

The Academic Author

For Creators of Academic Intellectual Property

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Custom publishing: Used book solution?

For authors who are tired of competing with used books, one bookstore manager has found a solution: custom publishing. "If every single text on every single campus was different, used books would be eliminated," said Dan Archer, associate director of the University of Southern California bookstore.

USC's bookstore went from selling 200,000 custom published books to 1.9 million in a little over three years. Archer, who chairs the National Association of College Stores Course Materials Committee, said stores are selling 300 million custom published books nationally. That number could rise to as high as 500 million by the next decade, he said.

Archer believes custom publishing may eliminate the used book problem for everyone. But, he says, there are others who are "brain-washed into thinking used books are the way to go." Nobody wants used books, Archer said, they want lower prices: "If bookstores concentrated on business efficiency to lower the price, they wouldn't have to fall back on used books to make money."

The average sell-through rate for a new textbook over the life of the edition has dropped to below 40 percent, according to James Bittker, vice president and director of operations for PubWeb, which uses a software program called NetPaper to automate the ordering, accounting and distribution of print-ready documents to any printer. "By contrast, when professors create a completely customized document, the sell-through rate skyrockets from 40 percent to over 85 percent," he said. "The difference over a three-year period for a 100-student class is the difference between selling 120 copies and 255. Such a custom book, selling at the comparative used book price, generates over 50 percent higher profit."

Publishers have gone to great lengths to minimize the impact of the used book market, said Bittker, including shrink-wrapping workbooks and multimedia with textbooks, to decrease the time-to-market for book revisions: "In a world where professors can easily and affordably create new book versions every semester, via NetPaper, used books have little or no value."

Bob Christie, president and CEO of International Thomson Publishing, said ITP is seriously interested in using PubWeb. "They have a lot of merit because people want to have our materials in a custom format with the ability to print it," he said. "The fact that it handles all the clearance permissions is very attractive to us."

Digested from a complete article at
[www.winonanet.com/taa/ARTICLES/98/04apr/
0413custompub.html](http://www.winonanet.com/taa/ARTICLES/98/04apr/0413custompub.html)

NOTABLE AUTHOR: NOAH WEBSTER

Putting the language into text

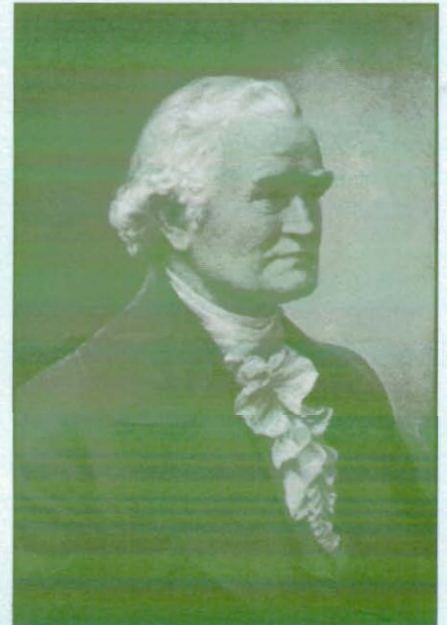
Noah Webster is called America's greatest schoolmaster. Why? He achieved his dream: to develop a simple system of elementary education that would create a uniform American language and in doing so, spread moral and religious truths and created patriotic Americans. And, he thought, what better way to do it than with his books? His three-part series of books on Americanized English language -- a speller, grammar and reader -- incorporated American history, geography, politics and morals, and his dictionary, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, standardized the English language. He was known best for *A Grammatical Institute*. Actually the complete title was: *A Grammatik Institute, of the English Language, Comprising, An easy, concise, and systematic Method of Education, Designed for the Use of English Schools in America. In Three Parts. Part I. Containing a new and accurate Standard of Pronunciation*. No wonder people shortened it to "Blue-Backed Speller," because of a blue cover in later editions. The book taught Americans the simple fundamentals: language, morals, economics and politics.

The 119-page book contained much of the same content as other spellers on the market but had several distinguishing features. Among them:

- Practical wisdom: "You must not buy a pig in a poke; Let not your tongue cut your throat; He that lies down with dogs must rise up with fleas."
- Advice on time management, developing good habits, and how to attain success: "Sloth keeps such hold of some clowns, that they lie in bed when should go to school; but a boy that wants to be wise will drive sleep far from him."
- American geography: he included a list of Connecticut towns, and tables containing their population and distance from Hartford.

With the exception of the Bible, the *Speller* sold more copies than any book in the world. The first edition of 5,000 copies sold out in nine months. At least 75 million copies were sold by 1875, when more than 1 million copies were sold each year. One hundred million copies were sold during the lifetime of the book.

Webster was the first author to gain copyright protection in America. Webster secured copyright for the *Speller* in 1783, for a term of 13 years. For the next 50 years he worked to improve laws to protect the rights of authors' works.



Noah Webster is called America's greatest schoolmaster. His three-part series of books on Americanized English language — a speller, grammar and reader — incorporated American history, geography, politics and morals, and his dictionary, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, standardized the English language.

It took him 28 years to write the first edition of his last book, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, which included 12,000 new terms. After completing the book, Webster said: "When I had come to the last word, I was seized with a trembling which made it somewhat difficult to hold my pen steady for writing. The cause seems to have been the thought that I was so near the end of my labors. But I summoned the strength to finish the last word, and then walking about the room a few minutes I recovered." That was before typewriters. No wonder his hand trembled. He had written 70,000 entries.

Digested from a complete article at
[www.winonanet.com/taa/NOTABLE/
webster.html](http://www.winonanet.com/taa/NOTABLE/webster.html)

QUICK TIPS

Writing livelier features

Marian Burk Wood, a former member of the corporate world who has teamed up with top academics to co-author business textbooks on marketing, advertising and management, offers this advice for writing livelier cases, boxes, and other textbook features: "Draw students into your features by heightening the inherent drama of each story. When you use vivid language to dramatize the problem in the first few sentences, you not only grab students' attention, you also motivate them to continue reading so they can find out what happened. In addition, using direct quotes and spotlighting the actions and decisions of individuals can add human interest. These two techniques can enliven nearly any feature and encourage students to follow along as you make an important point about concept and/or application." Wood has co-authored three textbooks, including *Marketing: Relationships, Quality, Value*. WEWood@aol.com

Join TAA

Law author Karen Morris gives new authors this advice: Make sure you're serious about the pursuit of a textbook, make sure it is a priority and be a member of TAA. "The networking and advice of other authors has

helped me tremendously," said Morris, who has written two textbooks.

Draw from experience

When writing anything, said reading author Lee Mountain, draw from your own experiences. It has worked well for Mountain, who has written so many books, journal articles and multimedia packages that even she can't count them all. "What I published has always reflected what I was doing," she said. "I wrote *Uncle Sam and the Flag* when my son was in Boy Scouts." Mountain won a 1994 Texty for the first book in her *K-6 Heritage Readers* series.

Show need for your book

Journalism professor Richard Campbell, who won an unusually high \$54,500 advance to write his introductory masscom text, *Media and Culture*, believes his ability to tell publishers what was wrong with other intro masscom books and how he would address those problems is what landed him the contract: "What matters most to publishers is that you can show you have a strong understanding of the market," he said. "A lot of academic writers have a strong idea, but if you can't explain to a publisher why there's a strong need for the product, you're not going to get a contract."

Know your subject

Physics professor Paul Tippens gives this advice to authors just starting out:

• **Get the education.** "Make sure you know the subject you're writing about," he said. "Normally, an author should have an advanced degree in the discipline. Otherwise they might lack the foundation to write accurately or authoritatively."

• **Teach.** "An author should teach the subject for at least three or four years," he said. "It's the only way you really learn about the subject. As you're teaching, put away notes, test out theories and give handouts."

When you finally go to a publisher, said Tippens, who has written two textbooks, have four or five chapters written and a proposal for the rest of the book. "Contact one publisher at a time until you can get one to listen to you," he said. "Although it's more difficult to break in now, it's still much easier to get non-fiction published than fiction."

Quick tips is a regular feature with authors sharing ideas related to their work. If you have advice for other authors you would like to share, email: kmpawlak@mwt.net

NEWS BRIEFS

Signing up. Registration for the TAA annual convention in St. Petersburg June 11-13, is running ahead of previous years, said Natalie Gillespie, membership services director. Gillespie said a new wave of registration materials is being mailed. Some registrants are using forms included in the TAA online newsletter and the monthly *Academic Author* news digest.

Ballots mailed. Ballots for the annual TAA elections went in the mail to members May 6. The candidates, all recommended by the nominations committee, are:

- Peggy Stanfield, who ascends from vice president to a one-year term as president.
- Karen Morris, for a one-year term as vice president and president-elect.
- Dale Layman, for a two-year term TAA Council term, his first.
- Paul Rosenzweig, for a two-year TAA Council term, his second.
- Paul Tippens, for a two-year TAA Council term, his second.

The ballot has room for write-in candidates. www.winonanet.com/taa/AGENDAS/98/9804ballot.html

Workshops abroad. The continuing success of TAA-sponsored workshops has prompted Ron Pynn, the association's executive director, to consider expanding them internationally. "We can use our model to help author groups in other nations support authors in their efforts," Pynn said. He suggested targeting English-speaking nations first. Recent workshops have been on writing textbooks and academic articles, but Pynn said he sees additional sessions on self-publishing and marketing, and writing for tenure.

Custom publishing. Custom publishers claim they can track every bit of data to be sure authors get their share for their work that ends up in different products, but not everyone agrees. Custom publisher PubWeb executive director James Bittker claims to have software that monitors "all communication between customers, publishers, and networked printers." Authors get compensated, Bittker said, for every protected word. Publishing lawyer Steve Gillen says, however, it's

"practically impossible" to verify what custom publishers report because of tiny press runs. www.winonanet.com/taa/ARTICLES/98/04apr/0416custom.html

Additional role. School teachers are under pressure as never before, some imposed by technology and some by new insistence on accountability, and they must look to external sources to stay on top, said a study of K-12 teachers commissioned by Prentice-Hall and other Simon & Schuster textbook units. One source for ongoing training, said the study, will be textbook publishers.

Examining authorship. Biology professor Charles Lytle was curious whether writing textbooks had a positive impact on academic careers. On June 13 at the TAA national convention in St. Petersburg, Lytle will explain what he found in interviewing and surveying college faculty and administrators at select colleges. It's partly a cost-benefit analysis, said Lytle. He is a biology author from North Carolina State University. www.winonanet.com/taa/ARTICLES/98/05may/0507lytle.html

Looking global. British-based Francis & Taylor, an academic publisher, hopes to raise \$25 million by issuing new stock to continue expansion abroad, said chief executive Anthony Selvey. The company already is strong in psychology and the biosciences, especially after acquiring Garland last year. Another 1997 acquisition: Ashgate, a Singapore distribution company.

New members. The pilot workshops that TAA has sponsored at scattered campuses have been "fantastic" successes, said Ron Pynn, the association's executive director. "The reception and enthusiasm for these workshops has been fantastic," he said, noting that the workshops alone encouraged 285 people to join TAA. Pynn called on members to ask colleagues and friends if they want a TAA workshop on their campuses. "These are well-received faculty development workshops," he said.

Sales drop. The four major South Africa textbook companies reported financial problems because the government has tightened educational funding. Perkor, Naspers, Caxton and Kagiso have dropped 40 percent of their employees, and 1998 earnings growth is doubtful. Textbook spending two years ago was \$170 million to this year's \$45 million. The industry's prospects were further dampened by a government decision to delay new teaching standards, which had been expected to spur textbook sales.

S&S suitor. The upstart educational publisher Knowledge Universe is eyeing Simon & Schuster's textbook, professional and reference divisions, which are for sale, insiders said. Perhaps Knowledge Universe, founded by former junk-bond king Michael Milken and Oracle chief Larry Ellison, wants to buy all of Simon & Schuster from cash-starved Viacom. Or so goes the growing speculation about Simon & Schuster's future. California-based Knowledge Universe had 1997 sales of \$1 billion. What would Simon & Schuster go for? Best guesses are running \$5 billion for the whole company, \$2.5 billion for the non-trade book units.

Reed purchase. Reed International added "the last brick in the wall" of its legal publishing business by acquiring Mathew Reed from Times Mirror. Reed's chief executive, Nigel Stapleton, announced. The transaction: \$1.6 billion, which includes half of Shepard's that Reed didn't already own. The acquisition puts Reed's Lexis-Nexis legal publishing operation on with Thomson, said Stapleton. Thomson earlier became the major player by buying West.

Amassing cash. The Pearson media conglomerate sold its British and French magazines for \$237 million, fueling speculation that the company is amassing cash to buy textbook and other companies that Simon & Schuster has on the market. Said Pearson chief Marjorie Scardino: "This enables us to concentrate more of our resources in the media

Litvins find self-publishing rewards

Maria and Gary Litvin say their venture into self-publishing has been fun and rewarding. The Litvins, who under their company Skylight Publishing self-published *C++ for You++: an Introduction to Programming and Computer Science* and its accompanying workbook, recommend self publishing to other authors: "As authors we put so much into our work. We want to see it through and get the financial rewards in the process."

Maria, a math and computer science teacher at Phillips Academy, and her husband Gary, a software engineer, said their backgrounds complemented each other well: "We had two different angles: a teaching perspective complemented by a perspective from the industry."

Computer science is a neglected subject in high school, said Maria: "It is usually up to the math department to teach computer science and until recently, there have been no specialized high school textbooks." Next year, the Advanced Placement program in schools will switch from the Pascal programming language to C++, and the Litvins believe this will revitalize the subject. Not only did Maria need a suitable textbook for her own class, the Litvins felt there would be a nationwide need for a new high school textbook.

Yet even with this need, the market for such a book is limited, said the Litvins, with only 12,000 students nationwide taking the AP exam in computer science. "This is a niche market for a large publisher," said the Litvins, "That is why we decided to publish ourselves." Also, they said, "we thought we would do a better job of marketing the book. We

understand who the book is for and how to reach these people. We care about our book and will make sure to focus on it. Large publishers may not."

They're promoting the book by:

- Direct mailing to computer science teachers who participate in the Advanced Placement program.
- Sharing information about the book with others on an e-mail discussion group, ap-compsci, which is read by 1,000 computer science teachers nationwide.
- Opening a website (www.concentric.net/~Skylit).
- Taking the book to trade shows such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM).
- Sending out complimentary copies to leaders of C++ workshops for teachers.
- Trying to get the text on state adoption lists in those states that do state-wide adoptions.

Skylight Publishing first released a softcover version of the textbook in the summer of 1997, and it was adopted by over 100 schools. They later revised it to bring it even closer to the Advanced Placement curriculum and printed the first hardcover edition in December 1997. They are now taking orders for the 1998-99 school year. At least forty schools have already signed on and many more have indicated their interest in the book.

Digested from a complete article at www.winonanet.com/taa/ARTICLES/98/04apr/041selfpub.html

businesses where we have or can build market-leading positions." The Pearson war chest of ready cash is estimated at \$1.1 billion. www.winonanet.com/taa/BRIEFS/98/03mar.html#binge

Adoption growth. Addison-Wesley Longman found adoptions for new products rose 15 percent in 1997, parent company Pearson announced in London in April. Particularly strong were college math, college physics and reading titles. Pearson said that Addison's elementary math series did well, fueling expectations for a strong 1998 adoption in states that are revising their math adoption lists.

Larousse list. Houghton Mifflin announced it will take over distribution of Larousse Kingfisher Chambers books. The arrangement will expand sales in schools and libraries, analysts said.

Creativity award. The Curtis Benjamin Award for Creative Publishing will go to President Charles Ellis of John Wiley & Sons. The presentation will be May 31 at

BookExpo. Ellis is retiring this spring.

One-stop shopping. A new web site, sponsored by Monument Information Resource, is designed to facilitate textbook selections for faculty. The site lists titles by discipline and then alphabetically by author. Some titles have links to publisher web sites, and links are being added to others. Manuel Guzman, president of MIR, said the site should "simplify the adoption process." www.winonanet.com/taa/ARTICLES/98/04apr/0418mir.html

Shutting down. The Creative Publications office in Mountain View, California will be shut down and moved to Chicago, the new owner, Tribune Education of Chicago, announced. Jo Anne Schiller, president of Trib Ed, said key management people would be invited to move. Thirty-five people will be laid off.

Aspect sold. College publisher Aspect, which specializes in English as a second language, was sold to Sylvan Learning Systems. Price: \$65 million.

Author explores text market for trade book

When psycholinguist Don Jacobs tried to publish a book exposing radio host Rush Limbaugh's rhetorical tactics, he was turned down. One publisher told him they didn't want to take on Rush Limbaugh. That response got Jacobs so fired up, he cashed in his savings – close to \$30,000 – and published the book himself.

First marketed as a trade book, *The Bum's Rush: The Selling of Environmental Backlash, Phrases and Fallacies of Rush Limbaugh*, and published through Jacob's Legendary Publishing in 1994, it sold 4,000 copies in the first two years. Still, it didn't do well because it was too much of a "textbook". Since it didn't attack Limbaugh but gave clear, objective analysis of facts, motivations and consequences, Jacobs was told it was too much like a textbook.

Syracuse University has been using it in its introductory writing courses since 1995. Syracuse writing program assistant Nance Hahn said the book's value is that it is in the students' eyes timely and palatable to read. It also teaches them rhetorical terminology.

Jacobs said he hasn't done much marketing. Most of his sales are word-of-mouth. He has opened a web site, www.regalweb.co.uk/about.html, is selling it on Amazon.com, and has an ad in an environmental magazine. One advantage of self-publishing, Jacobs said, is "you can speak the truth without censorship." Two disadvantages: "Breaking into a rigid publisher-dominated textbook market and having to send books to teachers as review copies."

Digested from a complete article at
www.winonanet.com/taa/ARTICLES/98/04apr/0427jacobs.html

YOUR INDEX TO TAA ONLINE NEWS

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Speaker examines authorship and careers

www.winonanet.com/taa/ARTICLES/98/05may/0507lytle.html

TAA members asked to name officers

www.winonanet.com/taa/AGENDAS/98/9804ballot.html

Website gives profs one-stop text shopping

www.winonanet.com/taa/ARTICLES/98/04apr/0418mir.html

Can custom publishers keep royalties straight?

www.winonanet.com/taa/ARTICLES/98/04apr/0416custom.html

Range of sessions at St. Pete convention

www.winonanet.com/taa/ARTICLES/98/05may/502convention.html

Arkansas press to keep rolling

www.winonanet.com/taa/BRIEFS/98/04apr.html#arkansas

Pearson buys S&S textbook units

www.viacom.com/press.tin?ixPressRelease=40000486

Updated regularly, usually daily, TAA's online newsletter offers archival coverage of TAA business and news. If you don't have access to the Internet you can request a mailed or faxed printout of full stories and features of the online newsletter from TAA headquarters at (813) 553-1195.