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**UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS PUBLICATIONS**  
**Library Series, 31**

**The 14th Annual Lecture on  
Books and Bibliography, presented at  
the University of Kansas on  
16th November 1967**

**THE TWO WORLDS  
OF UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING**

**BY ROGER SHUGG**

**UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS  
LIBRARIES**

**1967**

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Library of Congress Catalog Card number: 68-65126  
Printed in Lawrence, Kansas, U.S.A. by the  
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*The 14th Annual Books and Bibliography Lecture was given on November 16, 1967, under the joint sponsorship of the University of Kansas Libraries and of the University Press of Kansas, on the occasion of the founding of the new Press.*

*In his prefatory remarks, Mr. Shugg joined with his colleagues from other university presses in paying tribute to John Dessauer, Director of the University Press of Kansas, and in wishing the Press the vastly expanded usefulness and success promised by its serving all the state-supported universities of Kansas.*

MOST OF US, I am sure, will remember the famous essay on "Kansas" written in 1910 by Carl Becker, the distinguished historian who lived some of the most fruitful years of his life here at the University in Lawrence.<sup>1</sup> Do you recall the amusing irony with which he quoted a local newspaper's comment on a near-by village that he tactfully identified only as "X"? It is "a fine town, one of the best in the state," claimed this newspaper. "It has a fine university, and a fine class of people, who have made it a center of culture. X lacks only one thing; it has no sewers." Becker admitted that this "juxtaposition of culture and sewers" might be considered a little "bizarre." But since both are "good things to possess," Becker thought that an equal concern for them demonstrated the effective pragmatism with which the Kansans of 1910 gave heed simultaneously to their ideals and their necessities.

Nothing, then, if we understand Carl Becker's fable, is strange or irreconcilable about the academic and business worlds that have their conjunction in university publishing today.

In considering this conjunction, we may enlarge our perspective by taking a quick look back at the history of university publishing. It is a comparatively recent phenomenon and its history really begins with our own century, and for the most part in our own United States. It is true, of course, that the very first university presses were established long ago in England, at Oxford in 1478 and at Cambridge in 1521, and we do well to hail them as our venerable ancestors.<sup>2</sup> But nearly four centuries went by before American university presses came into being, first at Cornell in 1869 and next at Johns Hopkins in 1878. They took root, unlike the English presses, with the development of the graduate school in the United States and the adoption of German methods of training students in graduate semi-

nars for research and the writing of doctoral dissertations. The American university press ever since has been closely related to the graduate school, without any functional relationship whatever to the undergraduate college.

American colleges in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries could not possibly have given birth to scholarly publishing. They were devoted to training the young in the classical pieties of the liberal arts, especially in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, philosophy, and theology; and their faculties, composed of gentlemanly teachers rather than scholars, never had time or interest enough to write monographs of the kind that university presses were created to publish.

It is important for us to be aware of this lack of any connection between the university press and the undergraduate college if we are to understand why the press has so often struggled along as a kind of academic orphan. It stands pretty much alone in the university's chart of organization, useful to the research-minded members of the faculty, yes, but of little moment in the classroom, never engaging in instruction itself or having much if anything to do with students as such. Consequently, there is often an inverse correlation between the degree of emphasis on undergraduate teaching at a college and the strength and distinction of its press. Most colleges in this country do not even have a press. University publishing is still, as it has always been, the instrument and adjunct of graduate education and research.

For that reason it was not until our own times that university presses in our definition of the term came into existence outside the United States and England. Even now only a few are to be found in Canada, Norway, and France, and here and there on the continents of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Except for those in Canada,

they are not really our kind of university press, committed to the publication of free scholarly inquiry regardless of political implications or academic politics. They do not generally restrict their publications, as we do, without fear or favor, to works of scholarship refereed and judged worth publishing by other scholars, and approved, again without fear or favor, by a publications committee of the university faculty.

In emphasizing the Anglo-American character of the university press as we know it today, we are not singing our own praises or indulging in a chauvinistic complacency. We are simply making the vital point that true university publishing is the creature of objective scholarship, free of any dominating influence by church or state, or by race, class, or political party, the kind of scholarship that flourished in the Western World when the spirit of rational scientific thinking became the prevailing academic temper. It is this spirit of freedom to learn, of unfettered search for knowledge, of faith in the widest possible sharing of truth, that made, and makes, university publishing a legitimate and necessary part of the academic enterprise.

In the short history of the American university presses, we have gone through what might be called three phases. First, until the 1930s there was the accidental or incidental press, started and run by amateurs—a maverick professor here, an unusually literate and ambitious printer there, a worthy but needy faculty widow somewhere else. They did well in their day, these early presses, and university publishing owes them a great deal.

The number of presses multiplied rapidly in the 1930s and 40s, and more often than not in this second phase they were directed and staffed by people who recognized their limitations in the craft of publishing, sought eagerly to acquire more professional expertise, and gained it largely

by teaching one another in their national federation, the Association of American University Presses, organized in 1937.

The third phase began after World War II. It was marked not only by the establishment of many more presses, but by a steady increase in the number of books published, a growing concern for the art of bookmaking, and a new vigor and efficiency in marketing books, both at home and abroad. This phase also witnessed a swelling influx into university publishing of refugees from commercial publishing. They gave willingly, most of them, of the skills and methods and general "know-how" they had acquired in their commercial experience, and in return they were schooled, not always so willingly, in the attitudes and ways of scholars and scholarship.

During this third phase university publishing may be said to have come of age in the academic world and to have been accepted as a highly important and very fast-growing segment of the American book industry.

We may now be entering a fourth phase. Hopefully, it will be distinguished by genuine acceptance of the necessity for supporting a university press on the part of administrative officers and the board of trustees or legislative committee who must meet its deficits, and by equally genuine recognition of the press and its staff as worthy members of the university community. We may also hope that in this fourth phase commercial publishers will learn to live with university presses without complaining about their exemption from taxes and their few commercially successful books. These businessmen really ought not to begrudge us a plum that provides some real income once in a while when they owe so much of their own fabulous success nowadays to the academic enterprise of which we are a part.

In point of fact these gentlemen are most gracious in

their acceptance of university presses as long as we publish books that they could not handle at a profit. Charles Scribner, head of his distinguished family firm and president this year of the American Book Publishers' Council, when addressing university publishers in their annual convention at Toronto in June 1967, expressed his admiration of "the wonderful lists of scholarly books you bring out each year," adding that "most of these books would never see the light of day if it were not for the institution of university presses and believe me that is simply an overwhelming fact compared with the one or two times a year that one of us may feel that you have stepped on our commercial toe."<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps our friends in commercial publishing would have a better understanding of university presses if they knew how some of us got our start. To my knowledge the minutes or transcript of discussions among university officials when they are thinking of establishing a press have never been published. But from their later statements, reactions, and expectations, once a press has been started, it is not difficult to imagine what they may have said at the embryonic stage. Let me try.

*Administrative vice-president* (chairing the meeting): Next on the agenda is this proposal from a faculty group that wants us to set up a university press. Professor Smith, you represent them. What about it?

*Professor Smith*: Well, we've been thinking for a long time this university ought to have a press of its own, so that we could get all our manuscripts published. Other university presses are so busy they either won't consider our books, or they take years to get them into print and ask our university for a subsidy besides. There must be a goodly number of manuscripts lying

around in faculty offices and studies here just because we don't have our own press to publish them.

*Vice-president for Development:* I think a press of our own would be a good idea too. It could do a lot to improve our image, with books going everywhere carrying the name of this university. And if we could publish some of our old settlers' memoirs, and—say, I know a couple of pretty well-to-do alumni who'd love to get their autobiographies published. If we had a press to do it for them, I might get some money out of them for that new science laboratory.

*Academic vice-president:* I was talking to the humanities dean the other day about what further incentives we might offer to some of the new faculty members he wants to bring here. A university press that would guarantee them quick publication for their research might be just what he needs.

*Dean of the Graduate School:* Yes, and it would help with our Ph.D.s too—if we had a press to publish their dissertations. That might bring us more good fellowship-holders from other schools.

*Professor Smith:* Now wait a minute. Don't get going on old settlers, alumni, Ph.D.s and everybody else right away. We want a press to look after the faculty manuscripts.

*Administrative vice-president:* Are you sure we really need a press? Won't any really good manuscripts our faculty produce be published by some other university press, or by one of the commercial houses? They certainly have enough scouts and salesmen tramping through our halls and offices, taking up hours of faculty time.

*Vice-president for Development:* But then the books that others publish don't carry our name or do much to

spread our fame as an institution. You know, I'm getting quite excited by the development possibilities of this idea.

*Financial vice-president:* With all of you so enthusiastic, I hate to ask the question, but what would a press cost? I've heard a good deal of grumbling from my opposite numbers at other universities about the increasing deficits they have to meet for their publishing programs year after year. Some of them talk about sums running to \$100,000, even \$150,000 a year. Where can we find that kind of money? And think of all the other things we could do with it: four or five distinguished professorships, a good collection or two added to the library, quite a few more graduate fellowships, maybe. I'm not so sure we want to start a press. If we do, we might have a tiger by the tail.

Strangely enough, this kind of discussion leads more often than not to the appointment of a committee to study the question, and sooner or later to the organization of a university press, usually understaffed and undercapitalized.

There will always be debate about the proper role of a university press because it is of necessity Janus-headed, looking in opposite directions at the two different worlds to which it belongs. One is the academic world, in which the press exists to serve scholarship, professorial authors, and the libraries that are the principal customers and chief depositories for press books. The other is the business world of manufacturing, promoting, and selling that peculiar product called a book. Let us look more closely, and as realistically as we can, at certain aspects of these two worlds in which the press director and his staff must be equally at home.

The professorial clientele that presses are expected to serve in their academic environment has been growing at a prodigious rate in these recent years of the knowledge and population "explosions." In all our history, only some 200,000 Ph.D. degrees have been granted, and of these 32,000 were awarded in the three years from 1960 through 1962.<sup>4</sup> The number of doctorates granted yearly has now reached about 17,000 and is still rising. Roughly one half of these trained scholars enter and remain in university or college teaching, and it is with these members of the professoriate that the university presses are primarily concerned.

If they were all productive scholars of the first rank, the task of providing publication for their manuscripts would be impossible. But fortunately, the bulk of them settle comfortably, after a time at least, into the worthy and increasingly recognized and well-paid role of teacher, leaving research and writing to their more ambitious and energetic or more curious and original-minded colleagues.

Even so, the numbers seeking publication of their monographs, research reports, conference proceedings, and symposia are growing too large; university presses cannot possibly satisfy all of them. But service to scholarship does not demand, and never has demanded, that everything written in the name and guise of scholarship be published. University publishers have long felt this without adequately defining the line they would draw between what must be published and what can be left in manuscript, or at most be put into microprint or distributed in photocopies, without appreciable loss except to its author. Now David Riesman has supplied that definition.

In a recent book, Riesman has drawn a very useful distinction between the truly intellectual man of ideas, the thinker, who is never numerous in any society, and the

“academic craftsman,” who in great numbers staffs our laboratories and haunts our libraries.<sup>5</sup> Can anyone doubt that as the number of Ph.D.s continues to multiply, and with it the number of them on college faculties, the proportion of craftsmen to thinkers among them will likewise increase? Some ten years ago, Jacques Barzun warned a convention of history professors that all their tinkering to improve graduate programs and courses would not raise the caliber of young historians they were training, because, as he bluntly said, “There just aren’t enough first-class brains to go round.”<sup>6</sup>

If I were inclined to be cynical in my turn, I might say that all the manuscripts produced by the thinkers will never overtax the resources of university publishers. Our problem will be to sort out properly and give priority to the more useful of the informative or imitative products of the craftsmen. We may find this depressing and frustrating, but a press can seldom be any better than its faculty, since it must respond as if by conditioned reflex to what the faculty scholars are thinking and writing.

A scholarly historian of publishing, the late William Charvat, pointed out in 1959 that “Publishing is relevant to literary history only insofar as it can be shown to be, ultimately, a shaping influence on literature.” He explained his meaning by citing the example of the great Boston publisher, James T. Fields. In 1849 Nathaniel Hawthorne was planning to write a collection of “old-time legends” of which one was to be a novelette called *The Scarlet Letter*. Fields, said Charvat, “changed the course of Hawthorne’s whole career by persuading him to expand the novelette and publish it separately . . . .”<sup>7</sup>

Rarely can a university publisher exert such crucial influence on a scholarly author because of the specialized and complicated nature of his subject matter. A press director

or editor must be a diplomat of the highest order to question the worth or soundness of a piece of research even though he knows it is imitative, mechanical, or downright trivial. Scholars set their own standards, and they all insist on being judged by their academic peers.

Yet there are both creative and critical functions that the university publisher can and should perform. First and foremost, he can actively encourage good scholars to write, and can help them shape their materials into readable, publishable books, rather than sitting passively at his desk until a finished manuscript, finished past the point of practicable revision, is brought to him. He can begin with the young scholar preparing to write his doctoral dissertation and teach him what all too few professors have the time or energy to teach him, which is, simply, how to write a book—how to order and structure his materials and present them clearly and cogently, rather than in a wordy, rambling style befogged and smothered with meaningless, repetitious phrases, picayune footnotes, and pointless, unassimilated quotations that were tediously but lazily transcribed from his notes.

The dean of every graduate school in this country would be wise to conscript his university press director or editor to conduct for all graduate students in the humanities and social sciences a seminar each year in the ways of putting together a good book. And this seminar should be a prerequisite to the writing of a doctoral dissertation. Legion are the bad habits of scholarly writing now tolerated in thesis seminars that concentrate on subject matter, not style.

Here the university publisher has a subject to profess, and one worthy of a place in graduate education. Subject matter and research methods are not everything in scholarly writing; indeed they may be largely lost sight of for

want of order and clarity in presentation. Let us remember that there are two parts to that goal of university publishing of which we talk so much, namely, dissemination of knowledge. The knowledge comes first, of course, but successful communication is not a distant second. And the principles and practices of effective communication are, or should be, the university publisher's specialty. Let him have a chance to teach them to scholars-in-training.

Many press directors, especially those at state universities, can also take active steps to make their publishing of real and direct service to the community of citizens who support the university and its press.

To those who may dismiss regional publishing as unworthy of a university press, I quote the unforgettable words of Frank Wardlaw, director of the University of Texas Press: "It is a narrow view of scholarship indeed which holds that the Medici banks of Florence are legitimate subjects of scholarly inquiry but that the operation of a big cattle ranch in the Texas panhandle is not." I too question why it should be thought fitting for a scholar to write and a university press to publish a cultural study of the Russian steppes but not of the Kansas prairies, a collection of the folk tales of nomads in Iran but not of cowboys in our Western states, an analysis of the caste system in India but not of the bi-racial system in the American South.

Quoting Mr. Wardlaw again: "Some of the most imaginative and valuable publishing done in the United States has come from the regional programs of university presses. North Carolina pioneered in important publishing of this type with books whose impact was reflected in the development of the entire South . . . and most of our rich legacy from the history and culture of the American Indians

would have been irretrievably lost without the consistently brilliant program of the University of Oklahoma Press."

Regional publishing has suffered in respectability because it has too often been in fact parochial publishing—of old settlers' reminiscences, for example, or miscellanies of antiquarian history put together by enthusiastic but uncritical amateurs, or eulogistic biographies of local bigwigs. It will gain in stature and esteem when it matures into the application of science and of social science to the urban and rural problems peculiar to each of our many regions in the United States.

University presses, scattered throughout the nation as they are, are the only agencies that can rescue American publishing from its overcentralization, through which the provincialism of the East becomes standardized as the national pattern and character. It is fully as beneficial to have our publishing dispersed through the university presses as it is to have higher education itself diversified in different types of colleges.

In the interest of furthering this healthy diversification I am tempted to suggest that university presses ought to forget their snobbishly puristic aversion to textbook publishing and enter aggressively upon a program of developing experimental textbooks for use in the schools. Many states already require that textbooks be printed and manufactured within the state. Why not have them written and published there too, with due regard for the special character and needs of the people of the state? Why should children of Scandinavian ancestry in Minnesota or of Spanish-American descent in Arizona and New Mexico read in their history and literature textbooks only of our Anglo-Saxon heritage and never of their own cultural antecedents?

If you are startled by this suggestion, imagining the horror of Ku Klux Klan textbooks in Mississippi and Birch

Society texts in California, I ask you: Is it a lesser horror to have our children in many states using textbooks, as they sometimes do now, that have been tailored and slanted to meet the prejudices of these groups? University presses are free, as free as human institutions can be, from the need to cater to prejudice and bigotry, or to water truth down to the lowest common denominator. Why should they not put that freedom to use in producing honest, forthright textbook discussions of local, national, and world problems?

Another essential academic task in which the university publisher should share actively is the evaluation of manuscripts and the decision to accept or reject them for publication. All too often he and his editors remain passive in this vital process, acting like mere secretaries or clerks to the faculty board or committee. In fact, too often this faculty body itself—made up, after all, of professors who are laymen in every learned discipline but their own—puts its rubber stamp of approval on any manuscript that has won the commendation of another scholar in its field.

These scholar-referees on whom the decision to publish so often depends are not always reliable, as any experienced press director knows. The best of them are in too much demand and ask too high a reading fee for most presses to secure their services. Others are too casual and quick in their verdicts, or are swayed by considerations of professional courtesy, or yield to the dictates of professional friendships, which, thanks to the custom of annual conventions and multiple conferences, are widespread within every discipline. Some lack the capacity for discriminating judgment even in their own field, or simply cannot make up their minds whether a manuscript is good or bad.

The able and experienced university publisher or editor will have closely examined hundreds, even thousands, of manuscripts in the course of his career. From this

long and intensive training he has gained a power of critical judgment that his faculty committee must learn to respect. His advice should be sought, listened to, and weighed decisively in the final acceptance or rejection of a manuscript.

This is assuming, of course, that the publisher or editor has given enough time and attention to the manuscript to support his opinion with substantial reasons. He should not be merely captious or quixotic, unsympathetic or petty, caviling only at minor imperfections in style. Perhaps the first and basic job of a faculty committee on publications is to assess the capacities and habits of their publisher, and having found him competent, then grant him the freedom and power he must have to discharge his duties.

This will at times be an almost absolute power for the press director to say yes, no, or "not until after you have revised" to any member of the university community who has a manuscript—famous names on the faculty, big wheels on the campus, personal friends of his own and of the committee members included. Unless a press director has this authority and stanchly shoulders the burden of exercising it with integrity, and of course with diplomacy, whatever the consequences in lonely unpopularity, the very real power of the university press to achieve distinction in its publications will be undermined and subverted by all sorts of pressures and influences.

These stem in large part from the fact that publication is still indispensable to a scholar in his advancement up the academic ladder and in moving from a lesser to a greater university. True, academic preferment is no longer dictated so much by the rule of "publish or perish" as by the "grantsmanship" which enables professors, especially in the sciences, to obtain funds from government agencies, private foundations, and industrial corporations with which not only to finance their research but also to pay part or all

of their own salaries and the fellowship stipends of their graduate assistants. But for most scholars in the humanities and the social sciences publication still equals promotion to rank and tenure. A man's whole career may rest on the decision to publish or not to publish his manuscript.

Knowing or suspecting this unpleasant fact, as the press director often does, having been informed of it, perhaps, by a phone call from a dean, can cause the conscientious publisher a sleepless night or aggravated ulcer when honest respect for scholarship dictates rejection of a manuscript.

A curious paradox emerges in this connection. A study by an economist, David Brown, just published under the title of *The Mobile Professors*, furnishes ample statistical documentation for two old truisms about institutions of higher learning: one, what distinguishes a "prestige" university is the scholarly reputation of its faculty, and two, this reputation depends primarily on how much and how well the faculty publishes.<sup>9</sup>

What is remarkable about these truisms is the fact that in spite of them the mobile professors do not count the opportunity for publication through a university press among the seventeen factors that influence them in their transfer from one university to another. Publication enhances their scholarly reputation more than anything else, and universities are rated according to the publication records of their faculties, but no account whatever is taken of the role of university presses in providing much of that publication.

To pursue this paradox further: In all the recent studies of the academic marketplace, from Caplow<sup>10</sup> through Riesman to Brown, there is not one mention of university presses. Nor do the presses ever appear in a recent book on *Emerging Patterns in American Higher Education*, a collection of papers by university administrators published by the American Council on Education.<sup>11</sup> In fact, one can

ransack the entire literature of the sociology of academic life without finding a single reference to what university presses contribute either to scholarship or to professional careers. The presses are not even listed in the great majority of university catalogues, and only occasionally are they mentioned in the compendious directory of *American Universities and Colleges*—which, as all librarians know, never fails to describe at length the resources of a university library.

Clearly the university presses have been laggard in claiming their due place in the academic community. Obviously their directors have a lot to explain if the work of their presses is to be properly understood. Instead of lamenting among themselves that except on social occasions they hardly ever see their university president or the other administrative officers to whom they are directly responsible, they might better, perhaps, make a nuisance of themselves and call on university officials as often as they call on the faculty. It is still true, unfortunately, that the squeaking wheel gets the grease.

The real trouble is, of course, that the university press belongs to everybody and therefore to nobody in the complex hierarchy of a university. It is figuratively located, as my old press at Chicago was literally, somewhere between the hospitals and the department of buildings and grounds.

Or perhaps the presses are passed over because only one of their feet rests in the academic world. The other is of necessity planted firmly in the world of business. And there too, they stand on the periphery, of much more importance qualitatively than quantitatively. They are accepted in publishing circles but they are inevitably a group apart there, because they pay no taxes and make no profits. They thus fail to meet the overriding qualification for success in business.

This does not mean the presses can be unbusinesslike—unskilled or inefficient in business practices. On the contrary. It takes as much business acumen and sound judgment for a university press to break even or keep its deficits at a practicable minimum as for a commercial publisher to make his profits after taxes.

Book publishing is today a two-billion-dollar industry, with textbooks for the schools and colleges, reference books such as encyclopedias, and children's books accounting for the larger part of this dollar volume. Sales by university presses have been increasing at a rate faster than any other part of the business; yet in 1966 they amounted to only \$26 million, a relatively minor percentage of the whole.

In number of books published the presses do better. The sixty-eight members of the Association of American University Presses published some 2500 new books in the calendar year 1966, or about one in ten of all the new books published that year in the United States.

Yet these sixty-eight presses were staffed by only some 1200 men and women, if we are to go by the Association's Directory,<sup>12</sup> which actually names 770 salaried employees, to whom, applying Parkinson's law, we might add another 500 or so to cover all the un-named clerks and stenographers and warehouse-keepers. If these people were distributed equally among the sixty-eight presses, each would have a staff of seventeen employees. Actually the presses differ greatly in size, ranging from a staff of four at the smallest to nearly two hundred at Oxford-New York, the largest.

Book publishing is a painstaking and meticulous business. It requires more eyes and brains than hands or feet. There must be editors to read, correct, and mark up manuscripts and proofs; designers to plan formats and prepare specifications; production supervisors to estimate costs, make up schedules, buy paper, and prod the printers into

meeting standards and deadlines; advertising people to buy space and prepare copy for ads, mail out circulars, stage and stock exhibits; promotion people to send out review copies and write publicity releases that may win the attention of potential book buyers; salesmen to make the rounds of bookstores and coax their managers into ordering a copy or two; accountants, billers, bookkeepers, and shipping boys; and of course secretaries to maintain order and liaison among all the others.

At small presses, where all these functions must be performed by half a dozen people or less, each member of the staff must be a jack-of-all-trades, and however hard they work, something is bound to be neglected or forgotten in the crises and emergencies that occur every day. Whether the press staff numbers five or one hundred, its members must all be paid at least a living wage, and in addition must be provided with the essential equipment, materials, and office space to do their paper-pushing business.

The press usually appears in the financial reports of universities as an auxiliary enterprise along with revenue-producing services like the dormitories, cafeterias, bookstore, and athletics. The press is unique among them, however, because it is the only one of them that manufactures a product for sale beyond the confines of the campus. A few presses are required to print their books in a university printing plant, so as to underwrite this service for other departments, and this requirement, which makes the press captive to the printing plant, can be devastatingly destructive of efficiency and economy in the press's operation and even in time stunt its growth beyond recovery. Fortunately, most presses are free to buy their book manufacturing from commercial printers and binders at competitive prices. Then, as a rule, they bank their printing costs as they do their stock of books in what the publishing trade calls an

inventory, and the printing costs are repaid to the parent university, along with royalties to the author, as the books are sold, or they are written off as a loss in a certain number of years if the books remain unsold. This kind of speculative manufacture for a largely unpredictable market is the principal characteristic of the university press as a business enterprise.

The inflation of recent decades has nowhere been more evident than in the costs of manufacturing, especially of printing, a book. For every new book added to its list a press nowadays has to budget a capital investment in printing alone of from five thousand to twenty-five thousand dollars. The uniform accounting maintained by some twenty of the presses shows that half their annual operating expenses are incurred simply to pay the printers' bills.

When the Ford Foundation in 1956 granted the presses the richest benefaction they have ever enjoyed, the sum of \$175 million spread over five years, this fund by stipulation of the Foundation went almost entirely to meet the printing bills for scholarly books in the humanities and the social sciences. The grant was in fact intended, not to aid the presses, but to assist scholars in having their books printed. The subsidy went actually to the printers, not to the presses. The individual press benefited from its share in the grant only to the extent that the publication of additional books increased and strengthened its backlist. (By "backlist" publishers mean the number of books accumulated and kept in print over the years to sell steadily if slowly at much less operating cost than in the year they were published.)

It is the size and salability of the backlist that makes a press a going concern. A press with a thousand or more books on its backlist can naturally do a bigger volume of business and go much farther toward supporting itself every year than can the smaller press that is still struggling to

accumulate backlist resources. Clearly a university that means business when it starts a press, or finally gets down to business in developing its press, will save itself money by investing every dollar it can possibly spare in the production of books during an initial period of from five to ten years. If it holds back and skimps the press in these beginning years, it may well find itself forced to underwrite sizable deficits for many more years to come.

A striking demonstration of this financial axiom has recently come to my attention through a rather strange coincidence of figures. The University of Chicago Press, with a backlist of nearly two thousand titles, has been able to contribute more than half a million dollars to its university in the last thirteen years. The University of New Mexico Press, with a backlist of fewer than a hundred titles, has in the same thirteen years required more than half a million dollars in subsidies from its university. The fact that the press at Chicago is twice the age of the press at New Mexico has relatively little to do with the difference. Whether to pay more now and less in the long run, or to pay little by little every year and far more in the end, is the crucial financial question for any university that chooses to start or develop a press.

All university presses are doomed to deficits if they stick to their business of publishing scholarly books that are by definition limited in sale because of their specialized or technical subjects. Even large and well-established presses like those at Harvard and Yale are frank to admit that they could not make ends meet without benefit of their endowments and subsidies. If there is any prospect that a scholar's book will actually make some money, the commercial publishers are quick to claim it for themselves. And professional authors are just as quick to seek commercial publication if they have written a book that they think or hope will

sell beyond the small circle of their academic colleagues and university libraries.

Sydney Roberts, for many years the head of Cambridge University Press, expressed the frustration of university publishers on this score. Since the Cambridge Press had spent a good deal publishing substantial works of scholarship for Eileen Power, the distinguished historian, Roberts was disconcerted to see her small popular book, *Medieval People*, announced for publication by a London commercial publisher. When he took Miss Power to task for deserting the university press, she exclaimed, "Oh, but do you really want that kind of book? Of course, I always bring my tombstones to you . . ."

"And how," Roberts asked her, "do you think we can provide the money for your tombstones if we don't have the chance of making it on something more popular?"<sup>13</sup>

It is not commercial avarice that impels any university publisher who worries about his deficits to leap at the opportunity of publishing a salable book, if it is also a good book. He jumps at it because he hopes it will pay for the printing of some of the monographs he is expected to publish at an unavoidable loss. Or, if he is lucky enough to have funds for paying the printer, he knows he must meet also publishing costs that will at least equal the printing costs—to pay for space advertising, for direct mail circulars and catalogues, for salesmen's commissions and author's royalties, for all the business services from billing and book-keeping to warehousing and shipping. He knows too that he must write down his inventory as drastically as possible every year, because unsold books do not become a backlist asset for future sales until the liability of their manufacturing cost has been written off the ledger.

It is the sense of these financial realities that makes every university publisher into a speculative trade publisher on

occasion. And it will be surprising if such occasions do not multiply, as competition within universities grows hotter for every dollar they can raise, from either public or private funds.

McGeorge Bundy, in his new role as president of the Ford Foundation, has warned university and college presidents that higher education is being caught ever tighter in a merciless financial squeeze. He told them bluntly that their institutions are too poor to meet the costs of the policy to which the nation is now committed: higher education for all classes, if not the masses.<sup>14</sup>

Every member of the academic community is now attempting to grapple with a quasi-Malthusian pressure of population on university resources. No matter that the federal government has appropriated \$15 billion a year for basic research and allotted most of it to universities; there still is not enough money, public or private, at the disposal of most universities to sustain the required physical expansion, maintain salaries at the rising level required to get and keep good faculties, and still balance their books.

In view of the financial plight of our parent institutions, it must be recognized that the consolidation of university publishing programs within a state is a wise and forward-looking measure. It promises better services at substantial savings in costs, and it eliminates the waste in money of duplicating staffs and the waste in time of the competition among them that vanity and pride inevitably dictate.

Virginia led the way in such consolidation five years ago, to be followed now by Kansas, and in time, you may be sure, by others. It may be that eventually the principle of combination will extend beyond the boundaries of one state, so that small presses in neighboring states, instead of struggling each alone to grow stronger in spite of insufficient funds and inadequate staffs, will combine their re-

sources in a regional federation. Why not? Institutional vanity could be satisfied by retaining separate editorial programs and imprints while merging all or most of the other publishing operations. A larger, better staff, better paid, could provide each press in the federation with more efficient and effective publishing services at a lower cost.

The university presses are already familiar with cooperation as a means of doing collectively what no one of them could afford to do alone. They have joined together, through the Association of American University Presses, to issue announcement listings of all their books in one quarterly bibliography, *Scholarly Books in America*, and to hold joint exhibits of their books at conventions of the various learned societies. For several years they have been giving some thought to the feasibility of cooperative warehousing and billing and cooperative purchase of paper, printing, and advertising. Groups of presses have combined to sell their books cooperatively both at home and abroad. Federation is not so long a step beyond such cooperation, and it may prove to be the most practical solution for the main problems of our smaller and newer presses. The personal vested interests of existing press staffs should not be allowed to stand in the way.

How now, in conclusion, are the two worlds of university publishing to be reconciled? Neither the happiness of professorial authors nor the financial economy a press may practice is an end in itself. A press exists only to publish and what it publishes tells the world who and what it is. As that wise old musician, Louis Armstrong, said, "What you hear coming from a man's horn, that's what he is."<sup>15</sup>

The fate of university presses in the future will surely rest on their ability to publish not more but better books. Press directors are located where they can discover the original thinking and writing that is being done on the cam-

puses; let them do so and be the first to publish it. I suppose they have issued their fair share of the books "that changed our minds" and shaped our times, but we must admit that most of these have come from the commercial publishers. Perhaps that does not matter. Perhaps it is enough that from the presses come the majority of the links in that "chain of books" which must appear before the great books forged from them can come into being.

### FOOTNOTES

1. Carl L. Becker, "Kansas," in *Everyman His Own Historian* (N.Y. 1963), pp. 18-19.
2. Cf. P. M. Handover, *Printing in London* (Cambridge, Mass. 1960).
3. Association of American University Presses, *Proceedings of the Professional Program at the Annual Meeting Held in Toronto . . . 1967* (Toronto 1967), p. 284.
4. Allan M. Cartter, ed., *American Universities and Colleges* (9th ed., Washington 1964), pp. 1260-61.
5. Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, *The Academic Revolution* (New York 1968), pp. 242-43, 516-18, 532-33.
6. American Historical Association, Annual Meeting, St. Louis, December 1956.
7. William Charvat, *Literary Publishing in America* (Philadelphia 1959), pp. 7, 56-57.
8. Frank L. Wardlaw, "Scholarly Publishing in the United States," in Thomas Nickerson, ed., *Trans-Pacific Scholarly Publishing* (Honolulu 1963), p. 139.
9. David G. Brown, *The Mobile Professors* (Washington 1967), pp. 195-97.
10. Theodore Caplow and Reece J. McGee, *The Academic Marketplace* (New York 1958).
11. Edited by Logan Wilson (Washington 1965).
12. Association of American University Presses, Inc., *Directory 1967-68* (New York 1967), pp. 15-26.
13. S. C. Roberts, *Adventures with Authors* (Cambridge 1966), pp. 118-19.
14. *New York Times*, October 14, 1967.
15. Larry L. King, "Everybody's Louie," *Harper's Magazine* (November 1967), p. 61.

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