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Papa Lyman Remembers

Publishers of the Twentieth Century

by Lyman Newlin (Book Trade Counsellor) <broadwater@commtech.net>

My February 1997 column (*ATG*, v.9#1, p.76-77), began what may be a long run of memories of publishers whose archives should be made available for generations of future readers who will encounter unfamiliar publishers' names on title pages.

This statement is based on the assumption that the authors of *Guide To Book Publishers' Archives* (Book Industry Study Group, 1996. ISBN 094001663x) are desirous of continuing to create as completely as possible a "directory of the archives of U.S. book publishers who have been active in the twentieth century," as written in the first sentence of the introduction to their book. This is a laudable objective and I applaud them. Still, I find many names of publishers in the early part of the twentieth century, which are already forgotten now as we approach the twenty-first. I realize that it will be no easy burden to research for archival material of these organizations, but I believe that it is an important activity. The point I'm trying to make is simply this: If BISG feels that a *Guide To Book Publishers' Archives* is important enough to support rhetorically as well as (I presume) financially — then every effort should be made to continue work on this project.

I have read **Thomas L. Bonn's** review of this book in v.13 #1 (Spring 1997) of *Publishing Research Quarterly* and I have followed his advice and consulted his review of *Archival Gold* in *Book Research Quarterly*, v.6#2. And I have consulted **SHARP's** (*Society for the History of Authorship Reading and Publishing*) <<http://www.indiana.edu/~sharp> web pages>. These searches have led to names of publishers which should be included in any publisher archival listing. I have expressed previously in this journal my lack of confidence in

history (of any sort) written by anyone who has not lived through the period of time about which she/he is writing. A century is a long, long time in human terms — I know because I've been active in the book industry for nearly 65% of the 20th century, and I get terribly uncomfortable when I realize that the likes of publishers like **Scott Foresman** or **Grosset and Dunlap** or **Prentice Hall** (see p.77 of *ATG*, February 1997), are not recorded adequately.

With that preamble I will proceed to name other publishers whose archival material should be important to any serious study of "active" book publishers in the twentieth century. Again to prompt my memory, I will rely on the sources mentioned in my column of February 1977: page 76; viz.: Cheney; Madison; *Cumulative Book Index*.

American Book Company was one of the largest and most important textbook publishers of the latter part of the 19th century and the first six or seven decades of the twentieth century. Most of its life was in Cincinnati, Ohio (also the site of **Southwestern Publishing Company**, another important textbook house). History will remember ABC as the main and eventual publisher of *McGuffey Readers*, the legendary source of reading, history and morals for millions of American school children. I have two interesting personal experiences relative to ABC: my high school music teacher and glee club sponsor was **Josephine Wolverton**. Her training was so complete and her abilities so outstanding that she went from our small town school in Kansas to head the elementary school music section of the Evanston, Illinois public school system. It was not surprising to anyone who knew her to learn that she was soon put in charge of the elementary school music teaching

department of Northwestern University also in Evanston. At that job her talents became so well known that she was made a principal author of the *American Singer* series of school music books published by American Book Company ... When I traveled for Follett's college department one of my main customers was a book store at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, which also was the hometown of **William Holmes McGuffey** and the seat of the **McGuffey Museum** ... ABC eventually was merged with **D. Van Nostrand** and others under **Litton Industries**. If anything is left of American Book Company today, I would guess that it would be in possession of **International Thomson Publishing**. I have had an enlightening phone conversation with **Diane Cooter**, archival librarian of Bird Library, **Syracuse University**, who verifies that their library does have a huge, 2-volume, 600+ page "finding guide" to materials in their collections about the American Book Company. If you want to learn more, Ms. Cooter's phone number is 315-443-2697. If you want access to the archives, Ms. Cooter needs at least two weeks advance request. I also have the name and phone number of a lady who was in the employ of ABC, who has written a dissertation on that company, and I can furnish her name and phone number upon request.

continued on page 79

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Papa Lyman Remembers from page 78

In the following list I will attempt to include enough information to whet the work appetite of archivists in the hope that they will spare no efforts in their searching process.

Appleton Century Crofts was founded in 1831 when **David Appleton** gave up operating a dry goods store in New York and converted his premises to an attractive book store and in that same year published his first book. Appleton published text and science-related books (including medicine) as well as some bestselling trade books. A merger with the **Century Company** in 1933 put the company in a leader's place in reference book publishing; in 1948 Appleton acquired the textbook publisher, **F. S. Crofts**. Later **Prentice Hall** acquired the company and maintained it primarily as its medical book publishing arm. As of this writing Prentice Hall is part of **Simon & Schuster** which is owned by **Viacom**.

A. S. Barnes is credited by the editors of *International Publishing, An Encyclopedia* (Garland, 1995) as the first educational publisher in the U.S. (1839). The textbook list of ASB was included with those of four other publishers in an amalgamation (1890) creating the American Book Company (see above). A. S. Barnes, as a publisher of books on sports, indoor and outdoor, was acquired by **Thomas Yoseloff** in 1958. I don't know what became of the Barnes name or properties, excepting that I remember that **Ronald Press** eventually got most of the indoor titles. Ronald was absorbed by **Wiley** who, to the best of my knowledge eventually remaindered the line. I must point out that A. S. Barnes mentioned here has no connection with the Barnes of **Barnes and Noble**. That company was an offshoot of **Wilcox and Follett Co.** of Chicago and was primarily a dealer in new and used textbooks. The original B & N did publish a very successful line of college outlines and had American rights to some British classical titles. (More on Follett later in this series.)

The letter B brings to mind several reprint publishers. Lack of space dictates brief treatment but I suggest that archivists should recognize the work of this segment of the industry. During the Great Depression the low prices of reprints permitted impecunious citizens (and libraries) to stretch their funds for book buying and when thousands of World War II veterans took advantage of the GI Bill of Rights in Education, established reprinters were able to supply collateral reading material at low prices to students and government agencies who paid for most of the vets' book requirements. During this period of time several important new reprinters came into being ... **Ian Ballantine** was one of the most important figures in this field. His widow and his son, Richard, have recently embarked on a new

book merchandising venture and they, not **Random House** (which they are now part of), should be approached for archival material ... The brothers **Albert** and **Charles Boni** created the **Modern Library**. The famous brothers are mentioned in several standard publishing histories, often with **Horace Liveright** who was another important trade publisher of the mid-century and a partner of Boni brothers' Modern Library creation. **Richard Abel** and I were guests of **Daniel Melcher** at a luncheon in Luchows some time in 1974. The purpose was to bid bon voyage to **Albert Boni**, who in his mid-eighties, was finally retiring from publishing and moving to Florida. **Bennett Cerf** was the real promoter of ML. I remember his calling on Chicago booksellers in the mid-thirties, with a case full of Modern Library samples and an order book ... Other reprint houses which were of great importance were: **Blue Ribbon Books**, founded in 1933, was headed at various times by notables of the publishing community, including **Robert DeGraff** a founder of **Pocket Books** (1939), **Curtis Hitchcock** and **Eugene Reynal**, who founded a short-lived publishing house bearing their names. This company was acquired by **Harcourt Brace** in 1948 after Hitchcock died. Reynal became an important top official at Harcourt ... **A. L. Burt**, founded in 1883, as a reprinter of cheap juveniles eventually was absorbed by **Reynal & Hitchcock** ... **Bobbs-Merrill** is the last publisher of my letter B list. It was so important that I am doing a bit more research and will include it in my next column.

Probably the all-time champion reprinter, especially to the school and public library market, was **Grosset & Dunlap**. Their first reprint, **Janice Meredith**, appeared in 1903. By 1944 G & D was purchased by a group of publishers including **Random**, **Harper**, **Scribner**, **Little Brown**, and **Book of the Month Club**. I quote from Madison, *Book Publishing in America*: "This purchase was made in order to prevent unscrupulous buyers from misusing the list of this reputable firm." This statement causes my mind to go on a rampage: all five of those saviors of G&D have been taken over by mega-conglomerates. I am forced to the awful conclusion that those five were perhaps victims of a fate they prevented for G & D. And perhaps not — it's all in the way one defines the shenanigans of the megas. **Grosset and Dunlap** has become part of the **Putnam Berkley Group**, formerly a subsidiary of **MCA, Inc.** but recently combined with **Penguin**, a subsidiary of **Pearson** ... A Kansan cannot write about reprints without mentioning **Emanuel Haldeman-Julius** and his *Little Blue Books* of Girard, Kansas. Line H2 of *Guide To Book Publishers' Archives* locates two collections of books produced by this publisher, but notes that they do not contain archival material. There should be much available somewhere!

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From the Reference Desk from page 48

ten interest groups representing a wide political spectrum ranging from the ACLU to the American Conservative Union and the US Chamber of Commerce to the Consumer Federation of America. All ratings are given in percentage 1 to 100. The *Directory of Congressional Voting Scores and Interest Group Ratings* offers a treasure trove of information to help analyze an individual representative's or senator's voting record as well as his or her philosophical leanings.

Lastly, there is Pergamon's second edition of the *International Encyclopedia of Educational Technology* (1996, 0-08-042307-8, \$175) edited by **Tjeerd Plomp** and **Donald P. Ely**. References like this may be seen as exercises in creative, but useful re-packaging. This book conveniently organizes articles related to educational technology which first appeared in the second edition of the multivolume *International Encyclopedia of Education* published in 1994 by Elsevier Science. It also updates and revises some of these articles and then adds nineteen new articles to enhance the content. The articles are of a serious scholarly nature with extensive bibliographies. But quality is not the issue. If a library has already spent \$3,795 on the second edition of the *International Encyclopedia of Education*, is a volume like this worth the added cost? Obviously this is an individual decision but a search in ERIC for relevant articles might serve the purpose of updating just as well. For those libraries without the *International Encyclopedia of Education* and in need of a specialized treatment of educational technology, this book is worth considering. 🌿