

Verdict in journal cost survey row

A German court has given verdict (*Science*, 1990, 250, 906) in the court battle between Gordon and Breach Science Publishers and the American Institute of Physics, American Physical Society and the American Mathematical Society over the publication of survey articles on the cost of journals (see *Curr. Sci.*, 1990, 59, 584). Gordon and Breach and the American Physical Society and the American Institute of Physics have made conflicting claims about the German court's verdict. Gordon and Breach has claimed in a press release that the German civil court has agreed with it (G and B) that 'the surveys in which the prices of G and B journals appear to be extremely high were "false and misleading" and amounted to unfair competition under German Law'.

However, the court dismissed the appeal and opined that the surveys were directed at the US market and their distribution in Germany was limited. Though not fully satisfied with this verdict, Gordon and Breach is said to be 'heartened' that the court had agreed that the survey methodology was flawed.

Interestingly, the American Institute of Physics and the American Physical Society have viewed the court decision in a different light and not as a victory for Gordon and Breach. Henry Barschall, the author of the survey article published in the July 1988 issue of *Physics Today* (a journal of the American Institute of Physics), who is said to have attended the court proceedings, says, 'The court did not determine that the price survey was illegal advertising and it certainly

did not find that my work was false and misleading.'

In the absence of the original documents (court's ruling) at this stage one is unable to come to a definite conclusion. The verdict of the French and Swiss courts where the same case has been filed is not yet known.

Whatever be the final verdict on the case, the prices of journals are still increasing and libraries all over the world are facing difficulties coping with budget cuts and the rising cost of journals. Any reasonable indicators of increase in cost of journals would always be helpful not only to librarians but also to scientists recommending journals to their libraries.

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Panjab University suspends Gupta

Since the publication of a damning report based on evaluation of papers published by V. J. Gupta between 1969 and 1988 in the *Journal of the Geological Society of India* (reported in these columns, *Curr. Sci.*, 1991, 60, 138), Panjab University's vice-chancellor R. P. Bambah has moved to suspend Gupta from his posts in the university.

The report of the Geological Society of India, and another, equally damning one, by the New Delhi-based Society for Scientific Values, an independent body of scientists concerned with ethics and morality in science, were both available to Bambah earlier, but action against Gupta was pending amid reports that a high court judge was to go into the

entire affair.

The university's action now brings to an end a two-year-old controversy following the allegations against Gupta by John Talent, an Australian palaeontologist (see *Nature*, 1989, 338, 613, and 1990, 343, 305; see also *Curr. Sci.*, 1990, 59, 13, 244 and 441).