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Microforms

News Release: American Library Association

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LIBRARY

From: Peggy Barber, Director
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Libraries are warned of an objectionable business practice which may have serious budgetary and service impact. It has become apparent that one or more micropublishers may be securing copies of materials already in microform, reproducing them, and selling the resultant microform at costs substantially higher than charged by the originating agency. Not only are such microforms priced higher, but they are inferior to copies obtained from the originating agency because they are one further generation removed from the original camera negative. Furthermore, should the original be found to contain errors, omissions or other defects, the purchaser of such secondary or tertiary microform copies will likely have no resource for adjustment or correction. As an example of the price differential, in one instance an eighty-four reel microfilm project which is available at \$1,260 from the originating agency is being offered by another vendor at \$2,200.

While some companies are in effect charging libraries double the price at which these titles are normally available, it should be noted that these companies, although engaged in questionable practices, are not acting illegally. They have been very careful to confine their offerings solely to materials that are (1) in public domain, (2) not copyrighted, (3) or for which a valid copyright is not held in the United States.

To ascertain the best buy in microform, libraries should examine prices carefully and search carefully such authoritative sources as Micropublishers Trade

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List Annual (MTLA), National Register of Microform Masters, Guide to Microforms in Print, International Microforms in Print, International Microforms in Prints, and publishers' catalogs. Librarians should try to obtain explicit written warranties concerning what ANSI or LC standards are followed to assure technical quality. Furthermore, librarians should insist upon a written warranty covering defects and omissions which are discovered after purchase.

A checklist of criteria for examining micropublications may be found in CHOICE 5:4 (June 1968) and in Veaner's The Evaluation of Micropublications (ALA,1971).

Librarians who are interested in expressing their concerns are urged to write to Harriet K. Rebuldela, Chairperson, ALA/RTSD/RS Bookdealer-Library Relations Committee, c/o University of Colorado Libraries, Boulder, CO 80302.