

FINAL REPORT OF THE SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING AND TENURE TASK
FORCE

The State of Academic Publishing and Its Impact on the Tenure Process with
Conclusions and Recommendations

October 25, 2012

Dean Tsutsui created the Publishing Task Force consisting of Rick Cogley, Peter Moore, Francisco Moran, Dennis Simon, Sherry Smith, Brad Thompson, Steve Weisenburger.

PROCESS: The Task Force was provided with information on publishing and University Presses by Dean Tsutsui (see attached). The Task Force had access to: Sustained Scholarly Publishing: New Business Models for University Presses published by The Association of American University Press in March 2011; Report of the MLA Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion, December 2006; The Future of Scholarly Publishing 2002 Report of the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on The Future of Scholarly Publishing; History and the Future of Scholarly Publishing by Robert B. Townsend, Assistant Director for Research and Publications of the AHA, October 2003; A Wake-up Call for the Humanities by Robert B. Townsend, 2007; Scholarly Publishing Initiatives 2007 Annual Report of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Closeout Report to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for the Gutenberg-e Fellowship and Publication Program, December 1998 to March 31, 2008; and an on-line report, The Crisis in Scholarly Communication from the MSU Library (<http://www.lib.msu.edu/features/crisis/>). We also met with Department Chairs by Division, three recently tenured Dedman faculty (Associate Professors Steven Lindquist, Sheri Kunovich, Lisa Siraganian) and Associate Vice President for Research, James Quick.

FINDINGS:

There are several so-called crises in scholarly publications. The focus of the Task Force is the impact of these crises on the tenure process. Most of the emphasis in the literature has been on the Humanities disciplines and particularly those for which the book is the “gold standard” for tenure. A partial list of publishing crises include the dramatic increase in the price of periodicals, the increasing dominance of commercial publishing versus university presses and professional society publications, complex on-line pricing schemes, e.g., bundling, increasing subvention costs, unsustainable business models for university presses.

Much of the current concern with tenure and book publishing can be traced to an influential 2002 report of the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Scholarly Publishing (<http://www.mla.org/pdf/schlrlypblshng.pdf>). The report noted a number of factors contributing to a sense of crisis. Among these factors are the simultaneous reduction in University library budgets coupled with the explosion in the “quantity and price of scientific journals.”¹ In particular the report noted that from 1986 to 1997 “research libraries’ expenditures for serials rose 142%, while their expenditures on monographs rose a mere 30%.”² This pattern was already visible in a 1992 Mellon-funded study³ and has continued (see Figure 1 below). It is interesting that this situation may be reflected in the level of anxiety over scholarly publishing between faculty members in the humanities and the sciences (see below).

The potential impact on the junior faculty was deemed serious since accompanying this trend was the increasing reliance of humanities departments on the book as the “holy

grail”⁴ of tenure. Additionally the new publishing climate promoted “breadth and crossover” while Humanities Departments were focused on “scholarly depth.”⁵ The report made a number of recommendations including that departments develop clear guidelines for faculty and outside reviewers, increase subvention support, and re-examine the importance of the book.⁶ There is an ambivalence concerning electronic publishing that has yet to be resolved.

In 2003 the Assistant Director for Research and Publishing of the American Historical Association (AHA), Robert Townsend, wrote a short article on the impact of these trends in the broad field of history. The paper begins with a reference to the 2002 MLA report and notes the same trends on serial versus monograph expenditures. Surprisingly he finds that “they (University Presses) actually *increased* the number of new titles in the pipeline ...”⁷, a fact that has continued as shown in the data provided by Dean Tsutsui (see Appendix A). While the report acknowledges the overall health of publishing in the field of history the situation is not uniformly good. Some subfields have been more adversely effected (e.g., fields outside the United States, see statement below from Mellon report).⁸ The author goes on to argue that the current situation has all the makings of a tenure crisis.⁹ Proposed solutions follow those of the MLA recommendations.

In December 2006 the MLA issued a report of the Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion. The issues addressed go beyond those of the 2002 Ad Hoc Committee but there is significant common ground. The importance of publication and research has dramatically increased (the latter from 35.4% to 75.7% since 1968).¹⁰ The book remains the gold standard with 88.9% of departments in Carnegie Doctorate-granting institutions now ranking the monograph as either “very important” or “important” for tenure.¹¹ There has been little change in the value of journal publications.¹² Thus, the concerns of the 2002 Report have not been adequately addressed. Recommendations include increasing transparency in the tenure process, rethinking the importance of the monograph, promoting the scholarly essay, acceptance of publications in new media, start-up funds (the current average for Carnegie Doctorate-granting institutions is \$7056¹³), and subvention support.¹⁴

Again following up on the MLA Report, Townsend reported that in history, in a 1979 survey, teaching was considered twice as important as scholarship but by 2004 teaching and research expectations were approaching parity.¹⁵ As in the languages this has added to the stress of publishing. He continues to find that “opportunities for publication seem much better in history than in the language and literature fields.”¹⁶ He is more sanguine about digital publishing based on the experience (at that time) of the Gutenberg-e program.¹⁷

The evidence for the effectiveness of the Gutenberg-e experiment in digital publication is mixed. In the Closeout Report on the program the authors note that: the time between dissertation and publication remained the same as with traditional print publication; delays in publication and the uneven nature of the final production made marketing more

difficult; senior scholars were dubious of the value of these publications posing problems for tenure-review; the business model was unsustainable.¹⁸

In their 2011 report, the AAUP Task Force on Economic Models for Scholarly Publishing, recognizes the changing publishing climate and the unsustainability of the current budget model (they attribute part of the problem to STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, publishing as did the MLA Ad Hoc Report).¹⁹ They also recognize that changes to the budgeting model will have an impact on authors and the types of monographs they publish. Thus they recommend a dialogue between the authors and the presses. It is likely that revenue in the new budget models will depend less on the marketplace and more on revenue from the producers.²⁰ This change will put a greater strain on tenure-track faculty with an increased need for subvention if monographs are to remain the gold standard. Open access publishing will not solve this revenue problem but partnerships between presses and research centers are seen as part of the solution.²¹

Multiple SMU departments in the Humanities and Social Sciences confirmed difficulties for tenure track faculty in publishing monographs. The key problem is time to publish. One “solution” to the problem has been to lengthen the tenure clock by taking one year third-year leaves rather than the traditional one semester, often at half pay. In at least one Humanities Department several third year leaves of two years have been reported.

The situation, as it relates to tenure and promotion, of serial publications is significantly different. In most science disciplines department chairs noted that the publishing climate is acceptable but the funding climate, critical to receiving tenure, is alarming. On the other hand in several of the social sciences and biology publishing is problematic. In the top venues publishing is taking an increasing length of time, particularly when editors ask for revisions. If the paper is rejected with the editor suggesting a more appropriate venue significant rewriting is often required that does not enhance the research. One Associate Professor reported that this process happened several times for the same article. As in the case of the humanities, this is likely related to increasing reliance on research as a measure of tenure, which results in more submissions to a fixed number of journals (while the total number of journals in increasing the number of flagship journals is not). In addition there are outstanding questions in determining how to assess the value of publications.

Consider, as an example the field of Economics, since it is relatively data-rich. In a seminal paper in 2002 G. Ellison concluded that the “slowdown (in economics journal publications between submission and acceptance) is widespread” and attributable to “journals requiring more and longer revisions.”²² Based on an extensive examination of publication data from 1970 to 2000 he contends that while editors typically turned papers around in 6 to 9 months by 2000 the average was closer to two years.²³ A follow-up report in 2011 using the same data concludes that “publication rates of junior faculty over recent years” have experienced a significant slowdown and warns that “our profession should be careful when evaluating people for tenure and promotions. The rules of the game have changed and members of more recent cohorts who may be just as talented and hard-working as their predecessors almost certainly will have shorter CVs in

comparison.”²⁴ In a separate study the authors conclude, “unless we believe that recent (economics) graduates are fundamentally of poorer quality, the same quality of tenure candidate is significantly less productive today than 10 or 15 years ago.”²⁵ In a personal (email) communication with one of the authors of this study he reported that leave guidelines at his university are now much less strict than they were when he began his career, in some cases allowing faculty to delay the tenure clock. In our Economics Department all five of the last tenure-track faculty have slowed the tenure clock by one year on the advice of the senior faculty. How widespread this phenomenon has become is unknown.

These studies relied on data before 2000. To see if the trends reported from the previous decade have continued we asked Professor Nathan Balke, the department chair for a list of key Economic journals. He reported that there are three top journals in the field, *Econometrica*, *American Economic Review*, and the *Journal of Political Economy*. Just below these are *Review of Economics and Statistics* and the *Journal of Economic Theory*. Top field journals include *Journal of Monetary Economics* and *Journal of Labor Economics*. Junior faculty members are expected to publish articles in some of these venues though it is not likely that will include any of the three top journals.

The number of pages and articles for these seven journals over an eleven year period from 2000-2010 is shown in Figure 2. By neither measure has journal size increased in the decade and for a substantial number the number of pages declined along with the economy in the latter part of the decade. The corresponding available acceptance rates in 2010 are: 10% (unreported 2000); 6-10% (6-10% 2000); 9% (6-10% 2000); 15% (11-20% 2000); 6-10% (unreported 2000); 6-10% (6-10% 2000); 5% (6-10% 2000)^{26,27}. In these journals there is little change in the acceptance rate during this decade.

We also examined the length of time between submission and acceptance in *Journal of Monetary Economics* and *Journal of Economic Theory* at three times during the period from 2000-2010. For the first in 2000 the mean time length was 16.8 months (standard deviation 10.6 months) with a range from 5 months to 65 months. By 2005 the mean had risen to 29.4 months (standard deviation 12.3 months) with a range of 3 to 71 months. In 2010 it had come back down to 20.1 months (standard deviation 10 months) with a range of 4 to 43 months. In generating the data certain issues of the journal were ignored since the turn-around-time was less than one month due to the nature of the articles (e.g., conference proceedings). Including these special issues would skew the data. Interestingly these faster times are considered in the journal’s own reported data on time between submission and acceptance. The data also suggest that while the time between acceptance and publication could be substantial in the early part of the decade, by 2010 that time period was negligible.

For the *Journal of Economic Theory* in 2000 only the date of submission and date of receiving the final version are given, while by 2010, three dates are provided. Factoring in, using 2010 data, the time between the submission of the final version and acceptance the 2000 turn-around has a mean of 20.4 (standard deviation of 13.3, range 1 to 65 months) if only original articles are considered and a mean of 19.3 (standard deviation of

12.7) if the notes are included. In 2005 the numbers had declined to 17.8 and 17.1 months, respectively. By 2010 had grown to a mean of 20.2 (standard deviation of 13.2, range 1 to 72 months) for original articles (and somewhat less if notes and conference proceedings are included). Comparing this with the data in Figure 2 over the previous decade the turn-around time had stabilized and was more directly related to the number of articles published which increased shortly after 2000 followed by a decline until 2005-2006 followed by an increase. While the stabilization is important it still represents a time period of over one and a half years!

Such lengthy waiting periods have a detrimental effect on tenure-track faculty. Clearly in the top-tier journals it is much harder to publish in 2001 than in 1985. If the number of faculty members needing to publish has increased as it has in the language disciplines (and there is every reason to think this is so since the language increase is driven by more universities requiring research of their faculty members) then the situation in economics is more dire than a decade ago.

A similar situation is likely to hold in other social science disciplines which have a “fixed” canon of acceptable journals.

As a second example consider Philosophy. Tenure-track faculty are expected to produce articles (a book is typical for promotion to Full). Here there is much less data. We requested a list of key journals from Professor Barnes, chair of the Philosophy Department. He provided a list of fourteen journals. We were able to access data for all but two. On average the turn-around time is 9.7 months with a standard deviation of 3.4 months and a range of 5.7 to 17.7 months. The mean acceptance rate is 17.5% with a standard deviation of 7.3%.²⁸ The turn-around time is much less than for economics with a higher acceptance rate. Clearly this data should be used in advising tenure-track faculty as journals with over a year turn-around should be avoided, when the faculty member is close to tenure.

Departments that depend on journal publications for tenure and promotion provide a ranking of the candidate’s publications. For some departments the faculty members list the key journals without providing any independent verification of its rank. Other departments provide impact factors. It is also typical for the candidates to provide a description of the citations of their articles. The reliability of “independent measures” such as impact factor is unclear. Again, using Economics as an example, various measures have been suggested in recent papers.^{29,30} While some form of ranking is helpful in a recent paper, H. Wall warns that “little work has been done to assess how seriously any ranking should be taken.”³¹ The same is likely to be true in other disciplines.

As noted above there are recent trends in some departments (English, Economics) for tenure-track faculty members to extend their tenure clock. More generally before AY09-10 Dedman College was not allowing third year leaves to last the whole year and thereby receive an extension to the tenure clock. Thus it was rare for faculty to have longer clocks except in cases of maternity leave. In fact only two faculty members between

AY01-02 and 07-08 had such extensions (one in Economics), apart from maternity leaves. Since AY 07-08 we have had 10 such delays in Philosophy, History, World Languages, Economics, and English. Three out of seven third-year leaves submitted this fall involved tenure clock extensions. This represents a substantial increase. One difficulty with our current policy of granting tenure-clock extensions for year-long leaves is that faculty members who are able to take a year leave at half pay are at a distinct advantage over those who cannot afford to do so.

Department Chairs recognize the changing publishing landscape and have taken a variety of steps to alleviate the difficulties. These include directly contacting editors in an attempt to speed up the review process, reading through job applicants' dissertations to ascertain the ease with which it can be turned into publishable form, and encouraging tenure clock extensions.

CONCLUSIONS:

While it is clear that current publishing landscape is in a state of flux, whether it reaches the level of crisis depends on the field. The most salient concerns as noted in the 2007 Mellon Foundation Report, are, "In response (to the various outside pressures), university presses have intensified the scrutiny they give to manuscript submissions, judging not just the intellectual quality of manuscripts but also their prospects for either reaching markets beyond US academic libraries or otherwise attracting funds so that they can be affordably published. The increased scrutiny, combined with decisions of certain presses to abandon publication in entire scholarly fields or subfields, has raised deep concern that worthy manuscripts are going unpublished to the detriment of humanistic scholarship generally. Fields of study cannot advance unless ideas, arguments, and evidence are made available so that they can be debated and their implications tested over time. However, some types of work that deserve publication may not find their 'audience' for a generation or two, and others may never find a large audience but nonetheless provide the useful service of clearing a path for subsequent scholars by establishing essential knowledge on limited, even arcane, topics."³² Especially worrisome is the shrinking and/or demise of university presses that are the major publishers for some fields.

As anecdotal evidence consider the case of Nietzsche. "If book sales are a measure of literary achievement, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche in 1881 was an abject failure. His first work, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), caused quite a stir among a small circle of Wagnerians and philologists, but failed to catch the attention of the broader literary press and reading public. And yet this was his best-selling book during his lifetime; after that it was all downhill. ... The works that followed, *Human, All Too Human* (1878) and *Daybreak* (1881), went virtually unnoticed."³³ In today's publishing climate they may never have been published.

University presses and the university press monograph will continue to serve as a "critically important form of documenting and disseminating scholarly research in the humanities, as well as an essential scholarly credential in many areas of humanistic study."³⁴ The state of on-line/open access/digital monograph publishing continues in a

state of flux. University presses are beginning to experiment with forms of digital publishing but it is not clear if this approach will resolve the crisis. The increasing use of subventions will continue regardless. Commercial academic presses have increased the number of books they publish (see Appendix A) and we expect that they will continue to have an important role for our faculty members. There is a concern that increased reliance on them along with a decrease in university presses could lead to a loss of quality and breadth.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Our recommendations revolve around four themes: that we clarify our requirements for tenure; that we ensure our interview process leads to tenurable hires; that we provide good advice during the probationary period; that our support structures actually work.

We recommend that each department take several steps to clarify requirements for tenure. They should conduct a thorough review of their current requirements for tenure and produce written guidelines distinguishing high quality and outstanding research. For the so-called book-discipline departments this examination should address print and digital formats as well as the relative merits of university and commercial academic presses; it should also take into account the evolving academic publishing environment summarized in this report. Journal disciplines should provide junior faculty information on the time-to-publish of key journals.

We recommend that written yearly evaluations of research be provided to junior faculty that clearly indicate progress and give suggestions on critical next steps.

We recommend that in screening job applicants, departments thoroughly review the applicant's written work to verify that it will lead to appropriate publishable material and that the department can collectively name at least six potential external reviewers in its discussion of the candidate.

We recommend that the faculty council conduct a thorough examination of the third-year review process to see if it is serving the purpose of preparing faculty for the remainder of their tenure time (e.g., several recently tenured faculty members suggested an earlier leave would have been greatly beneficial).

We recommend that a Subvention Fund for completing book manuscripts be created in Dedman College. Faculty wishing to access these funds must agree to reimburse the Subvention Funds off the top of any royalty funds they receive for the sale of the book. Priority will be given to junior faculty.

We recommend that tenure-track faculty should be encouraged to keep a log of their submission process with key dates and events and make it available, upon request, to Department Chairs.

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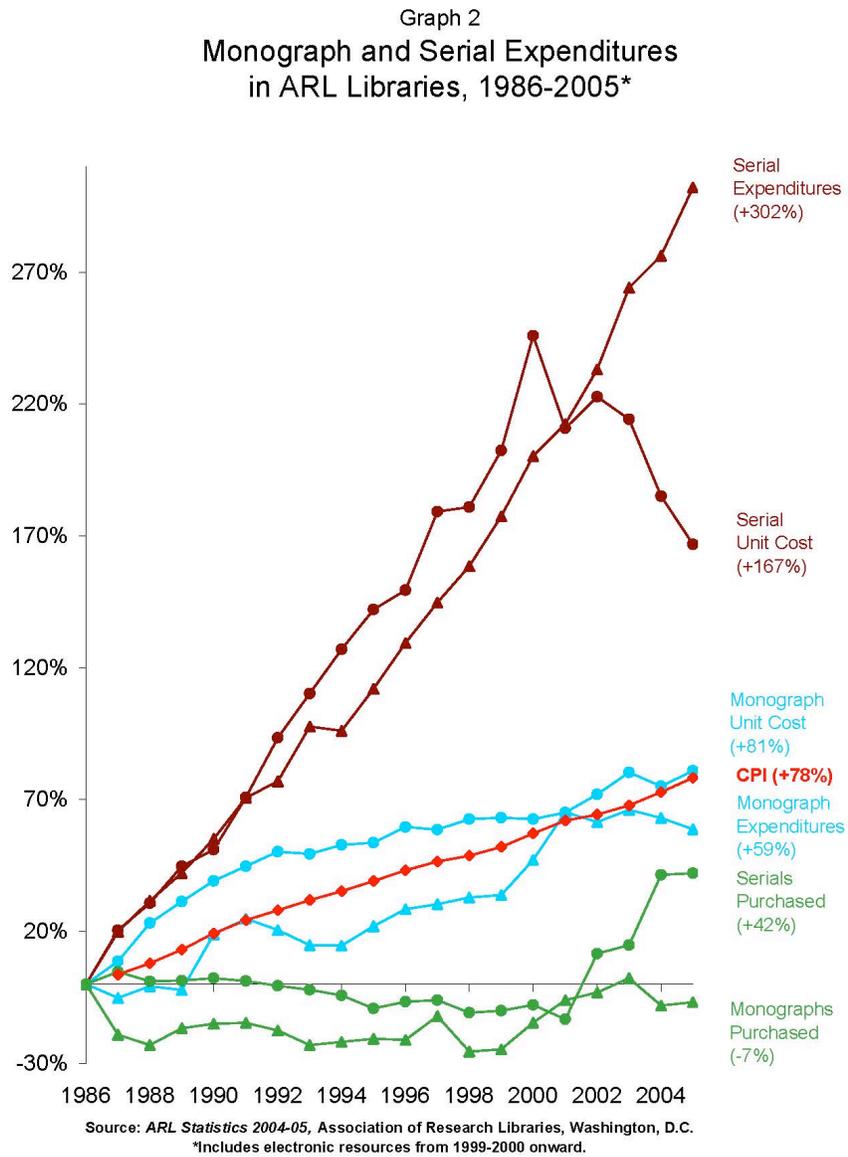


Figure 1. From The Facts: How the Crisis in Scholarly Communication Affects You
http://www.lib/berkeley.edu/scholarlycommunication/the_crisis.html

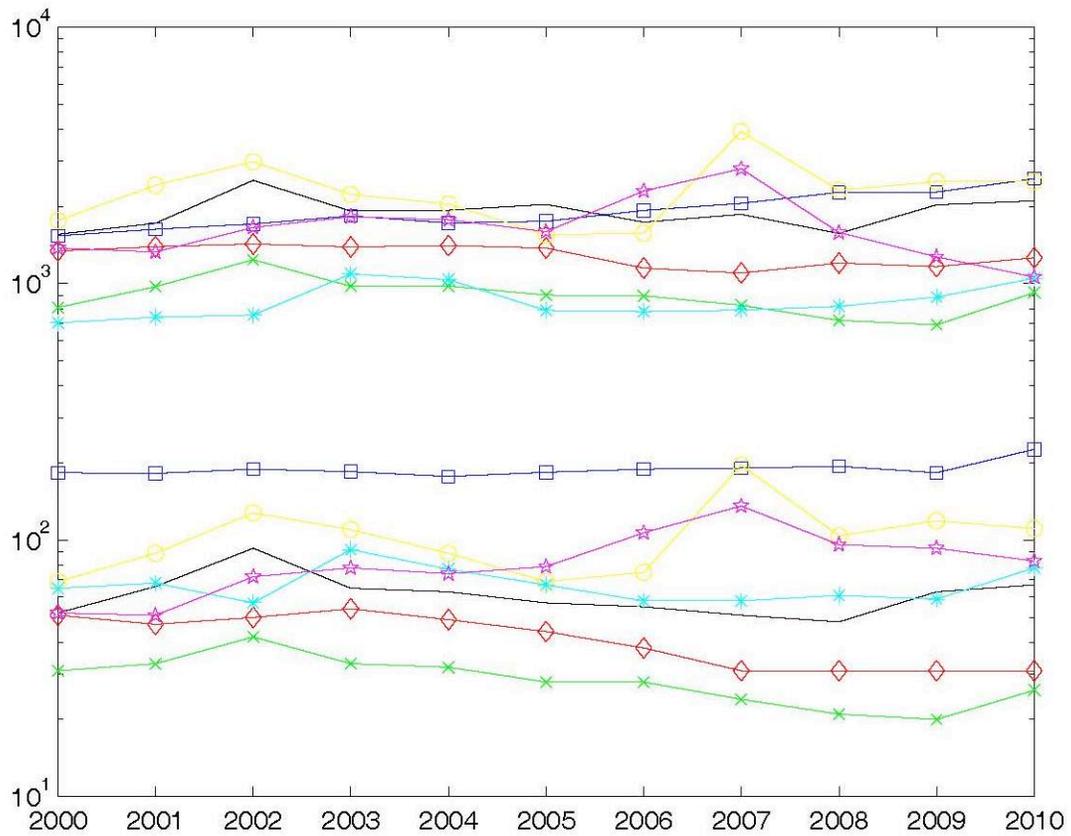


Figure 2: Number of pages (upper portion) and articles (lower portion) per year for *Econometrica* (black), *Amer. Econ. Review* (blue square), *J. Pol. Econ.* (red diamond), *J. Labor Econ.* (green cross), *J. Econ. Theory* (yellow circle), *Rev. Econ. Stat.* (cyan asterisk), and *J. Monetary Econ.* (magenta star) for the eleven year period from 2000 to 2010.

APPENDIX A

Number of new titles published by *UNIVERSITY PRESSES* in the United States

	Total	English & American Literature	Philosophy & Religion
2000-2001	10,130	1,142	1,105
2001-2002	9,915	1,098	1,081
2002-2003	11,104	1,213	1,174
2003-2004	9,854	1,071	998
2004-2005	9,812	954	1,018
2005-2006	9,969	964	992
2006-2007	10,781	997	1,146
2007-2008	11,113	1,035	1,197
2008-2009	12,070	1,252	1,231
2009-2010	11,997	1,092	1,136
2010-2011	12,104	1,078	1,234

Number of new titles published by selected *MAJOR COMMERCIAL ACADEMIC PRESSES* in the humanities in the United States

	Ashgate	Brill	Palgrave	Routledge	R&L	Total (5 presses)
2000-2001	398	213	780	1,108	185	2,684
2001-2002	474	271	751	1,020	268	2,784
2002-2003	451	299	706	1,257	294	3,007
2003-2004	619	341	777	1,133	271	3,141
2004-2005	593	343	775	1,047	262	3,020
2005-2006	537	332	1,011	1,637	297	3,811
2006-2007	651	400	1,037	1,769	291	4,148
2007-2008	639	434	1,104	2,038	237	4,452
2008-2009	648	406	1,133	1,961	183	4,331
2009-2010	639	431	1,309	2,164	145	4,688
2010-2011	637	511	1,370	2,216	158	4,892

Source: Baker and Taylor, YBP Library Services. http://www.ybp.com/title_reports.html?s