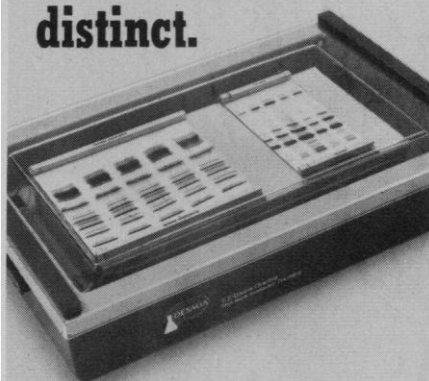


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Photocopying and Purchasing Practices of Libraries

In his reply (10 May 1974, p. 610) to letters from Vernon E. Palmour, W. Kenneth Lowry, and Robert D. Patton regarding library photocopying, Curtis G. Benjamin of McGraw-Hill, Inc., refers to a study of mine (1) and states that I "found that books and periodicals of all kinds were copied in almost equal proportion." This is true. He then says, "My own unscientific but painfully educated guess is that, of all the photocopying done today *at* (not *by*) all college and university libraries, about 65 percent is of books and 35 percent is of periodicals and technical reports." This is a misleading statement, besides being unscientific. It should be examined in the light of my findings, as follows.

Type of material copied	Number of copies	Percent
Book	33,000	21.5
Periodical	34,409	22.4
Government document	6,579	4.3
Thesis	4,713	3.1
Other published material	5,073	3.3
Miscellaneous	69,683	45.4
Total	153,457	100.0

The sample of 153,457 copies was taken at 37 university and college libraries, from both staff-operated and coin-operated machines, so the results take into account copying both *at* and *by* university and college libraries. It represents more than 1 percent of the annual total of photocopying *at* and *by* these libraries, sufficient to guarantee statistical validity. Although all the libraries were located in Canada, I believe that student and faculty requirements are sufficiently similar in our two countries that, if such a study were conducted in the United States, it would yield comparable results.

The category "Other published material" included newspapers, music, and such odds and ends as broadsides and advertisements. The miscellaneous category included for the most part student notes and library reproduction of business forms, catalog cards, and correspondence. On the basis of this evidence, it would be more accurate to say that about a fifth of *all* copying done *at* and *by* college and university libraries is of books.

I was also able to analyze 31,649 book exposures in terms of the imprint date.

Date of publication	Number of exposures
Pre-1899	3,308
1900-1949	3,581
1950-1959	4,746
1960-1964	5,376
1965-1969	10,941
1970-1971	3,697

It is impossible to say how many of the books from which copies were taken were in print. But to be generous, let us assume that every book published before 1960 is now out of print and all thereafter are in print. Then 63 percent of books copied would still be in print. Yet, although book copying is concentrated in the last decade of publishing, this amounted to about 20,000 exposures out of a total of more than 150,000, or about 13 percent.

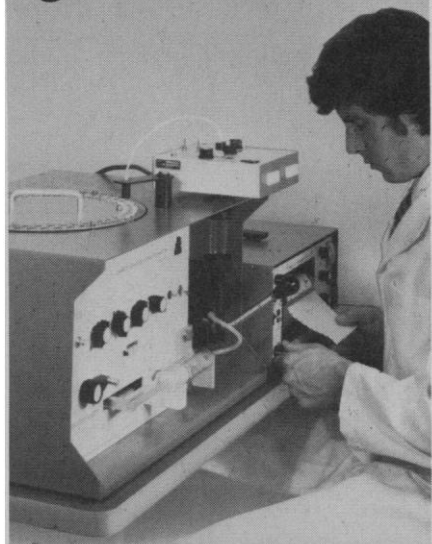
In the case of Canadian books, I studied the number of pages copied per individual book, by date of imprint. This showed that the copying of long passages and whole books was an exception, unless the books were published before the turn of the century.

Date of publication	Average number of pages copied per book
Pre-1899	55.9
1900-1949	8.3
1950-1959	6.3
1960-1964	10.4
1965-1969	6.6
1970-1971	7.0

Benjamin's argument is that copying of books leads to a decline of sales. Clearly, where libraries are concerned, the copying of up to a dozen pages would be no substitute for the purchase of the whole book. Benjamin says that he does not claim "to have absolute proof" of his thesis, but that he knows "for sure that many large library systems that used to order from two to five copies of a new monograph now order only one copy." He deduces "that the rapid growth of interlibrary loan services, coupled with readily available copying facilities, has been responsible for this change."

I would like to suggest that there are other more important reasons for the decline in the number of copies ordered by libraries. We are ordering fewer copies per title than we did just a few years ago, and the reasons have nothing to do with the copy machine. Our situation is not atypical. First, our enrollment dropped. Class sizes diminished, particularly those of large

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general courses. We needed fewer copies to meet student needs. Second, although our book budget has continued to increase every year, it has not increased enough to offset inflation, and our rate of accession has been virtually cut in half in 4 years. Third, our faculty members are distributing longer reading lists than they have in the recent past, so that student reading is no longer concentrated on a half-dozen texts which we had to buy in multiple copies.

I find it hard to believe that a college or university librarian would consciously purchase only a single copy of a work in the expectation that he would be able to borrow additional copies of the same work from other libraries when he needed them. Interlibrary loan is too slow a process to use for works in demand. Moreover, most libraries will not fill interlibrary loan requests on behalf of undergraduates, who are the principal users of multiple copies.

Benjamin also perceives a threat to the new monograph in the development of library consortia, which he thinks "will arrange to have one copy of a monograph serve the needs of the whole region." Cooperative purchasing has been taking place since the 19th century, and in recent years the decline of library budgets and the increase in costs of materials has lent some impetus to closer cooperation, with or without the fanfare surrounding the recent agreement among a number of eastern U.S. university and public libraries. But the concentration, as stated in Benjamin's quotation (2) from the director of the New York Public Library, will be on "expensive sets of volumes . . . or little-used journals." When a new monograph is published, is well reviewed, and is on a subject of interest, it will be in demand, and libraries will not be able to maintain standards of service unless they acquire those monographs. Our library is taking the same approach as many other research libraries in managing its collections budget, which is to stay current at all costs; what is getting cut out of our acquisitions programs is the rare, the expensive, the out-of-print. The publishers who should be concerned are those who flourished in the reprint business during the golden years of the 1960's, when new centers of learning were being founded across the continent and all were trying to catch up with Harvard. The golden years are over, and librarians

are having to answer to cost-benefit-minded administrators who want to know why thousands of dollars must be spent on a set of some obscure journal which might be referred to once in 5 years by four scholars at three neighboring universities. I am sure Benjamin, as a businessman and taxpayer, would ask that kind of question too. But as a publisher of monographs of the quality and distinction one has come to expect from his firm, Benjamin's fears on behalf of his product are unrealistic, where photocopying and cooperative purchasing are concerned. But there is no question that the market is changing. Academic planners and demographers tell us to anticipate fewer students; zero population growth does not in the end lead to an ever-expanding educational enterprise.

There has been much speculation about the implications of interlibrary lending for publishing and bookselling, and the continuing debate between librarians and publishers has been plagued with hunches and unsubstantiated hypotheses. It is encouraging to note that one of the provisions of a copyright bill (S.3976) which passed Congress on 19 December calls for the establishment of a National Commission on New Technological Uses of Copyrighted Works. This commission is to be composed of thirteen members: four selected from users of copyrighted works, presumably including libraries; four nongovernmental members selected from the public generally, including at least one "expert in consumer protection affairs"; four selected from authors and other copyright owners, presumably including publishers; and the Librarian of Congress. One of the functions of the commission will be to study and compile data on the reproduction and use of copyrighted works. So, at long last, there is the possibility that there will be sound information which can be used in the framing of legislation and, one hopes, in bringing together those who create and those who disseminate knowledge.

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1. B. Stuart-Stubbs, *Purchasing and Copying Practices at Canadian University Libraries* (Canadian Association, Ottawa, 1971).
2. E. Pace, *New York Times*, 24 March 1974, p. 59, sect. 1, part 2.