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1 Introduction

For 23 years, LISU and its predecessor, CLAIM, produced biannual reports of the average prices of academic books published in the UK and USA, from data supplied by Blackwell's Book Services from their primary subject coverage database. These series concluded with the reports published in August 2008, covering the period from January to June 2008. Changes in procedures at Blackwell meant that this was the last data set they were able to supply in that form. We are grateful that a new data set, differing only slightly from the previously supplied figures, is now available, covering a full academic year from July 2008 to June 2009. The current report is based on these data, and we aim to continue the series on an annual, academic year, basis. A single report will cover both UK and USA books, and will be available primarily in electronic form, with printed copies available on request.

The range of subject categories covered remains unchanged, and the indexes have been calculated based on July 1999 to June 2000 = 100. Three main tables are presented, Table 1 summarises the changes over one, five and ten years for seven major subject categories; and Tables 2 and 3 present greater detail for the current year and last year for UK books and US books respectively. A brief commentary notes the main changes, and includes comparison with the Retail Prices Index and exchange rates.

Wherever possible in this report, historical figures have been re-calculated on the revised basis, to be consistent with the most recent definitions. This means that figures may differ slightly from those in the previous series. Revised data for some of the earliest years were not available; however the differences are slight, and are not thought to have a significant effect on the broad trends presented.

Note that the average prices are based on titles published. Fluctuations in the numbers of books included in the calculations affect all subject categories, but disproportionately. Were they spread evenly across all subjects, the summary percentage change figures for the broad categories and overall would provide a valid index of the trend average. This is not, however, the case – the change in the overall average price per book is due in part to the change in subject mix rather than to genuine changes in book prices. The effect this has on libraries' budget calculations is that, if the pattern of acquisitions has moved in a similar way to the coverage of these statistics, use of the overall figures would be appropriate. If not, however, it would be preferable to undertake budgetary calculations subject by subject, either at the detailed level of Tables 2 and 3 (taking particular care with smaller subject categories) or at the summary level of Table 1.

2 Commentary

2.1 UK books

At £48.57 the overall price for 2008/9 is up by 3.6% over the 2007/8 figure of £46.90, and is 14.9% higher than five years ago. Overall, the number of titles included has increased by 5.8% this year, disproportionately across subjects. When the average prices are adjusted using the assumptions of a constant mix of subjects, the increases are slightly less, at 2.1% over the last year, and 12.6% over five years. These figures compare to general inflation rates of 1.0% and 16.1% over one and five years respectively, measured by the Retail Prices Index.

Subject-by-subject calculations will usually be more reliable than taking an 'overall' figure, for the reason explained at the end of the introduction. There are considerable variations by subject this year, detailed in Table 2. In particular, there has been a small number of expensive titles published this year which has distorted average prices in General science, Library science & book trade, and, to a lesser extent, Mass communications. Apart from these exceptional cases, the highest price increases over the year have been in Language (35%, 251 titles); Surgery (30%, 63 titles); and Anthropology & ethnology (29%, 52 titles). Ten other subject areas recorded increases of more than 10% over the year. The largest falls recorded were also in the smaller subject areas - Earth sciences (-29.3%, 91 titles); Sports & recreation (-17.6%, 134 titles); and Dentistry (-15.7%, 31 titles). Six further subjects recorded falls of more than 10%, and eight subjects with fewer than 500 titles recorded falls of between 5% and 10%.

In those subjects with 500 or more titles included, the greatest increases were of 6.2% in Management & business administration (976 titles); 5.6% in Applied inter-disciplinary social studies (814 titles); and 5.1% in Law (922 titles). The greatest falls in these larger subjects were of -12.3% in Literary texts (excluding fiction) (590 titles); and -9.1% in Fine Arts (603 titles). No other subjects changed price by more than 5% over the year.

2.2 USA books

At \$81.34 the overall price for 2008/9 is up by 4.3% over the 2007/8 figure of \$78.00, and is 20.6% higher than five years ago. Overall, the number of titles included has increased by 6.6% this year, again disproportionately across subjects. When adjusted using the assumptions of a constant mix of subjects, however, the overall average price increases are slightly less over the last year, at 4.0%, but slightly higher over five years, at 21.5%. These figures compare to general UK inflation rates of 1.0% and 16.1% over one and five years respectively. The effects for UK librarians of changes in the exchange rate are considered in Section 2.3.

There are around three times as many books included in the US than in the UK approval programmes. It might be thought that this would lead to greater stability in prices, but there remain considerable variations in price increases by subject this year, detailed in Table 3. Despite this, and as noted above, subject-by-subject calculations will usually be more reliable than taking an 'overall' figure.

The greatest price changes are again in the smaller subject categories, with increases of 38.2% in Materials science (227 titles); 26.1% in Nursing (334 titles); and 24.2% in Military science (296 titles). Five other subjects with fewer than 500 titles included recorded increases of between 10% and 20%, and five recorded increases between 5% and 10%. Three subjects with

3 Definitions

3.1 The Data Base

The academic book prices and associated indexes in this report are produced from data supplied by Blackwell's Book Services, and reflect their coverage of monographs supplied through their New Titles / Approval programme for academic library collections. The books included are the selection from all UK / US books published that are included in Blackwell's Approval Program. These new titles have been chosen by Blackwell's as being of interest to librarians in colleges, universities and other institutions operating at a tertiary level of education. Reprints are not included. Note that the figures are based on the number of monographs published – each title is counted once, regardless of the number of copies purchased by libraries.

The book categories used for this index are derived from the Primary Subject Coverage classification used by Blackwell North America, which is itself related to the Library of Congress classification. However, LISU consulted a number of academic libraries to produce 64 working subject categories which are closely relevant to libraries' acquisitions needs. Section 3.2 indicates what the main LISU subject categories encompass.

3.1.1 What is "UK"?

Books originally published anywhere in the British Isles. Note that the Republic of Ireland is included in this definition, as well as the United Kingdom. Books manufactured in the British Isles are normally covered by this definition, but not necessarily so.

3.1.2 What is "USA"?

Books commissioned from copy edited by, and distributed from, publishers in the USA and Canada. The figures cover only books first published there: they therefore include American editions imported into the United Kingdom.

3.1.3 What is a book?

The obvious definition applies and includes some mixed media material where the book is the dominant element - e.g. books and CD-Rom together. Some pamphlet material is included but very little. Loose-leaf and spiral-bound material is generally excluded by Blackwell because of its susceptibility to damage in transit rather than any other consideration. Paperback and hardback formats are both included; e-books are not.

3.1.4 What is academic?

Academic books are those of interest to the academic libraries: these are institutions of higher learning. Books addressed to secondary school students or below are not covered. Included are textbooks of interest to both undergraduates and advanced students and good quality books, which are primarily intended for the general reader.

3.1.5 Is anything not included?

The following are excluded:- reprints (not new editions) and paperback reprints of hardbacks still in print, children's books, contemporary fiction by new authors, do-it-yourself books and manuals, books for collectors unless they have some more general interest, catering,

gardening, leisure, sheet music, religious books of a devotional character, electronic editions, periodicals and pamphlets of fewer than 50 pages.

Certain publishers or groups and universities are given only limited coverage, notably HMSO, Federal and state governments and departments of universities that publish their own material. No publications of corporations outside the conventional publishing industry are included. Publications of quasi governmental bodies are normally excluded.

3.2 Coverage of the Book Categories

Some indication of the more detailed types of books within the current categories may help librarians using the index. In the following lists no attempt has been made to give every primary subject covered by Blackwell's but it is hoped that those selected will give an adequate explanation.

General Works include societies, meetings, museums, exhibitions, general reference works.

Fine Arts include primitive, national, regional, modern, contemporary, by type or subject, by media, history, antiques.

Architecture includes landscape architecture and urban planning.

Performing Arts (except music) cover theatre, dance, cinema, radio.

Literary Texts excludes novels and collections of short stories (fiction) and juvenile books, but poetry and plays are among the categories included.

Literary Criticism includes literary biographies.

Law includes international law.

Library Science includes bibliography, publishing and book selling.

Mass Communications includes communication theory, popular culture, media of communication, public opinion and propaganda.

All Social Sciences covers the five sections specified plus general social sciences and research methods.

Military Science includes naval warfare.

Sports and Recreation also includes non-athletic games and international games.

Applied Interdisciplinary Social Studies covers a wide range of social problem areas including urbanism, population, poverty, housing, race relations, women, youth, age, leisure, drugs and alcohol.

General Science includes the philosophy and history of science.

All Biological Sciences covers the four sections specified plus areas such as evolution, genetics, ecology, cytology, bacteriology and virology.

Earth Sciences includes mineralogy, petrology, geology, palaeontology, oceanography and meteorology.

Interdisciplinary Technical Fields includes cybernetics, theory of organisations, operations research and simulation methods.

Technology excludes trades and crafts. In addition to the five categories given the general category includes marine engineering, aeroplane and space technology, mining and nuclear engineering.

Food and Domestic Science includes food technology and institutional management.

Non-clinical Medicine includes public health and hospitals.

All Medicine covers the five sections specified plus such areas as neurology, ENT, obstetrics, paediatrics, geriatrics and anaesthesiology.

Agriculture and Forestry includes farm management and horticulture.

Natural Resources and Conservation includes energy, land, wildlife and marine resources.