Trends in Modern American Book Publishing

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Modern American publishing, like modern librarianship, came of age in the United States in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Until about 1950, the general conservatism of both librarianship and publishing allowed for development and change only within well-established and recognized parameters. Since that date both publishing and librarianship have been in a state of flux. Publishing in particular has experienced more significant changes in the past few years than in any comparable period since the advent of printing from movable metal type. And with the changes in publishing, librarians have sought to impede, influence, or accommodate the transformation of an industry so vital to the profession.

Both librarians and publishers are keenly aware of the changes that have affected them in varying degrees. On one hand, publishers have found new approaches to profit in expanding fields and in the exploitation of new formats: the paperback book and the microform. More recently, mergers, diversification and "going public" have offered publishers the security and capital necessary for expansion. On the other hand, while librarians (and their patrons) have enjoyed the riches of the publishing boom, they have also had to contend with the problems inherent in the new formats and an unfortunate lack of adequate bibliographic control. Both publishers and librarians have been adversely affected by the rising costs of materials and labor, by the profound shifts in governmental

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and private support, by demographic changes, and (librarians more than publishers) by the new information-gathering habits of their public. If the 1960s was a period of unprecedented growth for American libraries, the 1970s represents an era of harsh retrenchment. Librarians are purchasing fewer new publications, are exploring the advantages of networks and consortia, and are more resistant to publishers’ persuasions. Old frictions and new controversies are developing between the two groups—copyright and fair use, to name but two.

It is the purpose of this essay to examine the relationship between publishers and librarians within the context of a survey of modern American publishing. It is perhaps inevitable that the focus should be on the turbulent present and the uncertain future. The recent past, however, cannot be neglected, since in both publishing and librarianship past practices are the key to many present problems.

Modern American book publishing divides itself into two major eras. The first period, the age of conservatism, occurred between the end of the Civil War and the end of World War II. In the second period, the age of innovation (now about a quarter-century old), a progression of minirevolutions has taken place that even today shows no signs of abating.

PERIOD OF CONSERVATISM

For publishing to grow, readership and purchasing power must also rise, and there are close correlations in the late nineteenth century among the expansion of publishing, the growth of literacy and the rise of the middle class. A limited audience was sufficient to support the book-publishing industry, which in some cases relied for large sales on pirated editions of popular British authors.

Problems of distribution, however, constrained the growth of book publishing. Few bookstores existed, and direct ordering from publishers was not very satisfactory. Subscription book publishing, supported by armies of traveling agents, grew more rapidly because it circumvented the problems of distribution. However, there was an even larger audience available for which the newspaper and the periodical were almost ideal forms of publication. This ready market and better channels of distribution assured their initial dominance over the book.

The ascendancy of the newspaper is one of the important themes in this nation's cultural, social and political history, with the nineteenth century witnessing its greatest expansion. The newspaper has had a dramatic influence on American history, and its impact is most readily
seen in its growth. By 1870, one-third of the world's newspapers were being published in the United States. A variety of factors contributed to this impressive record, including the westward expansion and a growing population as well as increased literacy. The key element, however, was a new technology that enabled the rapid and inexpensive mass production of the "news." The telephone and telegraph made possible the quick and reliable assembling of information, and the emerging profession of journalism allowed an effective analysis and presentation. Power presses, stereo- and electrotyping, mechanical typecasting and typesetting, machine-made cellulose paper, and other innovations helped create a printing process that was almost completely mechanized.

Similar conditions gave rise to the periodical, which in the years following the Civil War became a truly popular medium. Its hallmark was an appealing text that was lavishly illustrated and competently printed. Century (1870-1930) and Scribner's Magazine (1887-1939) are representative of this tradition; their long lives attest to the success of the genre.

The 1890s saw the advent of the inexpensive general monthly which complemented rather than competed with its more elegant cousins. At ten cents a copy, such magazines as Cosmopolitan (1886-1925) and Munsey's Magazine (1889-1929) offered a bargain. Employing cheaper halftone illustrations, these lively magazines were immensely successful, attaining perhaps one-half million subscriptions each. High sales of periodicals (and even higher circulation figures for newspapers) attracted a new source of revenue, the advertising industry — itself only recently evolved. With the income from advertising, the more successful newspapers and periodicals were able to sell their products at less than the cost of production. Advertising has been an important force in newspaper and periodical publishing ever since.

For fifty years following the end of the Civil War, the book-publishing industry of the United States maintained the conservatism that had characterized it since the early nineteenth century. Most American publishing houses were family-owned, and this orientation was only slowly replaced with a more impersonal corporate structure. The old-line book publishers, such as Henry Holt, Frank H. Dodd, Harper and Brothers, E.S. Mead, and A.W. Wagnalls, truly believed in their roles as book publishers to a democracy. They were often scorned by other businessmen for the gentlemanly (some would have said casual) manner in which they conducted business.

Continuity in the publishing business was remarkable, especially
among the houses specializing in religious, juvenile and educational publications. Among religious publishers, for example, the Methodist Book Concern, established in the late eighteenth century, was a prospering business over 100 years later when it reported sales of 10 million dollars, and it is still active today.

Changes did take place, however. With the emergence of corporations, general publishing gradually replaced the specialties around which the old family-dominated firms had been built. Boston and Philadelphia were each superseded by New York City as the center of book publishing. The number of publishing houses increased. In 1859 there were just over 400; by 1900 they totaled 1000, and by 1915 more than 1500 publishers were active in the United States.

Within the publishing industry itself, the notable expansion of general publishing was counterbalanced by the increasing numbers of new special publishers. Specialty houses for the production of law books, textbooks and medical books had existed from early in the century. Subscription, religious and children's publishing continued to grow as well. Abuses in subscription bookselling, however, tended to give it a bad reputation, leading to the formation of the Subscription Books Committee by the American Library Association (ALA). With limited success, the committee reviewed proposed subscription publications in an attempt to monitor the sometimes questionable practices of subscription book publishers. After the Civil War, children's book publishing was stimulated through the spread of Sunday school libraries, and by the 1880s the children's market was inundated. In both content and form, the best children's books were significantly better than those of any earlier time.

An important new category of specialized publishing was the university press. The needs of university students and faculty for a medium in which to publish the results of advanced research were met in the late nineteenth century by the formation of university presses whose productions went beyond the occasional course catalog or laboratory pamphlet. Although previous attempts had been made to establish university presses, most notably at Cornell University in 1869, the oldest in continuous operation is Johns Hopkins University Press, established in 1878. Its motive — the diffusion of knowledge "far and wide" — was generally adopted by others that appeared in the following decades. By 1946 the university press movement had formally come of age with the establishment of the American Association of University Presses, and even though the output of university presses continues to be a relatively small percentage of the total number of titles published annually in the United States, the nature
of the publications, scholarly by definition, is generally of the very highest caliber.

In both general and special publishing, price-cutting and the net price principle dominated the scene in the early twentieth century. Fortunately, this vexing problem was resolved and the industry entered a period of slow and steady growth, with only occasional reverses brought on by general economic depression. Statistics reported in Publishers Weekly reflect the pattern of growth of American book publishing: in 1880 it reported a total of 2076 titles; in 1910 the total was 13,470.6

After the doldrums of the war years with their accompanying shortages and restrictions, publishing came alive during the 1920s under the influence of the brilliant personalities and energetic new firms that were to continue dominating the scene for many years thereafter. A number of new houses appeared, including Liveright, Albert and Charles Boni, Harcourt, Simon & Schuster, Norton, and Random House. But the quintessence of the new look in publishing was Alfred A. Knopf, established in 1915, whose Borzoi books became synonymous with literary distinction, attractive book-making, and the "unusual and individual." Knopf's success gave encouragement to the Design in Industry movement that eventually revolutionized the appearance of the trade book in this country. Knopf's publishing program was audacious. He gambled by promoting continental European authors on the American book market; he experimented with college textbooks; he produced a juvenile list; he published a literary magazine, the popular American Mercury; and during the depressed 1930s, he issued an inexpensive reprint line of his fine backlist. Other publishers were quick to imitate Knopf's use of high-quality yet moderately priced reprints as a hedge against the depression. Bennett Cerf's Modern Library Giants, for example, sold more than 10 million copies between 1931 and 1941. Knopf's accomplishments, however, were exceptional. The 1920s represented a period more of confirmation than of innovation.

The 1920s did carry the seeds of the post-World War I publishing revolution. For example, in 1926 the Book-of-the-Month Club was formed, to be followed a year later by the Literary Guild. The nearly instant success of these mail-order ventures surprised the publishing industry and alarmed the vested interests. The "book dividend" offered by the Book-of-the-Month Club caused some anxiety. Public libraries feared a decline in circulation, the bookshops spoke of unfair competition; but publishers eventually came to appreciate and even count on the rewards in residual rights. Public libraries have not gone out of business as a re-
result of the clubs. Furthermore, one study has established what is now obvious: sales of a title in bookshops are higher after its selection by a book club. The generally benevolent effects of book clubs on publishing and reading in this country in the pre-World War II years cannot be denied. The clubs made available a generous selection of good literature to a substantially larger audience than could have been reached by conventional book outlets. Moreover, the Limited Editions Club, established during the depression, did much pioneer work in developing popular taste for good commercial book-making.

Two other trends in the publishing scene since 1950 also had their beginnings before the war: the microform and the paperback. In the late 1930s, Eugene B. Powers of University Microfilms initiated the first commercial program of microfilm publication of original hardcover books. Unfortunately, the war curtailed development of this medium for the publishing industry. During this same period, the paperback book reemerged.

Until the 1950s, the development of the paperback book in the United States was sporadic. Associated with cheap format and indifferent content, paperback houses were shunned by the regular trade. Paperback titles were generally excluded from the bibliographies of the trade as well. Paperback publishers of the mid-nineteenth century took advantage of the availability of cheap paper, mechanized printing processes particularly well suited to large runs, the lack of copyright protection for foreign titles, and favorable postal rates to create a thriving market. There were in fact too many paperbacks, as witnessed by the growing number of books returned to publishers by wholesalers. Cutthroat competition, soaring costs, dwindling supplies of new authors and titles, declining popularity of fiction, and the constraining effects of the copyright law of 1891 all combined to destroy the paperback market. Ironically, even the technology that had made the phenomenon possible conspired against it. In the mid-1890s, the development of cheap buckram binding cloth re- vived the hardcover reprint market. By 1900 the paperback had almost vanished.

Nearly four decades passed before the paperback’s reappearance on a large scale when Allen Lane’s Penguin Books, established in England in 1935, provided the model for paperback publishers to emulate: attractively packaged reprints of works of popular appeal. Lane perceived the need for new markets and innovative methods of distribution. It was in large part the willingness of Woolworth’s chief buyer to stock his books...
that insured Lane's initial success. In 1939 Lane opened a Penguin office in New York City; that same year, his first American competition appeared in Pocket Books. Among the latter's early publications was an edition of Shakespeare's *Five Tragedies* that eventually sold over 3 million copies. Like its English counterpart, Pocket Books was decidedly democratic and its products could be found in dime stores, drugstores and department stores, as well as in bookshops. With the securing of these and additional channels of distribution, the mass market paperback was launched.

Statistics indicate that there is nothing like a war to stimulate reading and book buying. The paperback was remarkably popular during the Civil War. Had the United States been engaged longer in the First World War, it seems possible that a government-sponsored paperback program might have been developed. Within a year of this country's entry into World War II, the Council of Books in Wartime was established. By the end of the war, 1,324 titles representing 123,535,305 paperbacks had been distributed in the Armed Services Editions.* The popularity of wartime paperbacks prepared the way for the period of expansion that was to follow.

Librarians observed and reacted more than they actively participated in the events outlined above. Orion H. Cheney's report *Economic Survey of the Book Industry, 1930-1931* established for the first time the dimensions of the library market which were greater than some publishers had supposed. Also, by this time publishers had abandoned their notion that libraries, by their very existence, reduced the number of books that were sold. Both parties shared common interests and dealt with the same commodity. But the profit motive of the publisher and the idealism of the librarian must have seemed totally incompatible to both. Librarians demanded preferential treatment in the form of discounts. Their billing practices were frequently maddening to publishers— but they were an agency for promotion through the display and circulation of books, through the numerous and generally favorable reviews which they provided in various library journals, and through their advocacy of freedom of the press. Librarians and publishers disagreed mostly on monetary issues, but the problems were not sufficiently serious to cause a permanent rift.

**PERIOD OF INNOVATION**

In both publishing and libraries, change has been the dominant trend in the years following 1950. In publishing, a major theme has been expansion, particularly in textbook and reference works, in children's and
young adult books, in reprinting, and until recently, in subscription books. Trade book publishing has also accelerated from about 11,000 titles in 1950, to 15,000 in 1960, to 36,000 in 1970. The annual number of titles has declined somewhat since 1974, when a record of 40,000 titles was set.10

Growth in publishing can be explained in large measure by the general industrial growth after World War II and by such additional factors as an increase in the birthrate, income and leisure time; the rising educational levels; the importance of higher education (stimulated by the GI Bill); the financing of education, including libraries and media centers, by the federal government; and by developments in information technology.

From the librarian's perspective the new formats in publishing have overshadowed other developments. Additional topics of importance include hardcover reprints, mergers in publishing, emergence of alternative presses, and the working relationship between librarians and publishers.

PAPERBACKS

The "paperback revolution" has been accurately described by Arthur A. Cohen as "a mild technological innovation united in questionable embrace with a transformation of the techniques of consumer distribution."11 Advances in offset printing enabled the rapid simultaneous production of text and illustrations at relatively low costs. The development of perfect binding eliminated the expense inherent in conventional case bindings. The Cameron belt press made possible the rapid conversion of a reel of paper into a complete book in an uninterrupted sequence of operations. The new techniques referred to by Cohen were those shared in general by postwar merchandising—the supermarket, the chain store, the shopping center, and the discount store. In 1964, the year of its twenty-fifth anniversary, Pocket Books was able to boast of having sold 1 billion paperbacks. In the paperback market of today, this achievement is not unique.

Although perhaps not in itself revolutionary, the paperback explosion was a response to truly revolutionary changes in American education inaugurated by the GI Bill and continued by both the postwar baby boom and the infusion of federal funds into the educational systems. These activities resulted in more students, more faculty, more schools, more libraries, and expanded and innovative curricula. The profound effects of these events on the book needs of students were first felt in higher education, but they gradually filtered down into secondary and elementary schools as well. One important innovation occurred when primary source
material was substituted for or added to the predigested textbook anthologies, particularly in the humanities.

The mass market paperback industry could not meet the needs of American education after the war. Another kind of book, the quality paperback reprint, sometimes referred to as the "egghead" book, was devised by publishers for this purpose. Dover, Meridian, Vintage, and Anchor were among the early lines. The university presses, with their impressive backlists, entered the field somewhat belatedly.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s the mass paperback and the quality paperback reprint markets were independent enterprises. Each also moved independently into the publishing of paperback originals. Fiction predominated among the mass market originals, an early and successful example being the works in Fawcett's Gold Medal Books series. College textbooks were among the first original publications to appear in the quality paperback line. Van Nostrand entered this field early with its Anvil, Insight and Searchlight series, but many more specialized lines appeared eventually. Like hardcover textbooks, these publications were assured an appreciable audience, and the size, diversity and durability of the market for quality original paperbacks has surprised nearly everyone, including the experts. The higher prices now required for their production and sale have proved no real problem. Relative to hardcover prices, the paperback remains a decided bargain.

The continued and significant growth of the paperback industry has been recorded since 1955 in Paperbound Books in Print. That year 4500 titles and editions were listed. By 1960 that figure had more than doubled to 9800; it tripled in the next five years (30,700 titles), and nearly tripled again by 1970 (88,000 titles). The total number of titles in print in 1977 was 142,000. Perhaps the most significant year in the development of the paperback market was 1962, when for the first time reportedly as many adult books were sold in paperback as in cloth, and the paperback industry sold more adult trade books than were circulated by all the libraries in the United States.12 A recent and equally interesting development is the Quality Paperback Book Club, a subsidiary of the Book-of-the-Month Club.

The advent of the paperback book has resulted in significant changes in the reading and book-buying habits of millions of Americans. There are no reliable studies available, however, of the degree to which paperbacks have been utilized by librarians, who as a group were slow to abandon their traditional aversion to this format. The great opportunities offered by the paperback market could not be ignored for long, particularly

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since with proper binding, paperbacks can be integrated into a library's permanent collection.

There has been a significant increase in the number of titles published simultaneously in cloth and paper. When confronted with such a choice, even though publisher's discounts are greater for hardcover books, librarians hard pressed for adequate funds may increasingly opt for the paperback.

MICROPUBLISHING

The paperback has long since ceased to be revolutionary. Another innovative format is microform, and the end of its revolutionary phase is not in sight. More than any other type of publishing, micropublishing has not only had a significant effect on the industry generally, but also has had an even greater impact on those libraries that have had to accommodate this format to any degree.

Of the several formats produced by micropublishers (roll film, micro-opaques or microcards, aperture cards, microfiche, and ulrafiche), microfilm and microfiche appear to be the two most important today. The production of micro-images was made possible by the advent and development of photography in the nineteenth century. Not until the 1930s, however, were its techniques applied to the publishing industry. Until recently micropublishing was simply reprinting on a photographically reduced scale. Computer output microform (COM) is another, newer development in which the material to be published is generated directly from computerized data rather than by the photographic reduction of original documents. COM gives evidence that publishers are only now realizing that micro-formatted material does not have to appear as reduced printing. Libraries that have installed COM catalogs must now contend with eccentric title entries and mechanical omissions, however.

Initially micropublishers concentrated on publishing entire collections or large groups of materials for which a bibliography was the basis, such as Charles Evans's American Bibliography. Later, publishers began to create their own collections on broad subjects and specific themes. Since bibliographies were not always available for these ventures, access to their contents has always been unsatisfactory. Some publishers have now become aware of the necessity for bibliographic control, and are producing their own indexes and bibliographies. In 1958 ALA established the Micropublishing Projects Subcommittee to serve as a coordinating agency concerned with microform materials for both publishers and librarians. The committee advises on the desirability of proposed micropublishing projects.
that will serve the needs of the scholarly community and takes appropriate action to ensure a desirable quality of reproduction and adequate bibliographic control. Another committee evaluates the adequacy of access to microforms and advises on needed improvements.

An aim of micropublishing is to preserve the contents of materials originally printed on nonpermanent paper, and still another purpose is to copy important and sometimes unique material in case of the destruction of the originals. The use of microforms, especially microfilm, as a vehicle for the preservation of library materials has always been highly touted. As library users are discovering, however, reality seldom lives up to the ideal. There is nothing inherent in film that makes it any less impervious to gradual destruction than conventional book paper. Combine these weaknesses with the inevitable damage that results from even moderate use of the film, and the ideal becomes even further compromised. The recent use of new types of film has further lessened the archival purpose of micropublishing. Vesicular and diazo films are well suited for duplicating, since they do not require the use of a darkroom or of wet chemicals. However, both are less permanent than the more expensive silver-based film.

Micropublishing can also provide on-demand copies of materials not sufficiently needed to warrant conventional publication. Programs such as University Microfilm's provision of doctoral dissertations "on demand" have been quite successful. Another such program may be the "2-stream" approach endorsed by the National Enquiry into Scholarly Communication. Here the best scholarly works would continue to appear in hardcover, while "competent" work would be available on demand in microformat through a national bibliographic center.

Publishers who also produce printed books are often reluctant to publish the same materials in microform, thus allowing the entire book to be duplicated for ten or fifteen cents. Other publishers take pride in their programs of simultaneous publishing of the same material in both hard copy and microform, such as Pergamon Press and its Simultaneous Microfiche Subscription. The University of Chicago Press's Chicago Visual Library is a text/fiche program that combines the printed text with illustrations produced on microfiche.

Even though printed books will undoubtedly remain at the heart of scholarly research in several disciplines, micropublishers will probably supply at an increasing rate materials to supplement—and in some cases replace—traditional library materials. The major impediment may well continue to be the lack of adequate standards for reading equipment.
As Allen Veaner has observed: "It has been the lack of comprehension — one could almost say obtuseness — on the part of manufacturers of user equipment of the overriding importance of the man-machine interface that, more than any other single factor, has thwarted the realization of the long-sought powerful potential inherent in microforms."  

HARDCOVER REPRINTS

Reprint publishing was ideally suited to the needs of the expanding scholarly and educational fields in the 1960s. New libraries were being created, and existing libraries were seeking greater breadth and depth. Both paperback and microform publishers have been heavily involved in the reprint market. A third element is the hardcover reprint publisher.

Hardcover reprinting is as old as printing itself, a statement easily verified in bibliographies of incunabula. Publishers have always been involved in the reprinting of their own and other publishers' works. However, until the emergence in this century of reprinting as a distinct branch of the industry, publishers were primarily involved in the original publication of works for which a large sale was anticipated.

Modern hardcover reprint publishing is characterized by the reproduction, usually in an offset photographic form and in small edition sizes (the average press run being between 500 and 750 copies), of material available elsewhere at some earlier date. In the United States, the reprint publishers Peter Smith and F.S. Crofts Company were already at work in the 1920s. In the next decade, ALA established a modest program of surveying libraries to identify out-of-print titles worthy of reprinting. Whether from little need for reprints or from an aversion to the reprint format, librarians declined to provide much support for the reprint business, and the market did not grow. Nor did it until after World War II when, in the radically different milieux of the 1950s and 1960s, the reprint industry enjoyed its own explosion. Both the established trade and several entrepreneurs were quick to exploit the need for hardcover reprints. Not only were individual titles published in this manner, but also, as with micropublishing, large blocks of specialized material were created in fashionable subjects and disciplines that librarians and educators either needed or were persuaded to think they needed.

The degree of success of the reprint publishers in measuring the market is apparent in the expansion of the industry. Carol Nemeyer's definitive study of scholarly reprinting provides statistical evidence of growth: in 1966 there were 69 firms and 12,000 titles. Four years later,
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253 firms and 38,000 titles were listed. In 1976 the figures were 328 firms and 66,000 titles.

The reprint industry has its problems, and these are passed on to its chief client, the librarian. Since the number of copies of a typical reprint edition is small, as is the number of potential customers, library support is essential if the reprint industry is to survive. Reprint publishing, however, has been called a jungle market. No other sector of the publishing trade is so lacking in organization and accountability. There is still no association of reprint publishers. Publishers' names and addresses change with alarming frequency, and even though most reprint publishers are reputable, there have been cases of fraudulent business practices. Poaching among reprint publishers is commonplace and duplication not uncommon, with striking differences in the prices charged for the same publication. Bibliographic control is sporadic, and many bibliographic ghosts haunt the pages of those reprint bibliographies that do exist. As long as desirable reprint titles are in the public domain, participation in the business by the unqualified and even the unscrupulous will continue.

MERGERS, CONGLOMERATES AND BIGNESS

An important topic about which librarians have said very little, perhaps because they feel both unqualified and unaffected, is concentration in the publishing industry. Publishers are certainly aware of this trend; indeed, it is increasingly difficult for them not to be directly involved in a situation that is reflected in almost every issue of Publishers Weekly and other trade journals. Some authors and industry critics have become increasingly concerned, as have the U.S. Department of Justice and the Fair Trade Commission, over possible restraint of trade.

Two recent events, particularly visible because they were both "firsts," may indicate a turning point. Farrar, Straus & Giroux has withdrawn from the Association of American Publishers in protest against that organization's endorsement in early 1978 of concentration within the book-publishing industry. Farrar, Straus & Giroux's president noted that his firm had decided to discontinue paying dues for a point of view that it believes to be inimical to publishing interests, to the cause of literature, and to authors. In April 1978 about one-half of Houghton Mifflin's authors announced their intention of reexamining their relationship with the publishing firm if it should be taken over by Western Pacific Industries, a New York-based conglomerate which owns manufacturing companies as well as Western Pacific Railroad, but which has had no previous involvement in the business of publishing.

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What has brought some publishers, authors and the U.S. government to this state of anxiety? Earlier in this essay, the point was made that publishing existed outside the mainstream of American capitalism during the nineteenth century and for much of this century. Before World War II, mergers were not common and those between larger firms almost unknown, the major exception being the acquisition of the Century Company by Appleton to form Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Since the 1950s, publishing has come into closer conformity with the prevailing patterns of industry and business. The 1960s, which saw a remarkable expansion in the book-publishing industry, also witnessed the need of publishers for more working capital. New capital was obtainable in several ways. A firm could "go public" and offer shares of its stock to investors. Bobbs-Merrill, Crowell-Collier and Henry Holt were leaders in this technique. A second possibility is the horizontal merger between existing publishing companies. A recent example of this now-common method was the purchase by Harper & Row of J.B. Lippincott. An even more interesting example united Doubleday & Company and Dell Publishing Company, respective leaders in hardcover and paperback publishing. This merger offers interesting possibilities for the in-house transfer of reprint rights of their authors, which might become popular among publishers. Finally, the acquisitions made by a conglomerate will combine companies with dissimilar interests and provide the potential for strength through the diversity of its holdings in more than one segment of industry. The electronics-communication industry, which falls into this category, has been particularly interested in the purchase of publishing houses. The Columbia Broadcasting System now owns Fawcett, Popular Library, Saunders, Praeger, and Holt, Rinehart and Winston, as well as twenty-five magazines. The Radio Corporation of America controls Random House, Knopf, Pantheon, and Ballantine. Other media giants active in this line are Time-Life, Warner Communications and Filmways. American publishing houses have also begun to attract the ultimate in mergers, the international conglomerate.

The concern that mergers, conglomerates and bigness will somehow reduce the options for authors' manuscripts and for divergent points of view, and at the same time exert pressure for the promotion of some best-seller formula suitable for multimedia exploitation, may be valid. One can only guess what the lasting effects of this trend will be. Presently, however, publishing represents one of the less-concentrated industries in light of the fact that "it takes the fifty largest firms to produce 50 percent of the book titles published in this country."18 It is equally important
to know which firms have been merged and the effects of merger on the quality and integrity of their subsequent publications. If this trend should reduce the number or quality of trade books, concern is warranted, for the trade book is the cornerstone of many library collections.

THE SMALL PRESS MOVEMENT, SELF-PUBLISHING, FINE PRINTING

If the merger is a significant trend in contemporary publishing, the emergence of the small press and of self-publishing, both of which exist primarily outside of the major publishing centers, represents an interesting contrast. The current small press movement is one of the phenomena of the new culture in this country. Its model is undoubtedly Alan Swallow, who produced from his Denver office an impressive bellesstristic line until his death in 1966. Violating most of the old saws about publishing, he flourished for more than two decades. His enterprise and determination have become the hallmarks of his successors, who work in seemingly improbable circumstances to produce a body of publications which have attained a popularity and significance that have intrigued the publishing establishment and that cannot be ignored by librarians. Indeed, some librarians have become promoters of this genre, while the big publishers have paid it the ultimate compliment: imitation.

Although wary of their big brothers, the small press publishers are gradually becoming absorbed into the bibliographic network of the establishment, much to the relief of librarians. Increasingly, small press books are cited in the trade bibliographies, and incorporated into the Cataloging-in-Publication and ISBN programs. A sure sign of the movement's coming of age is the appearance of specialized reference works about small presses and small press publications. Most of these are published by Dustbooks, located in Paradise, California. The serious problem of distribution has been alleviated somewhat by the establishment of dealers specializing in this line. In Berkeley, California, for example, the firm Bookpeople now represents more than 500 small presses and self-publishers. There is even a Small Press Book Club which provides its subscribers with a sampling of recent publications.

The small press movement is a refreshing tonic to the prevailing conformity of the general publishing scene. And in meeting the needs of its more limited audience, one that the regular publishers have tended to ignore, it has enriched the quality of publishing in this country. Eventually it may provide a small but permanent adjunct to the regular trade book market.

The fine press movement which forms part of this invigorating
scene is also a reaction against the mass product syndrome. Recovering slowly from the effects of the depression and war years, it has exhibited great strength and momentum during the past decade or so. One can only hope that its generally high standards of design and production might have some effect on trade book publishing. Fine presses have been accused of producing too many of the chestnuts of literature. This is changing with the appearance of original and sometimes important texts.

The fine press movement has not yet been tied into the national and trade bibliographies of this country, nor is there a comprehensive bibliography of fine press publications. Given the deliberate isolationism of many fine printers, it seems unlikely that this problem will be easily resolved.

Another response to the limitations of conventional publishing is in the establishment of the library-oriented press. While R.R. Bowker, H.W. Wilson and other houses meet many of the bibliographical needs of librarians, these new firms, some of which were established by librarians, have their use. Firms such as Scarecrow Press, Shoe String Press, Greenwood Press and Libraries Unlimited, Inc. complement the publication programs of the professional societies including, in particular, the American Library Association.

PUBLISHERS AND LIBRARIANS

In its reaction to the challenges of the past twenty-five years, the American book-publishing industry has proven to be a viable capitalistic enterprise, exhibiting overall a business acumen totally uncharacteristic of its early history. New formats have been devised to meet new needs and exploit new markets. Abandoning the "occupational elegance"19 of the trade, the publishers of mass market books have secured a breakthrough for the industry by adopting modern merchandising systems to secure their impressively large audiences. The hardcover line has also enjoyed a healthy expansion. The annual listings of new, in-print and reprint titles grow, with no demonstrable decline in quality. Paperbacks remain reasonably priced, and thus far most hardcover books have been less affected than serials by inflation. The adult trade book may be adversely affected by industry concentration. Meanwhile, the quality paperback and the small press books serve as useful adjuncts.

Bibliographic control has improved as a result of most publishers' cooperation in such programs as Cataloging-in-Publication and ISBN. Even the newer formats have their specialized bibliographies, e.g., Guide to Reprints and Books on Demand.
Complaints are heard from within the industry of overproduction and underpricing, with the large remainder market viewed as symptomatic of both problems. For most books, distribution remains imperfect. Book outlets are too few and often inadequate. The percentage of returns is high and therefore costly to the publishers. The statement of one doyen of the industry that his inventory was "gone today, here tomorrow" was probably not entirely facetious. Too many books are poorly constructed and badly designed. The problem of paper deterioration which is now so critical for nineteenth- and early twentieth-century books has yet to be solved. But the industry has done its job reasonably well during the past quarter-century, including meeting the demands of American libraries during a period of their unprecedented growth. It seems fair to say that the book-publishing industry appears to be capable of coping in the foreseeable future with conventional problems. But what the industry may need is more imagination.

During the halcyon 1960s, when publishers' profits were high and librarians' budgets generous, both parties fell into the mistaken assumption that their interests were identical and that a natural alliance existed. There was general public accord, while specific problems and frictions were resolved through workshops, conferences and liaison committees. This process began in the 1950s when librarians and publishers found common ground in their battle against the censorship controversies of the McCarthy era. The Westchester Conference, organized in 1953 by ALA and the American Book Publishers Council, produced an effective statement on the freedom to read which received general endorsement. In the mid-1950s these two organizations formed the National Book Committee, and in 1958 launched National Library Week. During this decade the two groups also began joint lobbying efforts in Washington, D.C. that have facilitated the passage of mutually beneficial legislation.

The budgetary constraints of the 1970s have reminded librarians and publishers of their differences. Accord has been replaced by confrontation. Librarians were angered and shocked when the book industry withdrew its support from the National Book Committee in 1974, pleading financial reverses. On the other hand, publishers have expressed surprise and disappointment at what they regard as the callous attitude of librarians toward the effects of the new copyright laws on publishers. "We saw clear evidence," said Curtis Benjamin, "of the librarians' overriding concern for their own convenience and for the facility of service to their patrons." Many librarians would regard as appropriate these priorities which have so offended the book industry.
The growth of library networks and resource-sharing has created another point of friction. The inability of a given library to attain self-sufficiency has made cooperation among libraries almost inevitable. Library networks are designed to distribute or exchange library materials or services over various transportation and communication links. The dual trend of reduced or static library budgets, combined with the escalating costs of virtually all published materials, has no doubt hastened the advent and development of library cooperation. For example, in 1974 the research libraries of the New York Public Library, and Columbia, Harvard and Yale universities incorporated as the Research Libraries Group (RLG). Through its Bibliographic Center created at Yale, member libraries have access to over 26 million printed volumes as well as maps, manuscripts and similar research materials. The apparent effectiveness of this cooperation is indicated by the annual report for 1976-77 submitted by Yale University's librarian, Rutherford Rogers. He notes that because the library could use seventy-five "expensive items" through the Bibliographic Center, Yale saved $70,000.22 The observation that because of increased cooperation, libraries today are collectively purchasing fewer copies of individual titles is probably correct. However, the contention of publishers that by discouraging library cooperation (for example, through the new copyright laws which restrict photocopying and inter-library loan) they will force librarians to meet the needs of their users by purchasing additional copies of journals and books, is not necessarily supportable. In most cases the money for these purchases will not be there. In reality, it is because of the existence of RLG that Yale saved $70,000 that could, in theory at least, be used for further acquisitions. Publishers should realize that the real causes of journal cancellations and shrinking book orders from libraries are inflation, changing market conditions and declining library budgets — not library networks and consortia. For, as one observer has seen it, "all too frequently, cooperation is merely a pooling of poverty."23

The only perceivable alleviation to the financial constraints confronting both publishers and librarians is mutual understanding and continued cooperation. Publishers cannot expect librarians to spend money they no longer have. But librarians cannot continue to pool resources, lend to each other and enable patrons to copy, so that one book performs the work formerly done by many, without serious consideration of the effects of this policy on publishers.
References


20. Ibid., p. 102.


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