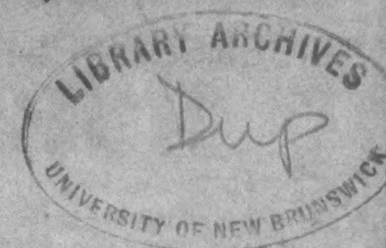


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Libraries Facing Cutbacks Price Gouging by Publishers to Blame

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U.N.B. libraries face serious difficulties due to the skyrocketing costs of research materials.

As a result, library officials have been forced to cut back on new book and periodical subscriptions. Some journal subscriptions have been cancelled.

Large increases in the prices of periodical subscriptions are largely to blame for the current crisis. Subscriptions at U.N.B. have seen overall price increases ranging from 18-23% a year during the 1980's, while book prices during this time rose only 5-6% a year during this same period. Because of the higher prices of journals, library budgets are unable to keep up, and book budgets are being cut into.

Inflation and the devaluation of the Canadian dollar during the 1980's played important roles in this increase of subscription prices. But, as noted by Rod Banks, Associate director of U.N.B. Libraries, "Inflation is not the only thing. There is gouging by publishers who follow differential pricing. Europeans especially will charge North Americans more than other Europeans." Price gouging is not limited to overseas publishers, as domestic North American commercial publishers are guilty too.

Publishers are raising subscription prices of journals, particularly scientific ones, because of the general feeling that research libraries are a captive market and will pay anything to keep certain high profile journals. Publishers

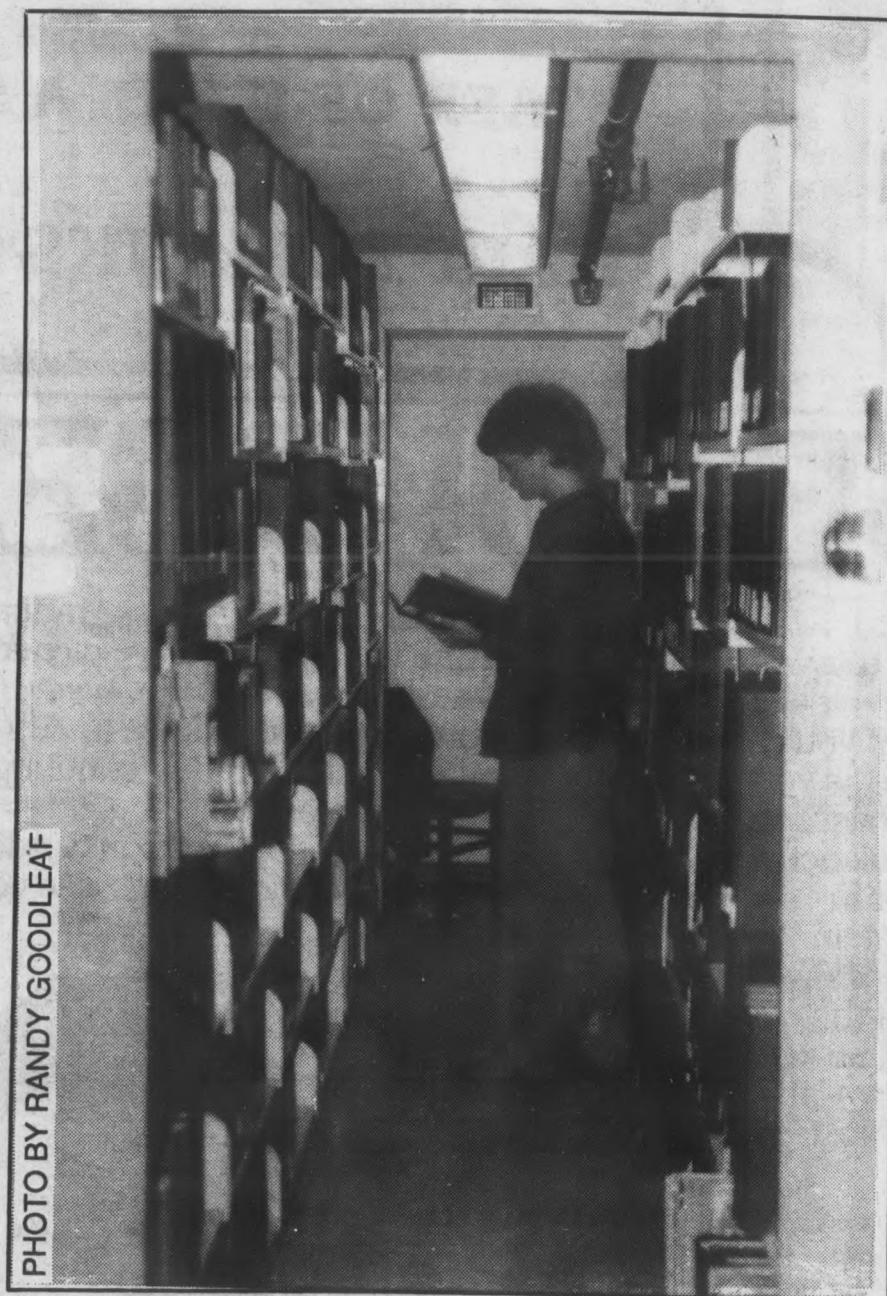


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have been aided by the great reluctance of faculty to cancel subscriptions to publications that departments simply must have to keep abreast of knowledge related to their specialties.

Eszter Schwenke, Head Librarian of the U.N.B. Science Library notes how the "publish or perish" syndrome drives the desirability of certain journals even higher, and hence reduces the likelihood that "key" journals will be cancelled no matter how high their cost.

Adding to the problem is the rapid growth of new and specialized periodical titles. With budgets not having enough in terms of purchasing power, increased journal prices and increased journal numbers, it is a case of too many publications chasing too few library dollars. Books and journals are cut back.

As to where these cuts are to be made Mr. Banks says, "(the) library does not cut arbitrarily. There are guidelines to the dollars that must be cut and the separate departments

themselves mark the journals for cancellation."

Cutbacks have had a "serious effect in terms of faculty and graduate study research," says Dr. Peter C. Kent, Dean of Arts at U.N.B. "For Arts students, the library is their laboratory and it is essential (for them) to acquire writings in particular fields... the health of the library is important to the faculty of Arts."

About this situation of cutbacks in the Science Library Schwenke says, "The situation is devastating. How are you supposed to keep up?"

She adds, "Periodicals are a basic research tool...if you take a basic reference tool away, you still have to make it available in other ways." She notes that other ways include increased interlibrary loans and resource sharing with other libraries via fax machines. Alternative formats for information include

microfiche and CD-ROM as well as online access to data banks. She adds "with new technology an incredible amount of information is available--but it is expensive to access."

"This is the first year that the situation is stabilizing," says Banks who notes that the average increase in the overall cost of periodical subscriptions at U.N.B. rose by about 10% during 1988, a significant drop in rate increases from previous years. He says some journal subscriptions will be returned but cautions that it will be difficult.

Still, with the current budget levels in a world of inflated periodical prices, U.N.B. libraries are hard pressed just to maintain their collection; growth in periodical titles is not economically feasible. Dr. Kent sums it up best when he says, "We need more money in the library."

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