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Editorial Matters

It's summer doldrums time and we've finally had to use the first of a series of astronomical photographs on the cover. We have a pretty good selection to use for future covers when there are no stories with photos. I'm looking forward to the Jupiter reprise, the Saturn reprise, the Mars reprise, etc.

WBY ABA?

I spent most of my time at the American Booksellers Association Convention talking to the same people I see in New York each year and collecting catalogs which publishers send us automatically or on request. So why spend a lot of money to go every year? First, there are publishers we would never even think of writing, who do one or two books per year. The ABA is the ideal place to gather that material. Second, the personal contacts with executives, editorial personnel, and salespeople make future writing or telephoning easier. The publishing industry still operates mainly on person-to-person contacts. Third, it gives a good idea of the relative prosperity of the book business in general and sf in particular. You can see immediately where publishers are going to be spending their dollars and efforts this coming fall. And, most important, the ABA is fun! The whole thing resembles a giant carnival and circus.

BOOK SALES

The book industry looked good at the ABA, and the various 1985 figures released by the Association of American Publishers confirmed this. Total book sales in 1985 were a little under \$10 billion, up 8.3% over 1984. The trade category -- adult and juvenile hardcover plus trade paperbacks -- the largest part of book sales, was up nearly \$2 billion (up 17.3%). Mass market paperback sales, at just over \$750 million, were up 4% -- probably not enough to cover inflation. The sf field covers 10% to 12% of the mass market, which is mostly fiction; and somewhat less, I would guess 2%, of the trade field, where the major growth has been. Overall, sf should have a good 1986, although some publishers may end up with a smaller slice of the pie than they hope for.

PORNOGRAPHY

I was unnerved when I heard of the

magazine blacklist sent to various chains by the Meese Commission. After all, Locus had been deemed pornographic by our ex-printer when we ran some masquerade photos featuring bare breasts. We apparently weren't on the list. Naturally, I tried to take advantage of this by offering to let Seven-Eleven stores stock Locus instead of Playboy, but they didn't seem interested.

I was fascinated to find out the commission couldn't define pornography, but were sure they were agin' it, that they used "intuition" and "common sense" whenever the facts didn't support them. It sounded just like a Gary Trudeau script for "Doodlesbury".

FOREIGN CHECKS

Our bank has started to charge us between \$7.50 and \$15.00 to cash foreign drafts on U.S. banks if they don't have the U.S. bank account identification in OCR characters at the bottom. Their official reason is that the checks have to be handled by somebody more intelligent than a clerk feeding them into an optical scanner, and they're rare and expensive. We changed banks the last time this happened (when Barclay's U.S. bank charged us money to cash Barclay's U.K. money orders) but we may not find it possible again. Most U.S. banks no longer offer much service. We do better with equivalent pound cheques deposited to our Barclay's U.K. account. Our local post office also refuses to cash Japanese/U.S. postal money orders because they're not the same color as other postal money orders. We have to take them to the main post office and see the manager in order to cash them. We've had to return a number of foreign drafts because of the silly OCR number problem. Our apologies to the readers who sent in perfectly good looking foreign drafts and got them back because of the extra charges here. We'll try to straighten it out or find another bank. Meanwhile, look for the OCR numbers on the bottom.

CORRECTIONS

I'll bet you're wondering why we ran interviews with Clive Barker in both July and August. The interview in this issue was supposed to be the cover story for last issue. The last-minute

(Continued on page 46)