November 2003

Talk of the Trade

Barry Fast

Deltabooks, barry0112@aol.com

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Recommended Citation

Fast, Barry (2003) "Talk of the Trade," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 15: Iss. 5, Article 25.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4173>

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Book Pricing Update

Trends in Book Pricing by Subject Area - June 30, 2003

by **Tom Loughran** (Manager Approval Systems, Blackwell's Book Services, 6024 SW Jean Road, Bldg. G, Lake Oswego, OR 97035; Phone: 877-270-4338) <tom.loughran@blackwell.com>

Each year, **Blackwell's** reports on pricing trends in academic monograph publishing. We derive

this data from the books that were treated on our academic **Approval Program** during the previous year. In the year ending last June, we treated 41,639 academic monograph titles with an average list price of \$61.88. Excluding 1,697 reprints, the average list price of the 39,942 remaining new titles was \$62.94. This represents a 2% price increase in the average price of an approval monograph from the previous year.

Trends in Pricing in the Humanities

Within the universe of approval books, 14,084 **Humanities and Fine Arts** books increased 3% in price, from \$46.99 to \$48.56. **Art** books (1,375 titles) fell -1%, from an average price of \$51.37 to \$51.04. Books on **Architecture** (493 titles) also fell -1%, from \$54.48 to \$53.88. **Performing Arts** books (1,072 titles) increased 2%, from \$49.63 to \$50.79. **Music** as a subcategory of **Performing Arts** rose 8%, from \$53.07 to \$57.09 on 488 titles. **Humanities** titles (excluding the Fine and Performing Arts) rose slightly more than the price of an average new title — 4%, instead of the average 3% overall. Within Humanities there were also some significant deviations from the average: the price of an average **History** title rose 6%, from \$48.35 to \$51.19, as did **Folklore** and **Mythology**

books, from \$39.98 to \$42.57. The price of the average **Literary text** rose 3%, from \$25.39 to \$26.11, while the price of a volume of **Literary Criticism** rose just 2%, from \$55.88 to \$57.15. **Religion** titles also rose 2%, from \$50.52 to \$51.52 and **Philosophy** titles fell -3%, from \$63.58 to \$61.99.

Trends in Pricing in the Social Sciences

The average price of 13,774 books in the **Social Sciences** (including Law) rose 1%, from \$57.17 to \$57.91. Again, within the broader category there were significant variations: 1,075 **Law** titles fell -4% — from \$86.04 to \$82.82. 1,266 **Economics** titles fell -1%, from \$69.70 to \$68.71. Also registering a decline, 270 titles in **Military Science** fell -17%, from \$49.33 to \$41.10. Books in **Environmental Studies** rose 4%, from \$63.84 to \$66.38, as did books in **Education**, from \$48.51 to \$50.53. **International Relations** titles held steady, rising only four cents on average, from \$57.70 to \$57.74. And **Sports and Recreation** titles fell -2%, from \$38.27 to \$37.54. **Psychology** titles rose 8%, from \$60.92 to \$65.69 and 83 **Applied Psychology** titles rose 11%, from \$58.29 to \$64.85. 109 **Anthropology** titles were up 4%, from \$62.40 to \$64.71. 1,266 **Political Science** titles stayed virtually the same, falling a nickel from \$53.12 to \$53.07. In another high publication area, 2,213 **Business administration** titles rose 6%, from \$54.97 to \$58.14, while 184 **Management** titles declined -1%, from \$54.55 to \$54.01.

Trends in Pricing in the Sciences and Technology

Last year saw an increase of 3% in price of the average STM title, or one percentage point more than the overall rate. The average price of a book in the **Sciences and Technology** went from \$82.82 to \$85.64. At the bargain end of Sci-Tech books, 319 **Nursing** titles rose 1%, from \$44.29 to \$44.90. Overall, 996 **Biology** titles fell -1%, from \$96.08 to \$94.77, but within the larger category, 154 **Human Biology** titles fell -2%, from \$92.98 to \$91.42 and 130 **Botany** titles fell -17%, from \$108.04 to \$90.03 and 170 **Zoology** titles rose 3%, from \$82.63 to \$85.12. At the higher priced end of STM, 253 **Chemistry** titles rose 6%, from \$138.71 to \$146.92. Books in **Medicine** rose 2%, from \$83.31 to \$84.60. **Astronomy** titles fell -5% from \$82.18 to \$78.25. 39 **Forestry** titles fell -6%, from \$95.47 to \$89.33, while 186 **Agriculture** titles rose 1%, from \$89.13 to \$89.60. While the price of 2,564 **Computer Science** titles rose 3% (from \$55.85 to \$57.55), 822 of those titles in **Personal Computing** rose only 2%, from \$38.93 to \$39.63.

The price of the average **Mathematics** monograph fell -3%, from \$83.45 to \$81.34. 2,161 titles in **Technology** (encompassing all of the **Engineering** disciplines) rose an average 8%, from \$105.52 to \$114.17, as did the average price of titles in **Earth Sciences**, from \$89.73 to \$96.73.

For further price details of subject areas not mentioned, or of sub-disciplines of those listed above, please visit our Website at: <http://www.blackwell.com/level4/coverageandcostindex.asp>.

Talk of the Trade

by **Barry Fast** (Deltabooks, 186 Cross Street, City Island, NY 10464; Phone: 718-885-9563) <barry0112@aol.com>

Radar Debuts with Boldface Boors

One of my favorite oxymorons is "popular culture", and the latest entry in the media world, *Radar* magazine, is devoted to covering this aspect of American civilization (another oxymoron?). This new magazine launched in May with a cover story on celebrity "Monsters", people who have "distinguished themselves in the area of physical and verbal abuse, overweening arrogance, and by the imposition of a particularly nasty influence over the culture at large." **Michael Moore** (*Stupid White Men*) made the cut for acting out his everyman blue collar routine from his \$1.7 million apartment in Manhattan's Upper West Side. He sends his daughter to a prestigious private school, while "unsuccessfully pressuring his writing staff at his TV Nation show not to join the **Writers Guild**." He achieved fame and fortune with his pro-union activism, but apparently the only good unions are those in any business but his business.

Partisan Review Killed by its Own Success

Speaking of popular culture, we Americans tend to measure success in terms of numbers, the more the better. By other measures, however, a

relatively small magazine (circulation never more than 15,000) was brilliantly successful, exerting a powerful influence on political thought and literary taste for at least half a century. Quoting from the *New York Times*, "From its inaugural issue in 1937, which included Delmore Schwartz's short story, *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities*, a poem by Wallace Stevens, and contributions by Lionel Trilling, Sydney Hook and Edmund Wilson, to its heyday, the 1940s to the '70s, "the journal published an astonishing range of landmark work."

For many Americans, *Partisan Review* was their introduction to Abstract Expressionism, Existentialism, New Criticism, and the voices of talented young writers such as Norman Mailer, Robert Lowell, Elizabeth Hardwick and Susan Sontag. When many intellectuals were in the thrall of communism and apologists for Stalin, the *Partisan Review* gave a strong voice to American liberalism, providing a forum for political ideas that opposed totalitarianism (a word we don't hear much any-

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zines in America", says **Morris Dickstein**, professor of English at **New York University**.

Dickstein says "the main influence of *Partisan Review* came from its freewheeling intellectual style, which was exactly critical yet jokey and colloquial, rooted in sources as wildly varied as Yiddish humor, Talmudic debate, sectarian Marxist polemics, modernist intransigence, and psychoanalytical unmasking. Versions of this style surfaced in journals of different political stripes. ... (that) drew away talented writers and eroded *Partisan Review's* natural constituency" over the years.

For 66 years the magazine was edited by its co-founder, **William Phillips**, until his death late last year at age 94. Ownership then passed to **Boston University**, and after polling a large group of intellectuals, **BU** made the decision to suspend publication this past spring. Because *Partisan Review* wielded such influence over the years, it spawned several imitators that were better funded and published more frequently. According to **Dickstein**, "the uniqueness of the magazine diminished and disappeared", becoming increasingly less relevant after the end of the Cold War. In a sense, says **Dickstein**, "the magazine became a victim of its own success."

Advice to the Lovelorn from Jurassic Park

Some people say that a second marriage is the triumph of hope over reason. Whether or not you agree with this sentiment depends, I'm sure, on your personal experience. But what can we say about a fourth marriage? Author **Michael Crichton** recently offered some success tips for wedded bliss: "You should want to spend a lot of leisure time together, sharing the same interests... if she wants to go shopping and you want to go hiking, you have a problem." According to **Crichton's** fourth wife, **Anne-Marie Martin Crichton**, living with her husband while he was writing was "like living with a body and **Michael** is somewhere else." The couple recently divorced. Failing to follow his own advice cost **Crichton** \$31 million, as the blushing bride of 14 years got their 63 acre estate in Bedford, NY (near the **Clintons**, **Martha Stewart**, **Ralph Lauren** and only 15 miles from the one-quarter acre estate of your humble correspondent), their 20 horses, two tractors and an art collection (in contrast, on our estate we have several cats, a lawnmower, and lots of fake pre-Columbian art, which may partly explain our continued marriage).

Crisis Looms as Academic Heavyweights Debate Theories of Literary Criticism

Critical Inquiry, the academy's most prestigious literary theory journal, convened a panel of scholars to discuss the recent demise of theories in the humanities. After the French assault of the 1960s—deconstruction and post-colonialism, and the earlier psychoanalysis, Marxist and structuralism theories of the 1940s and '50s, the mandarins gathered in Chicago to attempt agreement on a new approach in this time of criticism-crisis. **WJT Mitchell**, **University of Chicago**, according to the *New York Times*, set an upbeat tone by declaring "We want to be the Starship Enterprise of criticism and theory." From this high point, the discussion

more) in all its guises. "It was one of the four or five greatest maga-

languished toward Bush-bashing and condemnation of American foreign policy. As if to demonstrate the importance of this event, **Henry Louis Gates** arrived late, saying "I thought I was in the wrong room. ... (because) I thought we'd be talking about academic jargon. Instead, it was Al Qaeda and Iraq." **Sander Gilman** of the **University of Illinois**, Chicago, managed to get the debate back on track by stating, "I would make the argument that most criticism, and I would include **Noam Chomsky** in this—is a poison pill. I think one must be careful in assuming that intellectuals have some sort of insight. ... (in fact) they have been wrong almost all the time... and wrong in corrosive and destructive ways."

Stanley Fish nodded approvingly and said, "I like what that man said. I wish to deny the effectiveness of intellectual work." **Homi Bhabha** was the only panelist to disagree, saying, "intellectual work has its place and its uses." **Gates** rose to argue that he had never seen "the liberation of people of color because of deconstruction or post-structuralism." Trying to explain why so much of the forum was devoted to attacks on American foreign policy instead of discussion of literary theory, **Catharine R Simpson** of **New York University** theorized "This particular group of intellectuals has a terror of being politically irrelevant."

Random House to Create New Imprint; Will the Launch Party Take Place in the Sewer?

Back in the good old days when **Senator Joe McCarthy** could ruin your career with the "pinko" word, he eventually generated enough public disgust to bring about his own demise. Today, however, personal attacks and inflammatory accusations ensure your steady employment as a TV talking head and your book on the bestseller list. But who would ever believe that the venerable **Random House**, urged on by its German parent **Bertelsmann**, would use its **Crown Publishing** unit to provide a new venue for venomous right wing writers.

Regnery, the **Fox News** of the publishing world, has been so successful with a number of conservative bestsellers that other publishers have overcome their visceral abhorrence of the right wing. Some have dipped their toes in the sea where **Rush Limbaugh** swims. **Crown**, however, will now surf the wave, launching **Crown Forum** and planning to publish about 15 conservative books a year. (**Penguin** announced their intention to launch a similar conservative imprint soon after the **Random House/Crown Forum** press release.) Not that there's anything wrong with this. After all, publishers are in the business of giving readers what they want, and a glance at the *Times* bestseller lists make it abundantly clear that readers like the right and the left. That's healthy in a democracy. But perhaps we should pause, and contemplate **Crown Forum's** first blockbuster: The insufferable **Ann Coulter** debuts with her **Joe McCarthy** defense, *Treason; Liberal Treachery from The Cold War to the War on Terrorism*. Treachery? Treason? You can go to jail for that. Can't honest people disagree? Or even dishonest people, for that matter. Can't we passionately disagree without resorting to the kind of name-calling that is designed to destroy reputations? Is there no low blow that a publisher decides is too offensive? **Random House** ought to know better, and they would be the first to howl if anyone accused them of publishing treasonous books. This is more than bad taste. This kind of rhetoric is unhealthy for democracy. 🐸

IMHBCO (In My Humble But Correct Opinion)

OCLC, Trademarks, and The Library Hotel

by **Rick Anderson** (Director of Resource Acquisition, The University Libraries, University of Nevada, Reno, 1664 N. Virginia Street, Reno, NV 89557; Phone: 775-784-6500 x.273; Fax: 775-784-1328) <rickand@unr.edu>

When **OCLC** filed a complaint of trademark infringement against **New York's Library Hotel** over the hotel's use of the **Dewey Decimal Classification®** system, word of the suit spread quickly through various online discussion lists. The library

community's response was swift and generally incredulous. How could a company claim to own **Dewey**? How could it believe that a hotel's use of the **Dewey** system constituted some kind of commercial threat? What was **OCLC** thinking?

OCLC responded promptly to the growing outcry, issuing a public statement that was sent to a number of lists and individuals. **OCLC** explained itself by invoking the responsibility of trademark owners to protect their trademarks

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