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Book Pricing Update — Peter Piper Picked a Peck of Pre-Pub Prices



by **John Riley** (Sales Director, Eastern Book Company) <jdriley@javanet.com>

Editor's Note: This column begins a new chapter in the Pricing Update portion of *Against the Grain*. Thanks to **Celia Wagner** for her years of work on the column. She was a great advocate for "numeracy" and her columns were statistical models for pricing analysis. While I still plan on providing a once a year estimate of price increases to help librarians plan for future budgets, I wanted to take a different tack in examining pricing. I want to focus on different areas where pricing is an issue. In future columns I would like to explore out of print pricing, pre-processing charges, Amazon and other Web based sellers' pricing, etc. To accomplish this goal of looking at pricing from many angles I invite librarians, vendors and publishers to participate. Feel free to contact me with any issues or forward any articles you would like to have published in this column. — **JR**

When new reference sets are published it is customary for many publishers to offer pre-publication special pricing. This helps them to both promote the title and gauge interest in the publication. It allows a publisher to have a reservoir of capital before and at the actual moment of publication. From 40-60 new titles are published each year with special pre-publication pricing. **Wiley**, **Elsevier** and **Academic** are the most frequent promoters of their titles by pre-pub offers, but many other publishers such as **ABC-CLIO**, **Cambridge**, **Routledge** and **Oxford** have multiple offerings. The new imprint of **Sage Reference** plans on offering pre-pubs as well.

The offers begin anywhere from one year to six months before publication. The special pricing is promoted both by the publisher and by vendors. Publishers give special incentives to vendors to help them promote and consolidate orders. Publishers also benefit from the vendors linking the titles from their Website to the publisher database and from vendors updating customers on new release dates or other changes. Consolidated shipping helps both publisher and vendor. On larger orders we receive shipments directly from the printer to cut shipping charges.

When major reference sets are published, promotional mail, faxes and telemarketing calls follow. This is when librarians can face a blizzard of choices.

When sets such as the *Oxford English Dictionary* or the *McGraw Hill Encyclopedia of Technology* were published it was not uncommon for librarians to receive as many as 15 different offers, sometimes from firms that only seemed to appear for the occasion.

In most instances you can receive the best pricing on pre-pub sets through your vendor. Since publishers offer incentives to vendors to boost sales, vendors in turn pass along a share of those savings to their customers. For example, the **International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences** from **Pergamon** is listed at a pre-pub price of \$7995.00, but many vendors are offering it at prices ranging from \$6750.00 to just over \$6900.00. For a set such as the **Encyclopedia of Analytical Chemistry** from **Wiley** listed at \$4800.00, you can find this for prices starting at \$4100.00.

Some vendors post pre-pub prices on the Web, making it easy to see what offers are available. Others choose to have librarians contact them for pricing. Some vendors post a wide array of publishers, while some vendors choose to focus on areas of expertise. Depending on policy, some vendors offer free shipping. Vendor Websites are a good place to begin when searching for the best price on expensive sets.

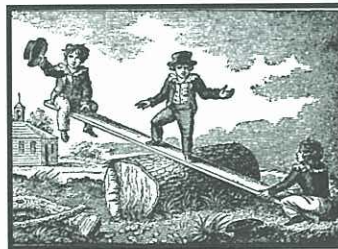
Some of the problems that can be encountered with pre-publication offers include: changing dates of publication or even cancellations of publication leading

to problems with encumbrances, especially if they overlap fiscal years; claiming can become a problem if the publication date is moved; and finally vendor turnaround statistics can be skewed because of the long lag time between ordering and receipt of an item.

Another problem arises when a publisher makes a publication available only if ordered direct, or even more problematic, when the publisher sells a set to the public for less than they do to the vendor community. **Oxford University Press** is not the only publisher that has issued a number of sets that would cost vendors more to acquire than the publisher is selling them for, leading to confusion amongst librarians and a dilemma for vendors.

Vendors would prefer to be able to supply all publications, even if it means accepting a low margin rather than not being able to serve their customers. Likewise, librarians find this situation troublesome when they place an order with their vendor but are forced to order direct.

A good rule of thumb is to look at all of the offers available on the more expensive pre-pubs. If you choose not to encumber monies ahead of time, hold the orders in a queue, listed by order deadline. That way you can place your order only when the set is about to be published. This would also eliminate the need for claiming and you could adjust the true publication date as it changes. 🐾



Issues in Vendor / Library Relations — A Lasting Difference

by **Bob Nardini** (Yankee Book Peddler) <rnardini@YBP.com>

It's a scary thing, the January 1981 issue of *American Libraries*. A scary thing in the year 2001 if one is a vendor, that is. Then as now, *American Libraries* was an advertising showcase for companies doing business with libraries, each issue a snapshot of what the library marketplace looked like. The first thing today's vendor will notice about the issue is that most of the vendors in that marketplace are gone.

Twenty years, not a long time in the

overall scheme of things, is time enough for scores of companies to vanish and leave no trace. **Porta-Structures Industries**, for example, ran a full-page ad aimed at libraries mounting book displays, with photographs of "a proven winner," their system of portable kiosks: "See the Newest **Porta-Boutique in Action!**" Other ghostly names may still be remembered, such as **CLSI** or the **McGregor Subscription Agency**; but how many today can recall Information Fu-

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