

# U.S. Serial Services Price Index for 1999

By Nancy J. Chaffin

PRICES ARE UP BY 5.6%  
OVER THOSE IN 1998,  
DOUBLE THE 1984 FIGURES

**T**his is the 36th annual survey of U.S. Serial Services, a product of the ALA's Association for Library Collections and Technical Services' Library Materials Price Index Committee, working in conjunction with the Faxon Company.

The selection of titles surveyed and determination of prices were in accordance with the guidelines of the American National Standard for Library and Information Sciences and Related Publishing Practices—Library Materials—Criteria for Price Indexes (ANSI Z39.20-1983). The standard defines a U.S. Serial Service as “a periodical publication that revises, cumulates, abstracts, or indexes information in a specific field on a regular basis by means of new or replacement issues, pages, or cards, intended to provide information otherwise not readily available.”

A total of 1,286 titles were included in the data for Tables 1–7. This year, 30 titles were dropped from the index, having been discontinued altogether or having been discontinued in paper. Thirty-four titles were identified as replacements for the dropped titles and were chosen to correspond as closely as possible in price range and subject content to the dropped titles. There continues to be some small movement

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Year	Number of Titles	Average Price	Price Change	Index
1984	1,537	295.13	—	100.0
1985–87	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1988	1,310	341.32	N/A	115.7
1989	1,308	363.20	6.4%	123.1
1990	1,308	377.24	3.9%	127.8
1991	1,307	412.38	9.3%	139.7
1992	1,294	445.37	8.0%	150.9
1993	1,294	466.57	4.8%	158.1
1994	1,294	489.76	5.0%	165.9
1995	1,280	522.01	6.6%	176.9
1996	1,280	556.58	6.6%	188.6
1997	1,281	578.22	3.9%	195.9
1998	1,282	604.31	4.5%	204.8
1999	1,286	638.18	5.6%	216.2

from printed paper publications to electronic publications, most notably in Internet-based access. This trend accounts for the majority of the titles dropped. Although replacement (and in the case of Table 2, “Business,” additional) titles were identified for most subject areas, the title list in both Table 5, “Science and Technology,” and Table 7, “U.S. Documents,” shrank. The move to offer publications in electronic formats only is particularly evident in publications by the U.S. Government.

Prices for approximately 750 of the sample titles were extracted from the serial subscription database of the Faxon Company. Prices for the remaining titles were determined by publisher lists (many of which were available on publisher's Web sites), cover prices, publisher correspondence, and library subscription records.

The data as computed by Faxon show that the average 1999 price for

U.S. Serial Services titles in the sample is \$638.18 (Table 1). This is a 5.6% increase over the 1998 average, and over two times the average price for 1984.

Tables 2–7 show the average price changes by subject (including “U. S. Documents”) and the numbers of titles added and dropped. The largest average price increase was in Table 4, “Law” (+9.3%). In this category, 17 titles were dropped and 18 were added. The next largest increase in average price was seen in Table 3, “General and Humanities” (+8.1%), in which there was no change in the number of titles. In Table 6, “Social Sciences,” with one title dropped and one title added, price increases were only slightly lower (3.7%) than last year. Table 5, “Science and Technology,” with one title dropped and zero titles added, showed a 6.2% increase, fairly consistent with the last three years.

Table 2, “Business,” with a price in-

TABLE 2 BUSINESS (7 titles dropped; 14 titles added)					TABLE 3 GENERAL & HUMANITIES (0 titles dropped; 0 titles added)					TABLE 4 LAW (17 titles dropped; 18 titles added)				
Year	Number of Titles	Average Price	Price Change	Index	Year	Number of Titles	Average Price	Price Change	Index	Year	Number of Titles	Average Price	Price Change	Index
1984	289	437.07	—	100.0	1984	122	196.55	—	100.0	1984	272	275.23	—	100.0
1985-87	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1985-87	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1985-87	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1988	281	458.33	N/A	104.9	1988	116	225.95	N/A	115.0	1988	265	338.13	N/A	122.9
1989	281	493.23	7.6%	112.8	1989	116	255.27	13.0%	129.9	1989	265	354.32	4.8%	128.7
1990	281	523.79	6.2%	119.8	1990	116	274.39	7.5%	139.6	1990	264	390.98	10.3%	142.1
1991	281	584.93	11.7%	133.8	1991	116	292.23	6.5%	148.7	1991	264	424.68	8.6%	154.3
1992	278	625.67	7.0%	143.2	1992	116	317.15	8.5%	161.4	1992	258	467.27	10.0%	169.8
1993	278	641.28	2.5%	146.7	1993	116	336.71	6.2%	171.3	1993	258	490.44	5.0%	178.2
1994	278	676.44	5.5%	154.8	1994	116	362.25	7.6%	184.3	1994	258	504.86	2.9%	183.4
1995	281	695.88	2.9%	159.2	1995	116	381.80	5.4%	194.3	1995	258	542.73	7.5%	197.2
1996	281	737.14	5.9%	168.7	1996	116	410.75	7.6%	209.0	1996	258	593.81	9.4%	215.8
1997	287	751.99	2.0%	172.1	1997	115	429.12	4.5%	218.3	1997	257	592.84	-0.2%	215.4
1998	287	781.33	3.9%	178.8	1998	115	455.78	6.2%	231.9	1998	257	611.71	3.2%	222.3
1999	294	798.73	2.2%	182.7	1999	115	492.59	8.1%	250.6	1999	258	668.61	9.3%	242.9

TABLE 5 SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (1 title dropped; 0 titles added)					TABLE 6 SOCIAL SCIENCES (1 title dropped; 1 titles added)					TABLE 7 U.S. DOCUMENTS (4 titles dropped; 1 title added)				
Year	Number of Titles	Average Price	Price Change	Index	Year	Number of Titles	Average Price	Price Change	Index	Year	Number of Titles	Average Price	Price Change	Index
1984	281	295.36	—	100.0	1984	159	283.82	—	100.0	1984	203	97.37	—	100.0
1985-87	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1985-87	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1985-87	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1988	302	378.37	N/A	128.1	1988	154	343.18	N/A	120.9	1988	190	101.88	N/A	104.6
1989	302	420.19	11.1%	142.3	1989	154	345.10	0.6%	121.6	1989	188	110.79	8.7%	113.8
1990	303	443.36	5.5%	150.1	1990	156	370.40	7.3%	130.5	1990	188	101.45	-8.4%	104.2
1991	302	483.90	9.1%	163.8	1991	156	398.76	7.7%	140.5	1991	188	107.74	6.2%	110.7
1992	301	529.35	9.4%	179.2	1992	154	420.24	5.4%	148.1	1992	187	112.18	4.1%	115.2
1993	301	560.45	5.9%	189.8	1993	154	448.88	6.8%	158.2	1993	187	117.93	5.1%	121.1
1994	301	593.73	5.9%	201.0	1994	154	466.86	4.0%	164.5	1994	187	121.98	3.4%	125.3
1995	301	640.14	7.8%	216.7	1995	154	487.16	4.3%	171.6	1995	170	121.28	-0.6%	124.6
1996	301	675.82	5.6%	228.8	1996	154	513.08	5.3%	180.8	1996	170	129.37	6.7%	132.9
1997	302	716.95	6.1%	242.7	1997	151	536.85	4.6%	189.2	1997	169	151.38	17.0%	155.5
1998	302	757.33	5.6%	256.4	1998	152	557.34	3.8%	196.4	1998	169	162.32	7.2%	166.7
1999	301	804.40	6.2%	272.3	1999	152	577.89	3.7%	203.6	1999	166	166.57	2.6%	171.1

crease of 2.2%, showed the lowest price increase. The number of titles in this category was increased by a total of seven, bringing the number of titles in this category to its highest level ever. The number of titles in Table 7, "U.S. Documents," continues to decline, primarily due to electronic publishing as stated above. The average price per title in this category in-

creased by 2.6%, the least amount since 1995.

In 1998, the base year for this index was set at 1984 to ease comparison with other price indexes. The 1999 prices represent the 15-year mark of a continuing trend of rising prices for serial services published in the United States. The average price for a serial service subscription has more than

doubled during those 15 years. In two categories, "General and Humanities" and "Science and Technology," the average price has increased over 2.5 times. The category of "Law" is just under the 2.5 times mark. For the overall index, no year has experienced increases less than 3.9%, and in the majority of the years it has exceeded 5%, including this past year. ❖