
Editorial

Can it be that the protests of consumers are having some effect? Peter R. Young's review of periodical prices in "The Serials Librarian" shows that US price increases are slowing down. Domestic titles which showed an increase of 12.4% in 1988 reduced to 9.3% in 1989. But the startling change came with a mere 3.3% increase in the cost of foreign titles in 1989 compared with 17% in 1987 and 18.7% in 1988. But, as H. Craig Peterson points out, the North American librarians must continue to be concerned about the \$100 difference between the average price of journals in his total sample as opposed to the average European price. US journals into Europe carry a premium of 10-15%; the European titles into the USA far exceed this acceptable level.

Our North American colleague, in her column, expresses concern at the Gordon and Breach developments. The UKSG has worked hard to bring the worlds of publishers, agents and librarians closer together and to extend the understanding of each other's problems and concerns. It is with dismay, therefore, we hear of litigation and the opening of such a nest of vipers. It is perfectly legitimate to challenge prices set and to consider such questions as value for money. It is equally reasonable for business people to hit back hard if they think criticism unfair and based on doubtful evidence. Those who have executive and financial responsibilities must vigorously defend their practices in whatever setting. However, the taking

of the next step, recourse to the law, can be seen as damagingly excessive. If a publisher has been unfairly judged and can produce evidence of this, consumers will draw their own conclusions based on a reasonable presentation of facts and opinions. Truth will out, if an atmosphere of moderation is maintained. The amount of nervous energy and resources expended on litigious exercises can be better spent on improvements in communication designed to bring publisher and consumer in closer harmony.

In order to underline the importance of stronger links between the world of publishing and libraries, UKSG is to organise a Publishers' Seminar in the Summer period. The location is not yet fixed but the intention is to hold it in a major academic library setting. There will be a selection of speakers dealing with such topics as acquisitions, management and exploitation of periodical literature. Importantly, publishers will also be able to see library operations at first hand in a busy university setting. The object will be for those attending to see how the end product is used in libraries and to exchange informal views with library staff directly involved in serials management. There are early indications that publisher interest in such a day is running at a high level. □

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