



# The United States Book Industry Abroad

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SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME, the book and library communities have been interconnected in many ways with similar if not overlapping goals, problems, and responsibilities. Although in the vast complexity of Western society today the interwoven nature of these several characteristics is not always easily discernible, it remains abundantly clear in certain developing parts of the world where social phenomena often exist distilled to scales more easily perceived by the human intellect.

In the quarter century since World War II, Western librarians and publishers alike have been pitting their minds against the monumental problems in developing countries of helping to raise educational, professional, technical, and economic competences to levels commensurate with current needs. In 1945, many of these developing countries found themselves suddenly faced with the necessity of advancing their levels of development from eighteenth- to twentieth-century adequacy in the short span of a decade or two.

Books, it was promptly recognized, would be an indispensable component in the success of any such program of national growth. For almost every need encountered in these nations' drives for advancement, there was already a superabundance of technical knowledge in the more developed countries, knowledge that was already encapsulated within the covers of their tens of thousands of books. Western publishers who knew how to bring authors, printers, and markets together into a single developmental sequence, and librarians who knew how to abet these distributory efforts in the interest of national development, found themselves engaged in the same worthy cause of nation building through information dissemination.<sup>1</sup> The work of librarians in this cause is being reported elsewhere in this issue; this brief chapter will review the work of American publishers.

There has been a clear need in developing areas of the world during this time for greatly increased traffic in two specific kinds of books.

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The first type needed is vernacular titles in limited diversity but large editions to serve as school texts, popular reading materials, books for neo-literates, and texts for persons seeking basic technical skills. Such books are needed to stock the schools, the street and village libraries, and the bookstalls and shops of developing countries.

The second type of book needed is one for more advanced technical, educational, and professional interests. These books are needed in limited numbers of copies, but in a wide selection of titles to stock the universities, the institutes, and the private collections of highly sophisticated scholars. Potential use of this second kind of book is usually too small to warrant either original authorship, or even translation and publication in the vernacular, and thus these books are distributed in their original Western languages. This requires, of course, that anyone who would tap the advanced expertise of the world has to master a Western language—usually English, which has come to be a scholar's *lingua franca*—and leaves the book industry open to charges of bibliographic and linguistic imperialism. Nonetheless it seems for the present to be the only economically viable route available to many developing countries; it appears cheaper for these nations to teach their scholars to read a Western language than it would be to prepare a wide range of vernacular literature adequate to their needs.

American publishers have been very active in recent decades in helping developing nations to improve methods of access to both these kinds of books. They have worked individually and through a variety of cooperative mechanisms, both private and quasi-public in sponsorship, and both bilateral and multilateral in scope.

Direct exportation of American published works, of course, constitutes a substantial segment of the contribution made by individual book publishers to national development abroad. An impressive \$170 million worth of American books are estimated to have been exported from the United States during 1970 alone. Who can appraise the impact of this huge "knowledge transmission" upon the importing nations except to realize that it was doubtless enormous?

Yet despite this accomplishment, direct book export has always been fraught with problems, including the following:

1. Political obstacles. For political reasons importing nations are sometimes wont to impose barriers in the way of the free flow of books.
2. Censorship. Importation of particular titles is sometimes blocked for moral, religious, or political reasons.
3. Inadequate monetary exchange. Book importers are sometimes frus-

- trated by their nation's need to keep tight control over the outflow of currency so that imported books cannot be paid for.
4. Lack of distribution mechanism. Few American publishers are large enough to be able to maintain sophisticated distribution channels into a wide range of countries.
  5. Economic factors. This category of problems "includes the troubles caused by systems of import licenses . . . the levying of import duties and other taxes, differences in exchange rates resulting in increased selling prices, the expense of shipment and insurance to foreign customers, the difficulty in collecting money from foreign debtors, and the extraordinary amount of time between the retailer's placing of an order and his receipt of the book."<sup>2</sup>
  6. Price. American-produced books are often of necessity among the most expensive in the world and are therefore frequently priced above the ability of an import market to pay.

For these reasons individual American publishers with properties needed abroad have sometimes found it desirable to develop alternate routes to export. Some publishers have concluded workable, exclusive, regional distribution agreements; *Encyclopædia Britannica* in particular has been successful in such an effort. Others have chosen to ally themselves with foreign publishers, giving them exclusive reprint and regional distribution rights for low-priced, locally manufactured editions of their more desirable titles.

In recent years several American textbook publishers have gained widespread distribution of their wares in Asian markets through the republication in Japan of so-called "Far East" or "Asian Students" editions of their best books at from one-third to one-half of the price of American editions. McGraw Hill has produced more than 350 of its titles in low-priced reprints in alliance with the Japanese firm of Kogakusha. More recently the same firm has also concluded arrangements with firms in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and India for similar distribution of its works in those regions.

In addition, of course, many American firms simply made ad hoc authorizations for their books to be reprinted in local markets in return for a 10 to 15 percent royalty on sales. In some locales where international copyright observance is either non-existent or weak, however, such authorizations can become quite confused. Book pirates sometimes produce unauthorized editions, only to have other pirates pirate them, producing clandestine reprints of clandestine reprints on which no royalties are paid to the original publisher. At the present time the Republic of China is the largest non-signer in the free world of any

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international copyright conventions, and it is estimated that there are now more than 10,000 English-language titles in print in unauthorized editions in Chinese reprint warehouses.<sup>3</sup> As recently as mid-June 1971, however, the Republic of China avowed its intent to relinquish piracy and subscribe to the Universal Copyright Convention.

Perhaps no other industry has been more aggressive than book publishing in seeking answers to some of the book problems of developing nations through collective action. These efforts have been vigorous in both the private and the public sectors, and they have often proved effective.

Doubtless, the most important joint activity in the private sector has been the support over the past two decades of the Franklin Book Programs. Established in 1952 with the somewhat circumscribed purpose of arranging the translation of American books for publication in developing countries, Franklin Book Programs in recent years has moved increasingly toward aiding in the creating and strengthening of indigenous book industries. In 1968/69, Franklin Book Programs merged with another private, joint enterprise of American bookmen, the International Book Institute, which had been organized originally as a non-profit corporation designed to facilitate the flow of books and related educational and cultural materials between the United States and other nations.

Franklin Book Programs now maintains offices in New York and sixteen cities of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. With funds drawn from a variety of public and private agencies, contractors, and philanthropies, it strives to aid the printing, publishing, and book-selling infrastructure in developing countries so as to maximize to their peoples the benefit of American published knowledge. To this end it has expanded printing plants, encouraged school library growth, trained teachers as textbook writers, furthered book trade association development, and supported experiments and innovation in publishing. Its projects are so extensive that its last annual report required 100 pages just to list them all.<sup>4</sup>

The American book industry has also expended considerable effort working with U.S. government and multilateral agencies to aid the flow of the nation's published knowledge into areas of the world where it is vitally needed. Among federal agencies concerned in one way or another with this problem are the Agency for International Development, the U.S. Information Agency, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Office of Education, the National Science Foundation, and the Peace Corps.

This direction for the American book industry was encouraged by President Lyndon B. Johnson in a special message to Congress on February 2, 1966. In that message the President urged federal agencies "to increase the flow of books and other educational material" between this and other countries. A National Policy Statement was issued soon thereafter.<sup>5</sup> Activities to support this increased flow in the federal establishment have fallen under the purview of an Interagency Book Committee which has had substantive guidance from an Advisory Committee on International Book Programs which is comprised of representatives from the book publishing, library, and related fields. American publishers, both corporately and individually, have worked extensively with governmental agencies abroad as advisors, consultants and contractors to further their missions through increased book activities.

The Agency for International Development (AID) especially has used information and knowledge of publishers and librarians in its studies of book activities in a large number of developing countries. As early as 1962, AID issued Policy Directive 12, which formally set forth that agency's intent to reduce the book deficits in developing countries through its programs. In 1964 Wolf Management Services contracted with AID to send a team of experts to Turkey to conduct a pilot study of the role of book activities in national growth.<sup>6</sup> Four of the seven experts were American publishers. Similar studies have since been conducted under AID auspices in a number of countries on three continents, all with substantial representation from the publishing industries. These studies have been used in several nations as guides for the strengthening of local book and publishing industries.<sup>7</sup>

American publishers have also vigorously participated in multi-lateral efforts to raise the level of publishing competence in developing areas of the world. The UNESCO Programme for Book Development was launched in 1964 to foster national book production and distribution. This program sponsored meetings of experts in Asia (Tokyo, 1966), Africa (Accra, 1968), and Latin America (Bogota, 1969), and encouraged the establishment of National Book Development Councils in a number of countries for purposes of promoting the reading of books and the development of indigenous book industries.<sup>8</sup> Representatives of the American book and publishing communities have been active in all of these and other similar efforts.

This brief account of the activities of American publishers in support of international book development is remiss in at least one important sense; it has not stressed the fact that in virtually all of the activities named herein publishers and librarians have worked together. They

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served together on the Advisory Committee on International Book Programs, they served together on the teams that studied national book activities under AID sponsorship, and the National Book Development Councils strive for the establishment of libraries as well as book stores. The interlocking nature of librarianship and book publishing is perhaps nowhere more clearly to be seen than in their joint responsibility for upgrading literacy and book use in developing areas of the world.

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