

# Gauging the Reception of Choice Reviews through Online Union Catalog Holdings

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*The reviews in Choice are known to influence book selection, particularly for academic library collections. An investigation was made of how many books that were reviewed over a seven-year period in Choice Reviews (the CD-ROM version of Choice) were subsequently received or purchased at Cain Library of California State University Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), as well as by a large number of other libraries across the country. All of the books mentioned in Choice Reviews were purchased by one or more libraries, while the majority of books were purchased by several hundred libraries. These findings were further tested to determine the extent to which they could be incorporated into an academic approval program. Two notification-slip approval plans were created for new titles from the presses and publishers of the best-received books. Notification-slip titles were searched shortly after they appeared or were profiled by the vendors, and a correlation was found between the later review holdings and these early approval holdings.*

**G**auging the reception of a particular title from Choice Reviews (the CD-ROM version of *Choice*) in a single library requires only finding a bibliographic record for the title in the local catalog. If the record is there, the title was well received. The reception of a particular title, defined in this case as the purchase and inclusion of a title in a library collection, is usually the result of an individual's intellectual interest moderated to some extent by the institution's financial constraints that together suggest the item would be a worthwhile addition to the collection. Typically this is because a member of the teaching faculty has suggested a firm order to an acquisitions librarian, or a subject bibliog-

rapher has selected a title from an approval program previously set up with an academic vendor. Over the course of time then, using a union catalog, we can judge the reception, not only of particular titles in particular library collections, but of whole groups of titles in a large number of academic library collections—either by discipline or across disciplines—on the basis of characteristics such as the titles having been included in Choice Reviews.

For single disciplines, we can search records in the local catalog by subject. We also can search across disciplines in the local catalog by searching multiple subject terms that would transcend a single main class. Alternatively, we can search across

disciplines using additional data elements, such as publisher, when there is a well-defined set of these additional data elements available.

Local catalogs can handle the first of these reception studies easily because access by subject has been built into the file structure. Some local catalogs would accommodate the second kind of reception study (across disciplines) because the searching can be repetitive in nature, using several subject terms, or because additional access by other data elements, such as publisher, has been included as a special feature of the indexing. Searching by additional data elements such as publisher is a special feature in the OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc. Online Union Catalog (OLUC) as well; and searching the OLUC also provides holdings information that indicates whether the title has been purchased and included in the collections of a number of libraries. The OLUC, however, does not indicate whether a title was reviewed in *Choice* or any other reviewing service. Determining that information required using *Choice Reviews* itself, and it was that circumstance that suggested the rationale of creating a single database with both the requisite data elements and access capabilities to make an efficient investigation of the extent to which books reviewed by *Choice* were purchased by libraries across the country.

There were several aspects to this study. The first was to create this database, which was done by superimposing the holdings data of machine-readable bibliographic records from the OLUC onto the corresponding records from *Choice Reviews*. The second was to use this database to gauge the reception of the books reviewed by *Choice* both in the local academic library collection—the Cain Library at California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH)—as well as in a large number of other, presumably academic, library collections across the country as reflected by OLUC holdings. The third was to collate the information from the reception of the books reviewed by *Choice* and acknowledged in the OLUC holdings to design an academic approval

program that would accurately forecast what the best-received materials were most likely to be.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Two articles were the conceptual antecedents of the present study. In the first, Balay (1988) described how the machine-readable bibliographic records for *Choice Reviews* were created in September 1988 and hypothesized future research for these records, such as discipline-oriented or cross-disciplinary searching. In the second, Serebnick (1992) analyzed the holdings of OCLC member libraries for a diverse group of small press titles published in 1986 to find a relation between library holdings and book reviews from core journals such as *Choice* and other review journals, publisher's catalogs, and vendor information. In the current study, I replicated the method used by Serebnick but restricted the domain of review journals searched to a single journal, *Choice*. The selection of *Choice* reflects the high value placed on its reviews as seen in the heavy use of the reviews in both the selection and collection evaluation processes.

Most depictions of *Choice* in the literature (e.g., MacLam 1992, or Graf 1995) have been supportive of the work of its highly qualified reviewers. In addition, the editors weed out about 70% of what is submitted for review, and at the end of each year produce a list of about 10% of what has been reviewed for the annual Outstanding Academic Books (OAB) list. In contrast, Leavy (1992) has suggested that this OAB list has absolutely no validity.

Other critics have not been willing to draw such an extreme conclusion, although they have suggested—through content analysis (Carlo and Natowitz 1995) or some form of quantitative study (Greene and Spornick 1995)—that the vast majority of the reviews that have appeared in major review sources (including *Choice*) have been favorable, perhaps too favorable. MacLam (1992) attributes this to an editorial process that weeds out inappropriate material and recognizably bad books, which is a serv-

ice provided by any good review journal.

On another dimension, the review coverage in *Choice* proved to be an accurate reflection, over a three-year period, of the subject proportions of the market identified in *Books Published Annually from Publishers Weekly* (Sabosik 1992). And the difference in use between titles reviewed by *Choice* from university presses (5.091) and titles reviewed by *Choice* from commercial publishers (6.404), in a representative academic setting, proved to be less than had been anticipated (Saunders 1996).

The OAB list is an aspect of Choice Reviews that has attracted a good deal of attention. Marquet and Diambra (1990) suggested that the OAB lists could be used to document a decline in both the quantity and quality of holdings from a midsized academic library. In a second study, Calhoun, Bracken, and Firestein (1990) suggested that the OAB presses and publishers would form an 80/20 core that could be used to model an academic approval program. Goedecken (1993) showed that, unlike the proportion found for *Choice* in general, the proportion of university presses to commercial publishers has increased significantly among OAB lists in the last ten years. Metz and Stemmer (1996) found, not surprisingly, that the reputation of these OAB presses and publishers is an important influence on macro-level decision making of collection development officers in the design of approval plans.

In addition to uses of the OAB lists as postselection assessment tools, Stebelman (1996) suggested that frequently cited publishers from Choice Reviews, particularly when arranged by Library of Congress main classes, are the best source for an academic library to use in maintaining its acquisitions program. Erickson (1992) recommended cooperative collection development based on book reviews from *Choice* as a way to stretch budgets and provide more titles without compromising the quality of individual collections.

Just as Choice Reviews-on-Cards might be used for cross-disciplinary selection from a single issue in such a cooperative project, so too might vendor referral

slips be used for discipline-oriented selection over a period of time equivalent to several issues in a retrospective project, affording bibliographers a perspective of what actually had been published. This last was the suggestion of Childress and Gibbs (1989). From these two instances, it would seem that cross-disciplinary selection from a single issue or discipline-oriented selection from several issues might be worthwhile characteristics to include in any large-scale study of the reception of Choice Reviews.

Finally, the utility of a recommended core list such as *Books for College Libraries*, 3d ed. might be limited by availability of the books (Budd 1991). Therefore, including the length of time after the appearance of each OAB list during which titles still were being actively purchased is an important piece of information to take full advantage of what the reception study tells us and to make that a part of an academic approval program.

## METHOD

We started with the creation of a relational database of machine-readable bibliographic records developed from Choice Reviews and the OLC. To increase the accuracy of the file, the holdings were normalized by date of issue and the subject categories were normalized by main class.

When the normalized database was sorted by main class, the second step of the study—an analysis by discipline—made it possible to gauge the reception of a particular group of titles reviewed in *Choice*, specifically the OAB items in a large number of academic library collections. It was also possible to gauge a more general group of titles reviewed in *Choice* (those selected by CSUDH bibliographers) in a single academic library collection.

When the normalized database was sorted by publisher, the third step of the study—an analysis of the file across disciplines—made it possible to gauge the reception of university-press and commercial-publisher titles in a large number of academic library collections. Those

TABLE I  
 REVIEW FILE BY REVIEW NUMBER AND DATE/ISSUE

X	TI	O	PB	IS	LCN	RN	DI	Index	SU	OCLC	Rank	PCT	D
	Index of Subjects, Proverbs, A	C	Greenwood Press	0-313-25712-4	88-160	26-2462	8905	0.802	REF	230	1,834	18	D
	Bibliography of Chaucer, 1974-		Archon Bks.	0-208-02134-5	87-35157	26-2463	8905	0.802	REF	469	615	72	D
	Civil War Dictionary		McKay, D.	0-8129-1726-X	87-40599	26-2464	8905	0.802	REF	771	455	77	D
	British Mystery Writers, 1860	C	Gale Res.	0-8103-1748-6	88-11465	26-2465	8905	0.802	REF	683	193	91	D
	H.L. Mencken: A Research Guide	C	Garland	0-8240-6634-0	87-36668	26-2466	8905	0.802	REF	219	1,841	12	D
	New York City, The Development	C	Garland	0-8240-9133-7	88-10220	26-2467	8905	0.802	REF	170	1,055	11	D
	Business Serials of the U.S. G		American Lib. Assn.	0-8389-3349-1	88-3428	26-2468	8905	0.802	REF	907	51	95	D
	Benjamin Franklin, 1907-1983	C	Hall, G. K. & Co.	0-8161-8673-1	82-12144	26-2469	8905	0.802	REF	475	1,026	49	D
	Civilization of the Ancient Me	C	Scribner	0-684-17594-0	87-23465	26-2470	8905	0.802	REF	1160	1	100	D
	Congress and Defense: 1988		EW Communications	0-918994-19-5	89-648736	26-2471	8905	0.802	REF	66	7	14	D
	Benny Goodman: Listen to His	C	Scarecrow Press	0-8108-2095-1	87-32069	26-2472	8905	0.802	REF	343	784	39	D
	International Business in South		Investor Responsibility Res.	0-931035-25-2	88-81189	26-2473	8905	0.802	REF	44	360	3	D

core presses and core publishers could then be used as the basis for two notification-slip approval plans in a single academic library collection.

In the final step of the study, the approval titles were searched in the OLUC shortly after they were profiled by the vendors; and following the first year of the program, the early searches of the approval titles were correlated with the later searches of the review titles. The definition of the 70/30 approval core and the 60/40 review core (the timely purchase of the most likely candidates to become OAB and later to be included in the fourth edition of *Books for College Libraries*) were used as comparison.

#### CONSTRUCTING THE DATABASE FROM CHOICE REVIEWS AND THE OLUC

Table 1 shows a display of bibliographic records from the top of a file that I was able to obtain from Choice Reviews in January 1995 using a locally developed program. These records existed because of the decision to put the reviews beginning with the September 1988 issue of *Choice* into machine-readable form (Balay 1988). In the display, the bibliographic records appear as rows and the fields of the bibliographic records appear as columns. Most of the fields are identified with two- or three-letter mnemonics that are recognizable from Choice Reviews (TITLE, Publisher, International Standard book number, Library of Congress control Number, Review Number, Date/Issue, and SUBJECT). From the sequence of review numbers, it will be clear that I intended to search all reviewed titles to ensure finding the OLUC holdings for a general group of large press titles published over several years but reviewed in a single core journal—in contrast to Serebnick (1992), who used a sophisticated sampling technique to ensure finding OLUC holdings for a select group of small press titles published in a single year but reviewed in several core journals.

Table 2 shows the initial intent of the project, which was to sort the file by the three-letter mnemonic for subject category (in this case, African Studies, or

AFR) and then to subarrange it in descending order by the OLUC holdings. Once the titles had been sorted and subarranged in this fashion, each could be assigned a rank (to facilitate discipline-oriented searching) and a percentile expression of rank (to facilitate cross-disciplinary searching) with short programs, to indicate how well each had been received among its peers from this subject category in the OLUC. Before this could be realized, however, some means had to be found to standardize the age of the records in the file. This was done because some reviews were issued in January 1989 (DI=8905), and thus would have had as much as eight years to accumulate holdings; while others were issued in January 1995 (DI=9505), and thus would have had as little as two years to accumulate holdings.

Figure 1 might help to make this technical problem clear. Our first searching project in the OLUC, covering titles from the years 1989 to 1994, occurred in February and March 1995 (equivalent to 9506 and 9507 on the bar graph, because each calendar year begins with issue 5 of Choice Reviews). When we compared the results of this large-scale searching project year by year, we elected to discard the 1994 data because first of all the data appeared to shelve off abruptly, and second, the OAB list for 1994 had just appeared, and we thought that might result in additional purchases that would not be reflected in the data. The results for 1989 through 1993 stepped up at a very modest rate of about 5% a year, and they seemed, in contrast to more recent purchases, almost plateau-like.

Our second searching project in the OLUC, looking again at titles from the year 1994, occurred in February 1996 (equivalent to 9606 on the graph). When the results of this second project were compared to the data for 1993 from the first project, we were pleased to see that the average holdings for 1993 and 1994 were almost identical. The appearance of the succeeding year's OAB list appeared to have a stabilizing effect on the penultimate year's holdings—in effect, closing the door on active purchases from the

TABLE 2  
REVIEW FILE BY SUBJECT AND OCLC HOLDINGS

X	TI	O	PB	IS	LCN	RN	DI	Index	SU	OCLC Rank	PCT	D
	Long Walk to Freedom: The Aut	C	Little, Brown	0-316-54585-6	94-19980	32-4642	9508	0.955	AFR	2042	1	100 D
O	Higher than Hope: The Authori	C	Harper & Row	0-06-016146-9	89-45053	28-0447	9001	0.871	AFR	1482	2	100 D
	Mind of South Africa	C	Knopf	0-394-58108-3	89-45890	28-1683	9003	0.871	AFR	1449	3	99 D
O	History of South Africa	U	Yale Univ. Press	0-300-04815-7	89-22594	28-1684	9003	0.871	AFR	1386	4	99 D
	Shouting at the Crocodile: Po	C	Beacon Press	0-8070-0210-0	90-52585	28-5783	9110	0.876	AFR	1236	5	99 D
	Struggle: A History of Af		Braziller	0-8076-1238-3	89-70782	27-5888	9010	0.889	AFR	1087	6	98 D
O	Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the U	U	Oxford Univ. Press	0-19-504-968-3	88-5960	26-5186	8909	0.840	AFR	1002	7	98 D
	Like Lions They Fought: The Z	C	Free Press	0-02-908910-7	87-36408	26-4002	8907	0.764	AFR	842	8	97 D
O	In the Name of Apartheid: Sou	C	Harper & Row	0-06-435659-0	88-24386	26-4610	8908	0.783	AFR	814	9	97 D
	Lives of Courage: Women for A	C	Basic Bks.	0-465-04139-6	89-42525	27-4649	9008	0.889	AFR	780	10	97 D
	Mau Mau: An African Crucible	C	Free Press	0-02-908920-4	89-11665	27-5252	9009	0.887	AFR	738	11	96 D
	Cambridge Atlas of the Middle	U	Cambridge Univ. Press	0-521-24243-6	87-6548	26-5185	8909	0.840	AFR	726	12	96 D

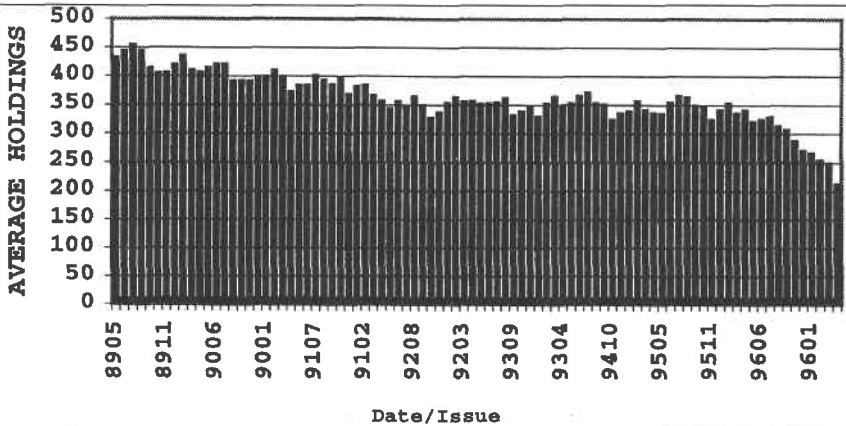


Figure 1. Average Holdings by Date/Issue.

previous year's OAB list. Following this, I was able to obtain another two-year file of machine-readable bibliographic records from Choice Reviews.

Our third searching project, for titles from the year 1995, occurred in February 1997. When we compared the results of this third project to the results for 1993 from the first project and to the results for 1994 from the second project, we were pleased to see that the average holdings for all three years were almost identical. This seemed to confirm that the appearance of the succeeding year's OAB list had a stabilizing effect on the penultimate year's holdings. As an addendum to this third project, we also searched the 1996 titles in April 1997, and the reader can see the effect of this early searching (which was very similar to our initial results for 1994 titles from the first project) in the shelving off of the average holdings in the 1996 dates of issue at the far right of the figure.

After some consideration, we decided to take the 1993 results from the first project, the 1994 results from the second project, and the 1995 results from the third project as our norm. We indexed the average holdings for each date of issue in the file to this value. This process of normalizing the holdings ensured that the titles from each volume and number would be weighted equally and that the dates of issue would be consistent

throughout the file. At the same time, because our approval vendors used Library of Congress (LC) main class to sort and arrange their notification slips (rather than the three-letter mnemonics for *Choice* subject categories that we had devised), we also decided to use Main Class as our norm in place of Subject Category.

#### FIRST USE OF THE DATABASE: DISCIPLINE-ORIENTED (MAIN CLASS) SEARCHING AND ANALYSIS

Table 3 shows a sample of the results of this normalization process: 44,950 titles with dates of issue from 1989 through 1995 were sorted in a single file by LC main class (in this case, for General Works: Collections, Encyclopedias, and Dictionaries; AC, AE, and AG) and subarranged in descending order by OLCU normalized holdings. Once the titles had been sorted and subarranged, each could be assigned a rank and a percentile expression of rank with short programs (under RANK and PCT, between the OLCU holdings and the Dominguez Hills holdings) to indicate how well each had been received among its peers from these main classes in the OLCU. Once our method was developed to the point that it permitted us to use a consistent file of this size, we could begin to answer some questions about the reception of titles from Choice Reviews on an empirical, rather than a

TABLE 3  
 REVIEW: FILE BY MAIN CLASS AND NORMALIZED HOLDINGS

X	TI	O	PB	IS	LCN	RN	DI	Index	MC	Norm	Rank	PCT	D
	Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays	U	Harvard Univ. Press	0-674-55162-1	94-47397	33-1313	9503	1.035	AC	286	1	100	D
	Suddenness: On the Moment of	U	Columbia Univ. Press	0-231-07524-3	93-29695	32-1458	9403	0.999	AC	171	2	50	D
	Kister's Best Encyclopedias:		Oryx Press	0-89774-744-5	94-11282	32-2480	9505	1.038	AE	1,130	1	100	D
	Oxford Illustrated Encyclopedi	U	Oxford Univ. Press	0-19-869140-8	85-4876	31-0676	9302	0.985	AE	875	2	88	D
	First Stop: The Master Index,		Oryx Press	0-89774-397-0	88-28870	26-5433	8910	0.858	AE	594	3	75	D
	Oxford Illustrated Encyclopedi	U	Oxford Univ. Press	0-19-869138-6	92-34265	30-2441	9305	0.988	AE	562	4	63	D
	Position to Command Respect:	C	Seacrow Press	0-8108-2567-8	92-9857	30-1865	9204	0.974	AE	251	5	50	D
	World History	U	Oxford Univ. Press	0-19-869161-0	85-4876	26-6060	8911	0.856	AE	146	6	38	D
	Encyclopedie and the Age of Re	C	Hall, G.K. & Co.	0-8161-0527-8	91-27978	30-1862	9204	0.974	AE	123	7	25	D
	Dictionary of Dictionaries		Bowker-Saur	0-86291-775-1	93-171619	30-5935	9311	1.005	AE	101	8	13	D
	New York Public Library Desk R		Webster's New World	0-13-620444-9	89-16692	27-2483	9005	0.838	AC	2,354	1	100	D
	Columbia Encyclopedia	U	Columbia Univ. Press	0-395-62438-X	92-26989	31-2995	9406	0.950	AC	1,147	2	94	D



theoretical, basis. We included codes for OAB titles as well as CSUDH titles in the file (O at the far left, and D at the far right), for example. So all that was required to create discipline-oriented subsets of these from the seven-year review file was a feature of the dBase software called SET FILTER.

Table 4 shows a subset of OAB titles created by setting the filter to X="O." Because their rank and the percentile expression of that rank (which is independent of a particular main class) had already been assigned in the seven-year review file, very little extra was required to find the mean (71) or the median (76) for this subset. There may have been nothing, *a priori*, among the 1,335 graded book review citations attached to the 460 OAB titles in the General Periodicals Index to support Leavy's (1992) findings of the superiority of Choice's OAB. However, there certainly seems to be something, *a posteriori*, among the 2,229,926 holdings attached to the 4,209 OAB titles in the OLUC to suggest taking another look.

More than once the editors at *Choice* have pointed out the primary role the reviewers (typically undergraduate teaching faculty with expertise in the subject) play in the review process (Graf 1995; MacLam 1992). The reviewers must say, in their own 200 words, that the title is outstanding before the editors can select it as part of their annual OAB list. It might be true, as some critics have said, that most book reviews are favorable (e.g., Carlo and Natowitz 1995; Greene and Spornick 1995). But a very large number of bibliographers have responded to the OAB lists in a way that suggests the reviews represented by the lists are much more favorable than most reviews, and the conclusion seems inescapable: an overwhelming majority of the librarians who buy academic books view these titles as outstanding.

Table 5 shows a subset of CSUDH titles created by setting the filter to D="D." Again, because their rank and the percentile expression of that rank (which is independent of a particular main class) had already been assigned in the seven-

year review file, very little extra was required to find the mean (63) and median (67) for this subset. That CSUDH has been buying some of the best-received, or weightiest, titles from Choice Reviews for the past seven years is good to know because we were only able to buy 15,285 of the 44,950 titles reviewed (34%). We have a Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) review coming up in which we will almost certainly be asked how well we have done with our declining funds. Our very modest share of titles from Choice Reviews will be significantly enhanced by the 44% share of normalized holdings or purchases attached to them in the OLUC. A more serious difficulty, however, may be the unequal distribution of that 34% or 44% share of the total—a fact that another bar graph will help to make clear.

Figure 2 shows the local holdings from CSUDH as a percentage of reviewed titles from *Choice* in the most frequently seen LC main classes. The editor and publisher have established already that the review coverage in *Choice* is an accurate reflection of the subject proportions of books published (Sabosik 1992). Within the context of what has been published, our overall performance for 1989 through 1995 was that we were able to buy one title for every three reviews. We will argue that, because we have been careful to buy the better received titles, the net effect, in terms of the weight of those titles, is closer to one for every two. In some LC main classes, however, we did much better than this, while in others we did much worse. Our students and faculty will have odds-on chances of finding reviewed titles in the history of theory and practice and special aspects of education (LC classes LA, LB, and LC); in English literature (PR); or in pediatrics (RJ). But they will have only about 1 chance in 10 of finding reviewed titles in Judaism and biblical studies (BM and BS); in the history of Great Britain, France, Germany, Greece, and Italy (DA, DC, DD, DF, and DG); in European politics (JN); in architecture and

TABLE 4  
 OUTSTANDING ACADEMIC BOOKS BY MAIN CLASS AND NORMALIZED HOLDINGS

X	TI	O	PB	IS	LCN	RN	DI	Index	MC	Norm	Rank	PCT	D
O	Webster's New World Encyclopedia	C	Prentice-Hall	0-13-947482-X	91-46020	30-3044	9306	0.985	AG	427	8	56	
O	Wellesley Index to Victorian P	U	Univ. of Toronto Press	0-8020-2688-5	67-79381	27-1330	8903	0.845	AI	277	1	100	
O	Keyguide to Information Source		Mansell	0-7201-2025-X	90-139801	28-0731	9002	0.847	AM	136	11	9	
O	Humanities: A Selective Guide		Libraries Unlimited	1-56308-167-9	94-40302	32-4218	9508	0.955	AZ	709	2	90	
O	Charles Sanders Pierce: A Lih	U	Indiana Univ. Press	0-253-31267-1	92-19888	31-0230	9301	1.054	B	842	8	99	
O	Handbook of Western Philosophy	C	Macmillan	0-02-949593-8	87-38326	26-2487	8905	0.802	B	783	12	99	D
O	Metaphysics as a Guide to Mora		Allen Lane	0-7139-9100-3	92-53533	31-0878	9302	0.985	B	764	14	99	
O	Cambridge Companion to Locke	U	Cambridge Univ. Press	0-521-38371-4	93-33190	32-2655	9505	1.038	B	747	15	98	D
O	Understanding John Dewey: Nat		Open Court	0-8126-9284-5	95-1492	33-1467	9503	1.035	B	651	24	97	
O	Introduction to Kant's Ethics	U	Cambridge Univ. Press	0-521-46208-8	93-40557	32-3836	9507	0.950	B	641	27	97	D
O	Interpretations of Conflict:	U	Univ. of Chicago Press	0-226-52795-6	91-3044	29-5052	9209	0.983	B	632	28	97	
O	Plato's Socrates	U	Oxford Univ. Press	0-19-508175-7	92-38865	31-5971	9411	1.035	B	630	30	97	

TABLE 5  
DOMINGUEZ HILLS TITLES BY MAIN CLASS AND NORMALIZED HOLDINGS

X	TI	O	PB	IS	LCN	RN	DI	Index	MC	Norm	Rank	PCT	D
	Kister's Best Encyclopedias:		Oryx Press	0-89774-744-5	94-11282	32-2480	9505	1.038	AE	1130	1	100	D
	Oxford Illustrated Encyclopedia	U	Oxford Univ. Press	0-19-869140-8	85-4876	31-0676	9302	0.985	AE	875	2	88	D
	First Stop: The Master Index		Oryx Press	0-89774-397-0	88-28870	26-5433	8910	0.858	AE	594	3	75	D
	Oxford Illustrated Encyclopedia	U	Oxford Univ. Press	0-19-869138-6	92-34265	30-2441	9305	0.988	AE	562	4	63	D
	World History	U	Oxford Univ. Press	0-19-869161-0	85-4876	26-6060	8911	0.856	AE	146	6	38	D
	Columbia Encyclopedia	U	Columbia Univ. Press	0-395-62438-X	92-26989	31-2995	9406	0.950	AG	1147	2	94	D
	New York Public Library Desk R		Prentice Hall General Ref.	0-671-85014-8	93-18299	31-4705	9409	0.990	AG	1117	3	88	D
	Cambridge Encyclopedia	U	Cambridge Univ. Press	0-521-39528-3	90-32220	28-3620	9107	0.867	AG	751	4	81	D
	Facts on File Dictionary of the	C	Facts on File	0-8160-1915-0	90-41796	28-5434	9110	0.875	AG	584	6	69	D
	Random House Encyclopedia	C	Random House	0-394-58450-3	90-38567	28-3620	9107	0.867	AG	405	9	50	D
	Dictionary of Theories	C	Gale Res.	1-873477-05-8	94-177695	31-3527	9407	0.934	AG	384	11	38	D
	Cambridge Guide to the Museums	U	Cambridge Univ. Press	0-521-37175-9	90-27183	29-0036	9101	0.910	AM	732	1	100	D

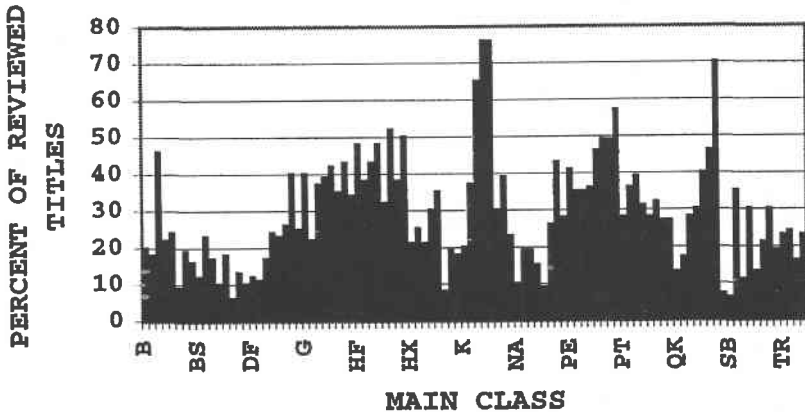


Figure 2. Percent of Reviewed Titles by Main Class.

decorative arts (NA and NK); in botany (QK); in agriculture and plant culture (S and SB); or in civil and mechanical engineering (TA and TJ).

A possible explanation for the numbers in the last few main classes would almost certainly be that we always have been a general campus rather than a polytechnic one. But clearly there was no coordination in our previous acquisitions model, which, in attempting to control declining fortune with subjective allocations to book funds, allowed the backs and sides of a number of academic departments to go bare. Against an increasingly insistent counterpoint of regularly scheduled courses from those same departments—e.g., courses with titles like *Comparative Religion and Understanding the Bible, the Emergence of Modern Europe and Twentieth-Century Europe, or Political Change in First and Third World Countries*—we can only hope that our explanation will not sound to our accrediting agency too much like “O Fortuna” from *Carmina Burana*.

#### SECOND USE OF THE DATABASE: CROSS-DISCIPLINARY (PUBLISHER) SEARCHING AND ANALYSIS

Table 6 shows a second arrangement of the file that can be very helpful for collection development purposes. To permit this display, the publisher field was first normalized using authoritative forms

from the WILSONDISC Cumulative Book Index; an asterisk indicates that the publisher form was not verified. Then the file was sorted on the normalized publisher field and subarranged on the International Standard Book Number field. We then took advantage of this new arrangement of the file by writing a short program that summarized the number of titles, normalized holdings, and percentiles for each publisher.

Table 7 shows summaries for the first 20 publishers; by using the SET FILTER command to establish a suitable threshold (in this case,  $PCT > 4,200$ ), we could create what are essentially cross-disciplinary subsets of the best-received presses and publishers from this summary file. Saunders (1996) found the differences between the circulation of university-press to commercial-publisher titles reviewed in *Choice* to be less than anticipated (5,091 to 6,404). And when we consider large-scale purchases and inclusions of the best-received presses and publishers reviewed in *Choice* from these cross-disciplinary summaries (that is, summaries in which the percentile expressions of rank are taken from many different main classes), we too found the differences to be less than anticipated. These cross-disciplinary summaries indicated that the average of the best-received university-press titles reviewed in *Choice* (with a mean of 56 and a median of 57) was

slightly better than the average of the best-received commercial-publisher titles reviewed in *Choice* (with a mean and a median of 53).

Table 8 shows a subset of the 54 best-received university presses, while Table 9 shows a subset of the 57 best-received commercial publishers from 1989 through 1995. During this seven-year period, these presses and publishers were responsible for two-thirds of the titles reviewed in *Choice* and three-fourths of the normalized holdings attached to these same titles in the OLC. This list of presses and publishers was also responsible for three-fourths of the OAB during this seven-year period. And in fact, if we were to pursue the replication of publisher quality (Goedeken 1993) or of publisher reputation (Metz and Stemmer 1996) a step further by extending our seven-year file to include 1996 reviews, we would find an 80/20 core of 56 presses and 68 publishers among the OAB much like the model for a publisher-based approval program (Calhoun, Bracken, and Firestein 1990) and very similar to this list. There seems to be enough of a correlation between quality and reception then to invite an application.

#### AN ACADEMIC APPROVAL PROGRAM APPLICATION BASED ON THE CROSS-DISCIPLINARY (PUBLISHER) ANALYSIS

In earlier studies, authors have used frequently reviewed publishers or number of OAB items as collection assessment tools for individual academic collections (e.g., Stebelman 1996; Marquet and Diambra 1990), but in this part of our study we were interested instead in the reception of *Choice* Reviews for the general academic collection. As a consequence, we used the cross-disciplinary subsets of best-received presses and publishers as the basis of two notification-slip approval plans for core materials, both with dealers who had online systems accessible over the Internet. Although we receive notification-slips each week from each of these vendors, we also can capture the bibliographic data from the slips through a pro-

gram developed by local system personnel that draws the data down over the Internet into a relational database file.

Table 10 displays the bibliographic data from the top of this file as it appeared at the end of the 1996 calendar year. Again, most of the fields are identified with two- and three-letter mnemonics that are recognizable from *Choice* Reviews. The titles in the display are sorted by main class and subarranged in descending order by OLC holdings; but in this example, because the titles were searched in weekly batches one month after having been profiled by the vendor, the holdings have not been normalized. This process of cumulating a large file of notification-slip titles, each of which was searched one month after having been profiled, allowed us to create consistent monthly subsets by using filters and to print these monthly lists with the rank and percentile expression of rank from the larger file still attached.

Table 11 is an example of such a monthly list. This list can be used by subject bibliographers as a guide to two notification-slip referral files, in which the bibliographers can find additional bibliographic information, such as the academic affiliation of the author, or a complete list of subject added entries. The overview that the monthly list and the coordinated referral files provide allows a combination of cross-disciplinary selection from a single issue, characteristic of a cooperative project (Erickson 1992); at the same time, it allows discipline-oriented selection over a period of time equivalent to several issues, characteristic of a retrospective project (Childress and Gibbs 1989).

This combination of discipline-oriented and cross-disciplinary searching, which is an attribute of the larger file, is something we would want to preserve in an online version of the monthly list once we were able to support a local area network that linked the subject bibliographers' computers and provide access to the online referral files in our vendors' systems over the Internet. If we were able to maintain the perspective of such a monthly list, say, at a Web site, while at the same time furnishing access to the online

TABLE 6  
 REVIEW FILE BY PUBLISHER AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BOOK NUMBER

X	TI	O	PB	IS	LCN	RN	DI	Index	MC	Norm	Rank	PCT	D
	Quintero Directs O'Neill	A	Cappella Bks	1-55652-105-7	90-28314	29-2646	9205	1.011	PS	269	1509	28	D
	Down Home Guide to the Blues	A	Cappella Bks	1-55652-130-8	90-37638	29-3686	9207	0.999	ML	545	166	87	D
	Murray-Louis on Dance	A	Cappella Bks	1-55652-147-2	92-6468	30-1971	9204	0.974	GV	354	151	62	D
	Arts in Crisis: The National	A	Cappella Bks	1-55652-204-5	93-41465	32-2533	9505	1.038	NX	567	12	92	D
	Computer Applications in Music	A-R	Eds	0-89579-225-7	88-70079	26-3032	8906	0.783	ML	327	625	51	D
O	Compact Disc: A Handbook	A-R	Eds	0-89579-234-6	88-70723	27-2122	8904	0.854	TK	437	33	88	D
	Computers and Musical Style	A-R	Eds	0-89579-256-7	91-11494	29-4427	9208	0.953	MT	406	29	72	D
	Synthesizer Performance and Re	A-R	Eds	0-89579-257-5	91-39700	30-5498	9310	1.026	ML	349	551	57	D
	MIDI: A Comprehensive Introdu	A-R	Eds	0-89579-259-3	91-39701	30-1984	9204	0.974	MT	438	19	82	D
	Artificial Intelligence and Mo	AAAS	Press	0-262-58115-9	93-155379	31-3826	9407	0.935	QH	228	373	23	D
	Assessment of Authentic Perfor	AAAS	Press	0-87168-500-0	92-14967	30-2811	9305	0.988	QA	476	144	84	D
	Large Marine Ecosystems: Stre	AAAS	Press	0-87168-506-X	92-38527	31-1506	9303	0.953	Q	208	292	30	D

TABLE 7  
SUMMARY FILE OF PUBLISHERS AND NORMALIZED HOLDINGS

O	PB	TI	NORM	PCT	AVE
	A Cappella Bks.	4	1,735	269	67
	A-R Eds	5	1,957	350	70
	AAAI Press	1	228	23	23
	AAAS Press	5	1,486	210	42
	Aarhus Univ. Press	1	28	0	0
	Abacus Press	1	87	8	8
	Abaris Bks.	2	640	92	46
C	Abbeville Press	68	31,214	4,861	71
C	ABC-CLIO	97	60,541	7,444	77
	ABCS	1	10	2	2
	Abdelmalek Essadi Univ. King	1	31	4	4
	Abhinav Pubs.	7	594	34	5

referral files over the Internet, we would have a prototype for a systemwide project—something that heretofore has been limited to the more stringent geographical proximity characteristic of traditional cooperative projects (Erickson 1992).

Our experience thus far has shown that the one-month holdings from the notification-slip file form a 70/30 core (that is, 70% of the holdings appear on 30% of the titles), just as the normalized holdings in the Choice Reviews file form a 60/40 core (that is, 60% of the normalized holdings appear on 40% of the titles). This would seem to support MacLam's (1992) charac-

terization of *Choice's* selection procedures, in which inappropriate material and recognizably bad books are weeded out and a more consistent file is produced. We started our notification-slip approval plans in October 1995, by the end of the 1996 calendar year, we found that the list of 54 university presses had produced 5,261 notification slips, while the list of 57 commercial publishers produced 10,027 slips. Also by the end of the calendar year, we found that the university-press list had predicted 2,714 Choice reviews, while the commercial-publisher list predicted 1,856.

The lists accurately predicted two-

Commerical core

University core

Other

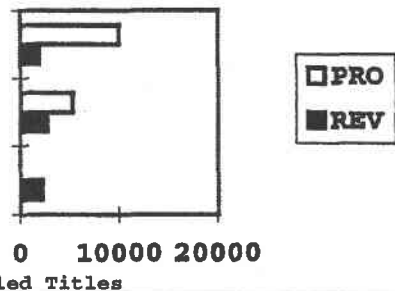


Figure 3. Reviewed Titles within Profiled Titles.

TABLE 8  
CORE UNIVERSITY PRESS AND NORMALIZED HOLDINGS

O	PB	TI	NORM	PCT	AVE
U	Brookings Institution	106	68,903	9,380	88
U	Cambridge Univ. Press	2,140	702,050	116,206	54
U	Columbia Univ. Press	314	128,786	19,933	63
U	Cornell Univ. Press	539	172,253	28,585	53
U	Duke Univ. Press	216	70,113	11,402	53
U	Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press	143	36,132	5,389	38
U	Harvard Univ. Press	483	233,752	34,854	72
U	Indiana Univ. Press	467	176,096	28,196	60
U	Johns Hopkins Univ. Press	426	157,298	25,663	60
U	Louisiana State Univ. Press	184	71,891	10,238	56
U	Manchester Univ. Press	221	44,267	5,901	27
U	MIT Press	386	145,491	24,653	64
U	National Acad. Press	120	50,074	7,908	66
U	New York Univ. Press	216	69,651	10,360	48
U	Oxford Univ. Press	2,434	920,550	135,505	56
U	Pennsylvania State Univ. Press	207	62,313	9,889	48
U	Princeton Univ. Press	800	298,744	49,422	62
U	Rutgers Univ. Press	246	102,684	15,436	63
U	Smithsonian Institution Press	212	85,590	12,882	61
U	Southern Illinois Univ. Press	139	43,931	6,847	49
U	Stanford Univ. Press	321	100,231	16,766	52
U	State Univ. of New York Press	547	167,959	26,342	48
U	Syracuse Univ. Press	82	31,620	5,064	62
U	Teachers College Press	83	40,443	5,398	65
U	Temple Univ. Press	215	80,034	12,538	58
U	University of Alabama Press	106	32,167	4,610	43
U	University of Arizona Press	129	42,094	6,504	50
U	University of California Press	803	285,044	45,851	57
U	University of Chicago Press	539	227,211	35,462	66
U	University of Delaware Press	103	29,354	4,569	44
U	University of Georgia Press	214	74,364	10,931	51
U	University of Hawaii Press	86	22,606	4,057	47
U	University of Illinois Press	333	119,784	17,813	53
U	University of Massachusetts Press	124	50,038	7,420	60
U	University of Michigan Press	238	71,575	11,363	48
U	University of Minnesota Press	111	34,267	5,568	50
U	University of Missouri Press	124	43,613	6,632	53



TABLE 8  
CORE UNIVERSITY PRESS AND NORMALIZED HOLDINGS, continued

O	PB	TI	NORM	PCT	AVE
U	University of North Carolina Press	315	130,704	19,907	63
U	University of New Mexico Press	123	37,417	5,691	46
U	University of Nebraska Press	184	62,766	9,163	50
U	University of Oklahoma Press	166	64,600	9,029	54
U	University of Pennsylvania Press	182	58,332	9,683	53
U	University of Pittsburgh Press	121	37,247	5,692	47
U	University of South Carolina Press	150	48,781	7,806	52
U	University of Tennessee Press	113	42,402	6,570	58
U	University of Texas Press	205	70,450	11,772	57
U	University of Toronto Press	250	54,707	7,412	30
U	University of Washington Press	100	30,457	4,502	45
U	University of Wisconsin Press	142	52,483	7,964	56
U	University Press of Kansas	143	64,589	9,334	65
U	University Press of Kentucky	138	49,593	7,694	56
U	University Press of Virginia	110	38,868	6,167	56
U	Wayne State Univ. Press	101	29,421	4,760	47
U	Yale Univ. Press	699	320,817	49,736	71

thirds of the 1996 *Choice* reviews and three-fourths of the 1996 OAB items. As figure 3 will make clear, we were anticipating that approximately one of every four commercial publisher titles and one of every two university press titles profiled would be reviewed. What we were not anticipating, however, was the extent to which the restriction on date (the review having to appear within six months of publication, which MacLam had described) would affect our operation. We found that the amount of time between a title's having been profiled by one of our vendors and the book's being reviewed by *Choice* had a mean of 151 days and a median of 152 days. As a result, our performance for the first five dates of issue in 1996 looked like a long upward slope. By the end of the year, using the standard numbers from the IS and LCN fields, we were able to find only 3,277 approval titles among 6,730 review titles (49%). Our performance for the last six dates of issue in 1996, however, looks more like level high ground. During that time, we were able to find 2,219 ap-

proval titles among 3,722 review titles (60%)—including 208 OAB approvals out of 311 OAB reviews (67%).

#### CORRELATION OF EARLY SEARCHES FROM THE APPROVAL FILE WITH LATER SEARCHES FROM THE REVIEW FILE

One last illustration will help to make clear how the one-month holdings from the approval file can be related to the normalized holdings from the review file through the 3,277 titles that we have been able to match. In the course of our third project, we searched the 1996 titles in April 1997; the effect of this early searching can be seen in the shelving off of the average holdings in the 1996 dates of issue at the far right of the display in figure 3. The results for January 1997 (which include the 1996 OAB list), as well as the results for the last six dates of issue in the display (June 1996 through December 1996), are obviously less complete than the data for the normalized holdings would be following our fourth searching

TABLE 9  
CORE COMMERCIAL PUBLISHERS AND NORMALIZED HOLDINGS

O	PB	TI	NORM	PCT	AVE
C	Abbeville Press	68	31,214	4,861	71
C	ABC-CLIO	97	60,541	7,444	77
C	Abrams	215	96,328	14,994	70
C	Academic Press	166	54,209	9,202	55
C	Addison-Wesley	83	40,532	5,549	67
C	Basic Bks.	191	154,283	17,026	89
C	Beacon Press	73	42,834	5,707	78
C	Blackwell	459	135,462	21,300	46
C	Chapman & Hall	133	29,385	5,102	38
C	Continuum	87	37,896	5,487	63
C	Erlbaum	181	61,473	8,746	48
C	Facts On File	258	151,940	19,984	77
C	Free Press	170	126,030	14,918	88
C	Gale Res.	226	115,651	15,412	68
C	Garland	585	162,838	20,044	34
C	Greenwood Press	1,295	353,501	48,269	37
C	Guilford Press	97	43,083	6,155	63
C	Hall, G.K. & Co.	179	66,205	8,860	49
C	Harper & Row	89	61,580	7,303	82
C	Harpercollins Pubs.	60	44,225	5,172	86
C	Houghton Mifflin	84	76,232	7,356	88
C	Island Press (Covelo)	82	43,657	6,165	75
C	Jossey-Bass	182	105,707	13,839	76
C	Knopf	148	132,461	13,306	90
C	Lexington Bks.	92	41,427	5,935	65
C	Little, Brown	61	53,220	5,203	85
C	Macmillan	123	82,933	9,937	81
C	McFarland & Co.	263	75,609	10,601	40
C	McGraw-Hill	257	85,817	15,259	59
C	Morrow	112	87,213	9,603	86
C	Norton	298	200,933	23,775	80
C	Pantheon Bks.	48	35,167	4,222	88
C	Paragon House	87	35,347	5,302	61
C	Plenum Press	130	51,605	7,483	58
C	Praeger Pubs.	755	219,342	31,953	42
C	Prentice-Hall	201	48,945	8,406	42
C	Quorum Bks.	167	56,177	8,482	51
C	Random House	131	122,275	11,744	90
C	Rienner Pubs.	146	38,866	7,213	49
C	Rizzoli Int. Pubs.	129	40,837	6,777	53
C	Routledge	1,025	267,003	38,300	37
C	Sage Pubs.	342	126,668	18,785	55
C	Scarecrow Press	274	72,659	10,862	40
C	Schirmer Bks.	50	26,718	4,063	81
C	Scribner	116	90,357	10,117	87
C	Sharpe M.E.	167	48,979	8,185	49
C	Simon & Schuster	103	74,803	8,405	82
C	Springer-Verlag	365	89,259	14,635	40
C	St. Martin's Press	1,007	232,437	31,726	32
C	Thames & Hudson	104	37,019	5,990	58
C	Times Bks.	62	54,110	5,593	90
C	Transaction Bks.	166	46,473	6,845	41
C	Twayne Pubs.	363	196,829	29,304	81
C	Van Nostrand Reinhold	117	37,373	6,427	55
C	Viking	91	65,845	7,806	86
C	Westview Press	634	195,535	32,081	51
C	Wiley	539	161,791	27,460	51

TABLE 10  
 APPROVAL FILE BY MAIN CLASS AND OCLC HOLDINGS

MC	OCLC	Rank	CEN	AU	TI	O	PB	IS	LCN	Date
AC	97	1	100	Kracauer, Siegfried	Mass Ornament	U	Harvard Univ. Press	0-674-55162-1	94-47397	950915
AC	15	2	67	Karatani, Kojin	Architecture as Metaphor:	U	MIT Press	0-262-61113-9	95-18602	951110
AC	1	3	33	Cowles, Fleur	Best of Flair	C	HarperCollins Publishers	0-06-017390-4	96-5196	961030
AG	10	1	100	Crystal, David	Cambridge Paperback Encyc	U	Cambridge Univ. Press	0-521-55968-5	95-14559	950929
AG	130	1	100	Yos Savant, Marilyn	Of Course I'm for Monoga:	C	St. Martin's Press	0-312-14693-0	96-19402	960904
AG	99	2	80	Kiper, Barbara Ann	Order of Things: How Ever	C	Random House	0-679-44478-5	96-31066	961204
AG	59	3	60	Rubin, Louis D.	Writer's Companion	U	Louisiana State Univ. Press	0-8071-1992-X	95-158	951027
AG	30	4	40	Princeton Review	Culturescope: The Princet	C	Random House	0-679-75367-2	94-34393	951108
AG	3	5	20	Random House	Random House Concise Ency	C	Random House	0-679-76454-2	95-32728	951115
AM	235	1	100	MacDonald, Sharon	Theorizing Museums: Repre	C	Blackwell	0-631-20151-3	96-6174	960522
AM	61	2	88	Ardouin, Claude	Museums and the Community	U	Smithsonian Institution Press	0-56098-611-5	95-68002	951222
AM	31	3	75	Kaplan, Rachel	Little-Known Museums In A	C	Abrams	0-3109-2676-8	95-52781	961023

TABLE 11  
 JANUARY APPROVAL TITLES BY MAIN CLASS AND OCLC HOLDINGS

MC	OCLC	Rank	CEN	AU	TI	O	PB	IS	LCN	Date
AS	9	1	100	Tropman, John E.	Effective Meeting: Improv.	C	Sage Publs	0-7619-0020-9	95-35749	960110
B	121	15	94	Quince, W.V.	From Stimulus to Science	U	Harvard Univ. Press	0-674-32635-0	95-14062	960105
B	73	46	81	Shaw, Gregory	Theurgy and the Soul: The	U	Penn. State Univ. Press	0-271-01437-7	94-34076	960105
B	68	52	78	Ziarek, Ewa	Rhetoric of Failure: Deco	U	State Univ. of N.Y. Press	0-7914-2711-0	95-1439	960126
B	55	75	68	Emmanuel, Steven M.	Kierkegaard and the Conce	U	State Univ. of N.Y. Press	0-7914-2697-1	95-30119	960112
B	44	94	60	McNeill, William	Fundamental Concepts of M	U	Indiana Univ. Press	0-253-32749-0	94-43451	960105
B	43	95	60	Baron, Marcia	Kantian Ethics Almost Wit	U	Cornell Univ. Press	0-8014-2829-7	95-9555	960119
B	34	107	55	Harvey, Van Austin	Feuerbach and the Interpr	U	Cambridge Univ. Press	0-521-47049-8	94-42936	960126
B	21	160	32	Hutchings, Kimberly	Kant, Critique and Politi	C	Routledge	0-415-10507-2	95-16862	960124
B	20	163	31	Macann, Christopher	Critical Heidegger	C	Routledge	0-415-12949-4	95-21333	960131
B	19	167	29	Scruton, Roger	Short History of Modern P,	C	Routledge	0-415-13327-0	95-16864	960117
B	18	173	26	Huang, Chin-Hsing	Philosophy, Philology and	U	Cambridge Univ. Press	0-521-48225-9	95-13358	960126

TABLE 12  
CORRELATING REVIEW TITLES AND APPROVAL TITLES

X	TI	O	PB	IS	LCN	RN	PCT	PCTDEV2	ZNUMBER	GENDEV2	CEN
O	Oxford Encyclopedia of the Ref	U	Oxford Univ. Press	0-19-506493-3	95-24520	33-6059	100	1937.76	2.62847	1794.37	100
	We Have Just Begun to Not Fig	C	Twayne Pubs.	0-8057-9134-5	95-20068	33-6506	100	1937.76	0.64285	107.33	68
	Not Out of Africa: How Afroce	C	Basic Bks.	0-465-09837-1	95-49109	33-6439	100	1937.76	2.38027	1471.49	96
	Lincoln	C	Simon & Schuster	0-684-80846-3	95-4782	33-4115	100	1937.76	2.56642	1710.65	99
O	American Folklore: An Encyclo	C	Garland	0-8153-0751-9	95-53734	34-0642	100	1937.76	2.25617	1322.05	94
	Cigarette Papers	U	Univ. of California Press	0-520-20572-3	95-44169	34-0954	100	1937.76	2.62847	1794.37	100
	Microsoft Secrets: How the Wo	C	Free Press	0-02-874048-3	95-30341	33-3990	100	1937.76	2.56642	1710.65	99
	Road Ahead	C	Viking Press	0-670-77289-5	95-43803	33-5758	100	1937.76	2.62847	1794.37	100
	Search and Destroy: African-A	U	Cambridge Univ. Press	0-521-46021-2	95-26128	34-2479	100	1937.76	1.26335	414.53	78
	Oxford History of the Prison	U	Oxford Univ. Press	0-19-506153-5	95-6280	33-5412	100	1937.76	2.07001	1112.89	91
	Up from Conservatism: Why the	C	Free Press	0-684-82761-1	96-8097	34-2449	100	1937.76	2.62847	1794.37	100
	Devil's Disciples: Makers of	U	Johns Hopkins Univ. Press	0-8018-5200-5	95-31432	34-1756	100	1937.76	2.62847	1794.37	100

project. Nevertheless, we can assign an index to each of the 1996 dates of issue that will permit us to normalize the holdings of the 3,277 titles in question. And with the caveat in mind—that the 1996 normalized holdings will not have the same sense of closure that the succeeding year's OAB list would provide (the 1997 OAB list)—we will proceed.

Table 12 shows the Pearson product-moment correlation between the percentile expression of rank for the normalized holdings of 3,277 titles from the review file to the percentile expression of rank for the one-month holdings for the same titles from the approval file. We have called the latter "centile" (CEN), in order to distinguish it from the former. First, the review file and the approval file were indexed on common key expressions (the IS and LCN fields). Using the relational features of the software, we linked the review file to the approval file according to those common key expressions. And the data for the centile expression of rank from the one-month searches in the approval file were used to replace the CEN field in the review file. Then, the means for both PCT and CEN were found (55.98 and 57.64, respectively). Next, the standard deviations for the two (26.12 and 27.16) were found. And finally, the product-moment correlation coefficient (.4678) was calculated.

The 3,277 records common to the approval and review files had a CEN mean of 58 and median of 60. This is in keeping with what the 70/30 core from the approval file and the 60/40 core from the review file had already suggested. This offers further support to MacLam's (1992) characterization of *Choice's* selection procedures, which weed out inappropriate material and recognizably bad books: from as early as one month, reviewed titles enjoy better than average reception. Also because these 3,277 records have a code (O) to identify OAB items in the review file, we can create subsets of OAB and non-OAB records. When we did this, we found that the mean and median for the OAB records from the PCT field was 69 and 73; and the mean and median for the non-OAB records, 55 and 54. It might

be that a large number of librarians ordered these titles from the 1996 OAB list (which appeared in January 1997) and were able to receive and catalog them in time for the OLC holdings to appear among the data from the addendum to our third searching project (which occurred in April 1997). But it seems more likely that the 1996 normalized holdings reflect some innate quality already inherent in the titles that the reviewers and editors highlighted with the list. Even the very earliest results—the one-month holdings from the approval file—reflect something of this. The mean and median for the OAB records from the CEN field were 61 and 63, and the mean and median for the non-OAB records were 57 and 60.

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 70/30  
APPROVAL CORE AND 60/40 REVIEW  
CORE: TIMELY ACQUISITIONS OF NEXT  
YEAR'S OUTSTANDING ACADEMIC  
BOOKS**

We were able to correlate the normalized holdings of the review file with the one-month holdings of the approval file, and we are willing to speculate, on the basis of that correlation, that there is a conceptual equivalence between the 60/40 core of the review file with the 70/30 core of the approval file worth further investigation. The advantage in establishing a correlation between the review file and the approval file and suggesting a link between the 60/40 core and the 70/30 core (as Budd (1991) has suggested already), is that of utility. The earlier we recognize core materials, the better our chances will be of finding those materials available. *Choice Reviews* appears several years ahead of the next edition of *Books for College Libraries*, and notification slips from vendor profiles appear several months ahead of *Choice Reviews*. If we are willing to search the reviews in the OLC once the OAB list from the succeeding year has appeared, we can predict from the 60/40 core what *Books for College Libraries*, 4th ed. will contain. And if we search the notification slips in the

OLUC one month after they have been profiled, we can add a depth to the bibliographic data that only a 200-word review several months later will rival. We believe the succeeding-year search (like a year's-end political analysis) and the one-month search (like a first-hour election poll) are well worth the effort to get an accurate forecast of what the best-received materials will most likely be.

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