

1989

# Library Services Improvement Act (1989): Report 13

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## Notes on costs of foreign materials to libraries

I've attached a chapter on Prices of U.S. and Foreign Published Materials from the 1989-90 Bowker Annual Library and Book Trade Almanac. It's hard to generalize about foreign materials prices because they vary from country to country. However, to do just that, generalize a bit from this chapter, the price of foreign materials is increasing rapidly -- more rapidly than the price of U.S. books and journals, which are themselves increasing faster than the overall consumer price index.

In 1988, the average U.S. academic book increased 6%, U.S. hardcover books 5.8%, and journal prices 9.4%. As a comparison, p. 462 in the attached chapter notes that British academic books went up 16.1% for U.S. libraries, based on a combination of price increases and the loss in value of the dollar compared to the pound. The tables in the chapter do not factor in the dollar value change, but a couple of knowledgeable research librarians I talked to indicated that the increase in British book prices is comparable to that of other European countries. The table on p. 469 indicates that Latin American book price changes in 1988 ranged from an increase of almost 60% to a decrease of 36% depending on the country of origin. The materials Jaia Barrett of ARL sent you indicate that foreign journal prices increased by over 80% in three years.

Foreign materials also cost libraries more for other reasons. They require more effort and expertise (in languages and foreign publication sources) to identify, acquire, and process. As an example, the Chicago Public Library spends about \$.17 (17¢) per volume to catalog English language materials through a commercial firm. However, almost all foreign language materials acquired require intellectually-demanding original cataloging at a cost of \$24 per volume.

The Chicago Public Library's Foreign Language Section in the Central Library carries materials in over 100 languages. CPL's Cataloging Dept. catalogs materials in over 65 languages.

The CPL Foreign Language Section circulates annually 84,000 books, 24,000 periodicals, and 18,000 audio materials. In addition, 15,000 foreign language titles are rotated throughout the CPL branch libraries on long-term loan. Additional foreign language materials circulate among regional and branch libraries.

Of information requests to CPL from other libraries and library systems in the state, 40% are for foreign language materials and information.

The Chicago Public Library's Foreign Language Section in the Central Library is larger and circulates more items annually than the New York Public Library's central collection.

A one-year LSCA project a few years ago allowed Chicago Public Library foreign language catalogers to be shared with other libraries in the state to partially alleviate the difficulty of getting such staff expertise compared with the demand by many libraries for foreign language materials for their users.

Carol C. Henderson, July 13, 1989

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