fared.