

November 2013

Company Profile/ Collets

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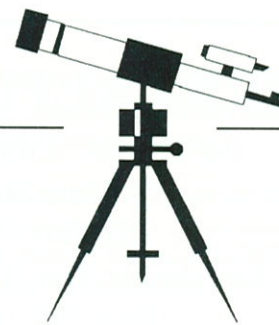
Recommended Citation

Editor (1992) "Company Profile/ Collets," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 4: Iss. 5, Article 20.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1293>

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Company Profile



Collets

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Collets was established in London in 1933 by one of the outstanding personalities of the day, Eva Collet Reckitt, to promote the written word amongst the increasing reading population of Britain. The early history of the company was very much bound up with the hub of London bookselling — the Charing Cross Road. Eva Collet Reckitt's radical bookselling aim was to bring books to the people by offering the intelligent man and woman in the street the opportunity to read a wide range of books, including classic and contemporary novels, poetry and drama, history and philosophy, economics and sociology. This she largely achieved through bookshops in London, Glasgow, Manchester and Cardiff, enthusiastically welcoming Allen Lane's introduction of sixpenny paperbacks - "Penguins." Collets intention to bring books to new customers was demonstrated by the use of odd-looking motor tricycle based vehicles which acted as circulating libraries cum traveling bookshops using the slogan "Stop me and read one."

In parallel with the retail operation Collets opened offices in Museum Street, close to the British Museum, through which books and journals were imported from the Soviet Union and eastern bloc countries and from which British books and journals were exported to those same countries and elsewhere. In 1961, the Ministry of Works announced the acquisition of a large plot of land in front of the British Museum for the purpose of building a new National Library — a project which was ultimately abandoned. As in any case the company needed more space, and London property prices were exorbitant, Collets selected a site in Wellingborough, 65 miles north of London and created purpose-built offices and warehousing. This they first occupied in 1965. The new premises permitted considerable business growth, particularly in the export of books and journals to worldwide destinations. In 1968 the Library Supply Service was established and soon developed a reputation in UK academic, institutional and public libraries for prompt, efficient and attentive service. It was not until the 1980's that any structured effort was made to penetrate the export library market. Today the company has customers in over sixty countries, including the United States and Canada, Mexico, western, eastern and central Europe, the Far East and the Middle East.

Earlier this year Collets restructured the board and management team under the leadership of Harry Moore, a former Head of Management Consultancy at KPMG Peat Marwick and the company is now poised for further developments in import, export, retail, and publishing.

Collets has recently launched a new central/eastern European and Russian bookshop in refurbished premises at 40 Great Russell Street, once again near the British Museum, where a London office has also been established. The company has also opened an office in Moscow, managed by a specialist who will look after Collets import and export activities, and a bookshop in Prague, particularly geared to the interest of librarians.

Harry Moore says "Our recent sales growth in book export, subscriptions and library supply is encouraging. It remains our core business along with our niche markets of medical books, language and teaching materials, and eastern European book and journal imports. Our sales performance has been achieved through a fast turnaround in supply, and through our strong presence in world markets as both purchasers and suppliers."

Collets board of directors, management and staff today echo the ideals of the founder, Eva Collet Reckitt, by continuing to be motivated by a passion of conviction that knowledge put to effective use can make the world a more efficient, more enjoyable — even better — place.