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LETTERS

Textbook prices

Dear Editor,
I would like to draw the attention of your readers to the sometimes large difference between the US and European prices of mathematics textbooks. For example:

- "Modern Algebra, an Introduction" by John R. Durbin (Wiley) costs St£36.05 here, US\$ 32.45 in the USA;
- "Methods of Mathematics Applied to Calculus, Probability and Statistics" by Richard W. Hamming (Prentice-Hall) costs St£59.90 here, US\$ 56.00 in the USA;
- "Calculus with Analytic Geometry" by George F. Simmons (McGraw-Hill) costs St£42.95 here, US\$ 48.95 in the USA.

The above are all hardback editions. The UK price is taken from the October 1988 edition of "British Books in Print", the US price from the November 1988 edition of "Books in Print". In each case the UK price exceeds the US price by a factor of at least 50%.

These are not isolated examples. The differential in prices usually seems to be a function not of the individual book but of the publisher. Most publishers have virtually identical US and European prices, but as you see there are exceptions.

Irish and British libraries are apparently aware of the problem and are trying to control it. We as individuals can help in this endeavour, and simultaneously get better value from our book budgets, by being wary in the choice of books ordered for our institutional libraries. This is particularly easily done when choosing textbooks for undergraduate reading, where there is generally a wide selection of titles.

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