

**The Content of Journals Published by Nova Science Publishers, Inc.: *Political History and Culture of Russia and Current Politics and Economics of Russia, Eastern and Central Europe.***

**By David Bade\***

**Abstract**

A look at the contents of some journals published by Nova revealed many issues which contained no original materials at all. The journals show a pattern of entire books about Russia from the early 20th century being reprinted chapter by chapter as though they were separately titled articles. Material from US government documents, Congressional Research Service reports, and material excerpted from other recent public-domain sources have been combined, sometimes with one or more original articles to produce journals costing between 700 and 900 US dollars annually.

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**The Discovery of a Problem**

Due to my interest in Mongolian history, I recently picked up an issue of Nova Science Publishers' *Political History and Culture of Russia*. Volume 22, number 2 (2006) begins with J. Maratin Miller's article "Invasion of the Mongol Tartars". The title has an asterisk

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referring to the following note: "Excerpted from *The Thrilling Stories of the Russian-Japanese War* by J. Maratin Miller, 1904." Consequently the article was of no interest to me. I returned to the table of contents and noticed that the next four articles were by the same author; checking these, I found that they were all also excerpted from the same book. The only other article in this issue was "Alexander II and Russia on the Eve of Great Reforms", but that had a note "Excerpted from *A Thousand Years of Russian History* by Sonia Howe, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, London: Williams & Norgate, 1915." I proceeded to look at Volume 22, number 1 (2006). In that issue the first five articles are by J. Maratin Miller and as in the other issue, all were excerpted from the same 1904 publication. These were followed by another article from Sonia Howe's aforementioned history, and the issue concluded with a 12 page essay on Slovenia that appears to be an original submission.

*Political History and Culture of Russia* claims to publish "scholarly articles dealing with Russian cultural and political developments, personalities and trends" (page 2 of cover). The articles in these issues were all copyright 2006 by the publisher. The subscription price for six issues a year was listed as \$795, the first two issues combined containing 155 pages, of which 12 were original scholarship having nothing to do with Russia. How far back does this practice go?

### **An Investigation of the Problem**

The journal was formerly entitled *Political History of Russia*, and the first issue of the journal under the new title was volume 9, number 1, published in 1997. In that first

volume there are nine articles by Nicholas V. Feodoroff "excerpted from *Soviet Communists and Russian History* ISBN 1-56072-407-2 by Nova Science Publishers, Inc." followed by "Bitter memories" by Beloinok and a few poems, all "excerpted from *Forced Repatriation* ISBN 1-56072-447-1 by Nova Science publishers, Inc." The issue concludes with a bibliography "Baltic Occupation by Soviets" (no author/editor) which consists of 40 printouts of records formatted as catalog cards from what looks like the Library of Congress catalog. From that first issue of 1997 through the current issue, most of the issues are of the same nature: excerpts from the publisher's monographs (which are themselves compiled partly or largely from materials in the public domain), excerpts from early 20th century monographs of little scholarly value then or now, and bibliographies which are simply downloaded from the Library of Congress (or elsewhere). And the price, which was 175 US dollars in 1997, is now 875 US dollars (information from the publisher's website, 21 August 2007).

Some of the issues include articles by various authors—all have Russian or Georgian names—and there is no indication that these items have been translated, reprinted or excerpted from elsewhere. For instance volume 15 number 4 has "The Centralized Russian State: Russia in the Second Half of the Fifteenth and the Sixteenth Century" by N.Y. Nosov, "Feudal Russia in the Seventeenth Century" by A.G. Mankov and I.P. Shaskolsky, and "Early Eighteenth Century: The Formation of the Monarchy" by D.S. Likhochov. Yet suspiciously such articles in this and other issues are all alike: no bibliographies, no references, and no information of any sort about the authors.

The next question was: Is this practice related to the editor or the publisher? The journal offers no information about editors or editorial boards, no affiliation with any academic or governmental body. I checked the publisher's website and found that of the 63 journals published by Nova, 38 have no editors or editorial board listed, while of those with editors, Frank Columbus is the editor for such disparate journals as *Journal of Drug Addiction, Education and Eradication*, the *International Journal of Mathematics, Game Theory and Algebra* and *International Journal of Ethics*. In the case of the journals related to Russia/former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, there are only 4: *Current Politics and Economics of Russia, Eastern and Central Europe; Caucasus Context; Current Politics and Economics of the Caucasus Region*; and *Political History and Culture of Russia*, none of which have any editors mentioned. How do the first three compare to the last one?

*Current Politics and Economics of Russia* was renamed *Current Politics and Economics of Russia, Eastern and Central Europe* beginning with volume 11 number 1 (1998). In 1998 the price was 200 US dollars per volume with 2 volumes appearing each year in 4 issues per volume. The current price is 975 US dollars per volume with one volume per year and each volume appearing in six issues. The first issue of the journal under the new name contains articles first published in Russian and translated into English, presumably for publication by Nova, as well as one article with no prior publication history mentioned. The second issue of volume 11 includes four original papers and the annexes and bibliography from "Emergency Management in Russia in Practice: case studies on the 1990's" by Boris Porfiriev, "Excerpted from *Disaster Policy and Emergency*

*management in Russia* ISBN 1-56072-421-8 by Nova Science Publishers, Inc." More recent issues are mixed as well: Volume 18 numbers 5 and 6 consist almost entirely of material reprinted or excerpted from Congressional Research Service reports and other Nova journals. Volume 20 number 1 (2005) has all original articles, while volume 20 number 3 consists entirely of articles reprinted from various other Nova monographs. Volume 20 number 4 is again a mix of original articles (or at least articles that do not indicate any publication history) and articles reprinted from Nova Science Publisher's *Southeast European Security: Threats, Responses, Challenges*, originally published in 2001. It appears in fact that the entirety of that 2001 monograph is reprinted in various issues of volume 20 (2005).

*Current Politics and Economics of the Caucasus Region* began in 2007 and only volume 1 issue 1 has appeared. According to the information on the publisher's website, it will be a quarterly for 195 US dollars per volume (\$55 dollars per issue). The contents of the first issue includes four papers by Jim Nichol, two of which are identified as Congressional Research Service reports, and a paper by Robert C. Rickards and Hochschule Harz "2005: A Year of Corruption, Fraud, Intrigue, Protest, and Some Progress in the Caucasus" which is suspiciously like an article of the same title which appeared in Nova Science Publisher's journal *Caucasus Context*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Nova Science, Spring 2006, pp. 153-168. This latter journal is described on the publisher's website thus: "This new journal brings together important analyses, interviews with key players and cultural background". With the limited information given on the publisher's website and my own lack of familiarity with researchers in this area, it is difficult to ascertain the nature of the

contents without access to the full text. Yet the appearance of the Rickards article in both *Caucasus Context* and *Current Politics and Economics of the Caucasus Region* suggests an editorial practice much like the journals examined above.

### **Responding to the Problem**

What is there to say about these Nova journals? First, it is legal to reprint public domain materials and sell them on the market, as it is to repackage and sell under different labels materials for which one owns the copyright. Second, the journals as advertised make no claim to publishing original materials. It was noted above that *Political History and Culture of Russia* makes only the claim that it publishes "scholarly articles dealing with Russian cultural and political developments, personalities and trends." It makes no claim to be publishing either original or current research. *Current Politics and Economics of Russia, Eastern and Central Europe* makes a similar claim: "This scholarly periodical focuses on the rapid changes occurring in Russia, Eastern and Central Europe. The scope of the publication is the entire spectrum of contemporary politics and economics." No mention is made of any other editorial policies regarding source of materials. It is clear that there is no fraud involved. It is also clear that the lack of information about the nature of the contents and the source of those contents come close to being deceptive even if legal. Furthermore, taking entire books which are in the public domain, publishing them piecemeal under chapter titles in a journal without noting the source in the table of contents and then claiming copyright for the individual chapters appears to be a deliberately deceptive practice aimed at libraries. The question for librarians is then not

simply a matter of the value of these journals for collection development, but what the publisher's name means for approval plans, standing orders and subscriptions of any kind.

It has been claimed that in the era of online information and mass digitization collection development is not just a waste of time but an impossibility.<sup>1</sup> The explosion of information online means that we should reorient ourselves to bibliographic searching rather than collection development and bibliographic description. Publications like those investigated here point to the fallacy of such arguments: these journals are not online and they are expensive. They do contain original materials, but these are of varying kinds: translations, articles first published in these journals, and materials available under different titles in the same publisher's monographic publications. These journals bring together previously published materials that may be scattered about elsewhere and in other languages. But the large amount of duplication makes cost an important consideration. Are these journals worth their price? For which libraries? The fact that a decision has to be made means that collection development is still not only possible but necessary.

Fifty three libraries are listed in the OCLC database as having the journal *Political History and Culture of Russia*; fifty seven libraries have *Current Politics and Economics of Russia, Eastern and Central Europe*. Many of those also have the Nova monographs in which the same content is available, as well as having print and online access to Congressional Research Service Reports and the Russian journals in which many of the original articles were published in Russian. While it is true that the multiplication of

copies increases the long-term viability of information, these journals and the publisher that issues them present us with some real questions about the importance of collection development and evaluation, as well as the economics and ethics of information provision in libraries today. So long as information costs, we are going to have to make decisions, and those who stand to profit from our decisions cannot always be trusted to present us up front with all the information we would like to have for making those decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> Sheila S. Intner, "Copy Cataloging and the Perfect Record Mentality." *Technicalities*, 10: 7 (July 1990): 12-15.