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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 year, unlike past years, the 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, 1997, through June 30, 1998, there was a 2% increase over the previous year in the average list price of academic and scholarly titles. The increase was fairly evenly distributed. Arts/Humanities and Social Science (each of which accounted for 33% of all new titles) showed a 2% increase and a 3% increase, respectively. Sci/Tec/Med (which accounted for 34% of all new titles) showed a 3% increase. What 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 art, performing arts, and architecture) increased only 1% from $50.66 in 1996/97 to $51.27 in 1997/98. The 104 titles treated in the *Auxiliary Arts* lead in this with a 16% increase, from $50.68 to $58.59.

The average list price of Humanities titles increased 4% from $51.29 in 1996/97 to $53.17 in 1997/98. In this category, the average list price of 557 Philosophy titles showed the largest increase, of 10%, over the previous year; these went from $58.71 in 1996/97 to $64.32 in 1997/98. A corresponding drop of 10% in average list price was enjoyed by 44 Folklore/Mythology titles treated in 1997/98; these went from $45.06 in 1996/97 to $40.45 in 1997/98. A 4% increase in the average list price of 1,548 Religion titles treated in 1997/98 was consistent with Humanities as a whole, going from $44.50 in 1996/97 to $46.45 in 1997/98. 1,121 History titles treated saw a 2% increase over the previous year, going from $47.25 in 1996/97 to $48.42 in 1997/98.

**Social Sciences**

Social Science titles had an average list price of $54.27 in 1997/98 compared with $52.67 in 1996/97, or a 3% increase. Within Social Science, 125 Sports and Recreation titles treated in 1997/98 saw a rather dramatic increase in average list price over the previous year; going from $36.31 in 1996/97 to $46.75 in 1997/98 (a 25% increase). Another notable area of Social Science price increase was Race Relations; 454 titles treated in 1997/98 showed a 10% increase in average list price over the previous year, going from $46.50 to $44.55.

The average list price of 829 Law titles treated in 1997/98 decreased by 6%, from an average of $82.46 in 1996/97 to an average of $77.12. 207 Library/Bibliographic Science titles (including books about books) treated in 1997/98 rose in average list price of 7%, from $47.51 in 1996/97 to $50.69. The average list price of books about books decreased 3% from $56.54 to $55.12, so Library Science titles bore most of the increase in cost.

The price of titles in Economics dropped 1% in 1997/98; 1,052 titles treated had an average list price of $64.08 as compared with $65.02 the previous year. In contrast, 1,086 Political Science titles treated in 1997/98 showed a 9% increase in their average list price, going from $47.80 in 1996/97 to $51.87 in 1997/98.

Titles in Education rose in price by 6%. 1,081 titles treated in 1997/98 had an average list price of $46.68, as compared with $43.85 the previous year. Similarly, titles in Business Administration increased in price, going from $51.77 in 1996/97 to $53.81 in 1997/98; thus 1,481 titles treated saw a 4% increase in average list price.

**Science/Technology/Medicine**

S/T/M titles had an average list price of $83.69 in 1997/98 as compared with $81.42 in 1996/97, or a 3% increase. Notable categories within S/T/M included 1,730 Computer Science titles treated, the average list price for which increased by 7% over the previous year, going from $53.96 to $57.69. The 99 Botany titles treated in 1997/98 saw a 16% decrease in their average list price, as compared with the previous year, going from $110.74 in 1996/97 to $93.54.

The average list price of 1,932 Technology titles treated increased consistent with S/T/M as a whole, going from $98.97 in 1996/97 to $101.65 in 1997/98, or a 3% increase. Medical titles saw a 3% increase in price. The average list price of 2,935 Medical titles treated in 1997/98 was $81.92 as compared with $77.90 the previous year. The average list price of Mathematics books remained fundamentally steady — $82.58 in 1997/98 as compared with $82.80 in 1996/97.

**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 increase over this period, adjusted for inflation, was only 1.86%, with the largest increase affecting the Social Sciences which increased by 10.28%. Of particular interest is the fact that, after inflation is factored in, the price of S/T/M titles actually decreased by 5.33%. The average increase during this time, unadjusted for inflation, was 3.82%, a figure which may be of use to librarians struggling with the coming year’s budget.

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**Average Book Prices in the Arts/Humanities, Social Sciences and S/T/M**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>87/88</th>
<th>88/89</th>
<th>89/90</th>
<th>90/91</th>
<th>91/92</th>
<th>92/93</th>
<th>93/94</th>
<th>94/95</th>
<th>95/96</th>
<th>96/97</th>
<th>97/98</th>
<th>% Increase Adjusted For Inflation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities/Art</td>
<td>$30.98</td>
<td>$33.74</td>
<td>$34.66</td>
<td>$38.86</td>
<td>$41.63</td>
<td>$42.29</td>
<td>$41.73</td>
<td>$43.17</td>
<td>$43.27</td>
<td>$45.89</td>
<td>$47.05</td>
<td>51.87% (6.95%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>$34.66</td>
<td>$36.82</td>
<td>$38.44</td>
<td>$40.79</td>
<td>$44.28</td>
<td>$47.10</td>
<td>$47.23</td>
<td>$48.63</td>
<td>$48.26</td>
<td>$52.62</td>
<td>$54.27</td>
<td>56.58% (10.28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci/Tec/Med</td>
<td>$62.26</td>
<td>$66.90</td>
<td>$68.80</td>
<td>$72.32</td>
<td>$78.61</td>
<td>$81.64</td>
<td>$80.72</td>
<td>$79.13</td>
<td>$80.56</td>
<td>$81.38</td>
<td>$83.69</td>
<td>34.42% (-5.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All titles</td>
<td>$42.74</td>
<td>$45.88</td>
<td>$48.14</td>
<td>$50.69</td>
<td>$55.13</td>
<td>$57.86</td>
<td>$57.42</td>
<td>$57.26</td>
<td>$57.92</td>
<td>$60.68</td>
<td>$61.82</td>
<td>44.64% (1.86%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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62 Against The Grain / September 1998