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Short Subjects -- Religion

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Short Subjects — Religion

by **Carolyn Morris** (YBP Representative, Southwest, YBP; Phone: 800-258-3774 x.3337) <cmorris@ybp.com>

In this issue, I am going to examine trends in religion publishing. It is an interesting discipline because there are so many active publishers and for most of them academic institutions are only a secondary market. Last year 90 presses on YBP's approval publisher list published ten or more titles relating to religion, and there are many more with smaller output. Because there are so many publishers active in Religion, and because many focus their marketing efforts towards specialist bookstores, it can be difficult for academic selectors to get timely notification of new titles. For that matter, it can also be difficult for academic wholesalers. Though many publishers may aspire to "provide superior distribution services for products that enhance people's relationship with God," as one business card in our files reads, it is not uncommon to find these presses do not regularly produce catalogs, and a substantial customer outside of the core market—such as YBP—is never surprised to fall off their mailing lists. To further complicate matters, religion publishers have not been immune from the consolidation that is taking place throughout the world of publishing. Over the past few years, we have seen many small imprints change ownership or distribution arrangements. For instance, since 1999, **Continuum Publishing** has purchased **A&C Black**, **Burns & Oates**, **Sheed & Ward**, **Sheffield Academic Press**, **T&T Clark** and **Trinity Press International**. Religion publishing, again, is an interesting area for us all.

How is the subject organized?

The Library of Congress classification schedule breaks down Religion in the B subclasses BL through BX as follows:

LC Subclass	Subject Description
BL	General, Myth, Religious Life, History of Principles of Religion
BM	Judaism
BP	Islam, Bahaism, Theosophy
BQ	Buddhism
BR	Christianity
BS	The Bible
BT	Doctrinal Theology
BV	Practical Theology
BX	Christian Denominations

Of course, there are other subject areas that should be considered when collecting Religion. Titles with religious aspects are also likely to appear in the areas of Philosophy, Archeology, History, Music, and Art.

In this article I will look at the Religion titles that YBP profiled in the above subclasses over the past four years. For the sake of space, I have selected a few Religion subclasses to examine in depth. Similar analyses for the other subclasses can be found on the Website, www.against-the-grain.com.

Title Output:

Titles in Religion subclasses account for 5% of titles YBP handles on approval each year. The following tables show title distribution by subject area.

Titles Handled on Approval by YBP in Religion Subclasses
July 2001-June 2002

LC Classification	1997-1998	2001-2002	% Increase	% of All Titles Profiled 2001-2002
BL Religion	344	419	18%	<1%
BM Judaism	184	160	-13%	<1%
BP Islam	100	122	22%	<1%
BQ Buddhism	96	123	28%	<1%
BR Christianity	239	270	13%	<1%
BS The Bible	426	508	19%	<1%
BT Doctrinal Theology	264	317	20%	<1%
BV Practical Theology	328	449	37%	<1%
BX Denominations	370	422	14%	<1%
Total	2351	2790	19%	5%

Title Output in Religion
for University Preses
on YBP's Approval Publisher List

LC Classification	1997-1998	2001-2002	% Increase
BL Religion	85	113	33%
BM Judaism	33	35	6%
BP Islam	25	28	12%
BQ Buddhism	26	27	4%
BR Christianity	64	71	11%
BS The Bible	51	49	-4%
BT Doctrinal Theology	40	55	38%
BV Practical Theology	39	40	3%
BX Denominations	101	113	12%
Total	464	531	14%

Title Output in Religion
for Trade and Scholarly Imprints
on YBP's Approval Publisher List

LC Classification	1997-1998	2001-2002	% Increase
BL Religion	259	306	18%
BM Judaism	151	125	-17%
BP Islam	75	94	25%
BQ Buddhism	70	96	37%
BR Christianity	175	199	13%
BS The Bible	375	459	22%
BT Doctrinal Theology	224	262	17%
BV Practical Theology	289	409	41%
BX Denominations	269	309	15%
Total	1,887	2,259	20%

The 19% increase in the number of titles YBP profiled in Religion is similar to the 17% increase in all titles covered. The addition

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of several new Religious imprints to YBP's approval publisher list is a factor contributing to the increase in approval titles from Trade and Scholarly presses.

Pricing:

The chart below shows trends in pricing by subtopic and publisher type.

*Average List Price by Library of Congress Subclass for YBP Approval Titles
July 2001-June 2002*

Library of Congress Classification	Average List Price Trade and Other Publishers	% Change since 1998	Average List Price University Presses	% Change Since 1998
BL Religion	\$44.61	13%	\$46.67	10%
BM Judaism	\$48.02	27%	\$56.42	17%
BP Islam	\$46.36	-4%	\$43.62	-4%
BQ Buddhism	\$23.52	0%	\$48.21	14%
BR Christianity	\$53.62	18%	\$51.57	22%
BS The Bible	\$43.88	-9%	\$41.86	-8%
BT Doctrinal Theology	\$34.16	1%	\$39.31	9%
BV Practical Theology	\$23.95	4%	\$39.05	-11%
BX Denominations	\$40.49	23%	\$41.70	10%
All Titles Handled on Approval by YBP	\$59.07	1%	\$46.69	2%

For most Religion subtopics prices rose at a rate considerably higher than the 2% average for all academic titles profiled by YBP.

Major Bibliographic Characteristics in Religion (BL):

YBP profiled 419 titles in this LC subclass last year. This is up 18% from 4 years ago, while the average price per title increased 17% from \$38.56 to \$45.16 over the same period.

In this subclass, you will find titles relating to the principles of religion, religious life, and mythology.

Bibliographers at YBP assign each title a content level during the profiling process. In this system, "Popular" level titles are those that are primarily intended for retail sale to a very broad readership beyond colleges and universities, for example, meditations. YBP's "General-Academic" level includes titles accessible to all undergraduates, and the "Advanced-Academic" content level would be assigned to works of scholarship treating narrowly defined or difficult topics. Titles at the "Professional" level in Religion are those geared toward practicing ministers. The chart below shows the content levels assigned to BL Religion titles as well as other bibliographic characteristics of interest.

*Bibliographic Characteristics of BL Religion Titles Profiled by YBP
2001/2002*

Characteristic	% of BL Titles	% of All Titles
Biography	2%	3%
Collections	23%	15%
Based on a Conference	7%	7%
Devotional Material	5%	1%
Historical Work	38%	24%
Overview	5%	2%
Political Work	11%	11%
Practical Work	7%	13%
Works in Series	34%	36%
UK Publisher	24%	21%
'Popular' Content Level	16%	14%
'General-Academic' Content Level	30%	29%
'Advanced-Academic' Content Level	53%	44%
'Professional' Content Level	1%	13%

Some major publishers in this area are listed in the table below with the average list price of their titles published in the BL subclass along with their YBP content levels.

*Highly Active Imprints for BL Religion
Imprint Year 2001*

Imprint	# of Titles	Average List Price	Professional	Advanced-Academic	General Academic	Popular
Brill	7	\$119.57	0	7	0	0
Continuum International	7	\$57.95	1	3	2	1
Curzon Press	7	\$57.00	0	7	0	0
J.P. Tarcher	8	\$22.70	0	1	3	4
Oxford University Press	34	\$39.80	0	19	12	0
Princeton University Press	7	\$54.92	0	5	2	0
Routledge	17	\$83.82	0	8	9	0
Skylight Path	10	\$15.25	0	0	0	10
State University of New York Press	11	\$59.59	0	9	2	0

Major Bibliographic Characteristics Islam (BP):

In Islamic Studies (BP), YBP profiled 122 titles in 2001/2002. This number was up 22% from 1997/1998. This trend is likely to continue due to the increased interest in this topic. The average list price for titles in this Library of Congress subclass is \$45.73 down from \$47.55 four years ago. Prices decreased for university press titles as well as trade and others.

From the bibliographic information in the following chart, it is interesting to note that 57% of the titles profiled were at the "Advanced-Academic" level, and 30% of the titles profiled had significant political aspects, a trend expected to remain strong throughout the Religion subclasses but especially this one.

*Bibliographic Characteristics of BP Islam Titles Profiled by YBP
2000/2001*

Characteristic	% of BP Titles	% of All Titles
Biography	5%	3%
Collection	19%	15%
Devotional Material	3%	1%
Overview of Subject Area	6%	2%
Philosophical Work	10%	5%
Political Work	30%	11%
Practical Work	5%	13%
Works with Psychological Aspects	4%	6%
Works in Series	39%	36%
UK Publisher	27%	20%
'Popular' Content Level	9%	14%
'General-Academic' Content Level	32%	29%
'Advanced-Academic' Content Level	57%	44%
'Professional' Content Level	1%	13%

The publishers listed in the chart below were among the most active in Islamic publishing in 2001.

*Highly Active Imprints for BP Islam
Imprint Year 2001*

Imprint	# of Titles	Average List Price	Professional	Advanced-Academic	General Academic	Popular
Anthroposophic Press	6	\$19.62	0	5	1	0
Brill	6	\$129.00	0	5	1	0
Curzon Press	8	\$84.31	0	8	0	0
Oxford University Press	11	\$49.71	0	9	2	0
University Press of Florida	3	\$43.30	0	2	1	0

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Major Bibliographic Characteristics Christianity (BR):

In BR Christianity, YBP profiled 270 titles in 2001/2002 compared to 239 in 1997/1998. The average list price of \$53.08 is up considerably from the average of \$44.70 in 1997/1998.

Bibliographic characteristics to note include the percentage of titles considered to be at the "Advanced-Academic" level by YBP bibliographers and the high percentage of titles that appear in series. It's also notable that 56% of the works are historical in nature.

Bibliographic Characteristics of BR Christianity Titles Profiled by YBP 2001/2002

Characteristic	% of BR Titles	% of All Titles
Biography	5%	3%
Collections	18%	15%
Based on a Conference	3%	7%
Historical Works	56%	24%
Overview of Subject Area	5%	2%
Philosophical Work	13%	5%
Political Work	12%	11%
Practical Work	3%	13%
Works in Series	42%	36%
UK Publisher	24%	20%
'Popular' Content Level	7%	14%
'General-Academic' Content Level	29%	29%
'Advanced-Academic' Content Level	62%	44%
'Professional' Content Level	2%	13%

For the imprint year 2001, YBP handled titles in BR Christianity from 102 different imprints. Below are statistics relating to six of the most prolific in this subtopic of Religion.

Highly Active Imprints for BR Christianity Imprint Year 2001

Imprint	# of Titles	Average List Price	Professional	Advanced-Academic	General Academic	Popular
Baker Book House	9	\$23.21	1	2	5	1
Cambridge University Press	9	\$69.44	0	9	0	0
InterVarsity Press	5	\$13.99	0	0	3	2
W.B. Eerdmans	10	\$36.30	0	3	7	0
Yale University Press	4	\$31.86	0	3	1	0
Zondervan Publishing House	10	\$20.54	1	1	2	6

Major Bibliographic Characteristics The Bible (BS):

In this Library of Congress subclass, YBP profiled 508 titles. It is by far the largest Religion subclass. The average price per title was \$43.68 down from \$48.14 in 1997/1998. The average list price was lower for both press types in this subclass.

YBP Bestsellers Religion (BL-BX) 2001/2002

1. White, Vibert L., *Inside the Nation of Islam: A Historical and Personal Testimony by a Black Muslim*. University Press of Florida, 2001. Cloth. 081302082.
2. Curry, Thomas J. *Farewell to Christendom: The Future of Church and State in America*. Oxford University Press, 2001. Cloth. 019514569.
3. Kertzer, David I. *Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism*. Alfred A Knopf, 2001. Cloth. 037540623.
4. Cherry, Conrad. *Religion on Campus*. University of North Carolina Press, 2001. Cloth. 080782623.
5. Stark, Rodney. *One True God: Historical Consequences of*

Bibliographic characteristics to note are the high percentage of titles considered to be at the "Advanced-Academic" level by YBP bibliographers, the high percentage of titles in series, and the percentage that are "bible commentaries" indicating detailed scriptural analysis of parts of the Bible.

Bibliographic Characteristics of BS The Bible Titles Profiled by YBP 2001/2002

Characteristic	% of BS Titles	% of All Titles
Bible Commentary	16%	3%
Collections	11%	15%
Based on a Conference	4%	7%
Devotional Material	4%	1%
Historical Work	30%	24%
Overview of Subject Area	1%	2%
Practical Work	4%	13%
Works in Series	53%	36%
Translation into English	6%	5%
UK Publisher	18%	20%
'Popular' Content Level	11%	14%
'General-Academic' Content Level	28%	29%
'Advanced-Academic' Content Level	59%	44%
'Professional' Content Level	2%	13%

In this subclass YBP profiled titles from 80 imprints in 2001. The following table gives descriptive data about 9 of the most active.

Highly Active Imprints for BS The Bible Imprint Year 2001

Imprint	# of Titles	Average List Price	Professional	Advanced-Academic	General Academic	Popular
Abingdon Press	15	\$20.13	2	1	6	6
Doubleday	14	\$41.24	0	1	12	1
Edwin Mellen Press	20	\$76.95	0	7	13	0
Hendrickson Publishers	21	\$19.00	0	3	12	6
InterVarsity Press	28	\$28.52	0	6	15	7
Liturgical Press	16	\$28.38	2	6	8	0
Sheffield Academic Press	47	\$67.84	0	43	4	0
Society of Biblical Literature	14	\$37.90	0	12	2	0
Westminster Press/ John Knox	26	\$23.91	0	13	10	3

Best Selling Titles:

Over the past 12 months, *Publisher's Weekly* has run several articles on trends in religion publishing. They point specifically to the theme of politics and religion, a trend PW spots with the election of Jimmy Carter that has only been heightened by the events of September 11. Certainly, YBP's bestseller list for titles with Religious aspects bears out the current popularity of these titles in the academic market.

Monotheism. Princeton University Press. Cloth. 069108923x.

6. Fuller, Robert C. *Spiritual but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*. Oxford University Press. 2001. Cloth. 019514680.

7. Brasher, Brenda E, editor. *Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism*. Routledge. 2001. Cloth. 041592244.

8. Trainor, Kevin, editor. *Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide*. Oxford University Press. 2001. Cloth. 019521849.

9. Demerath, N.J. *Crossing the Gods: World Religion and Worldly Politics*. Rutgers University Press. 2001. Cloth. 081352924.

10. Bottero, Jean. *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*; translated by Teresa Lavender Fagan. University of Chicago Press. Cloth. 0226606717.