The Association of American University Presses
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REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

Annual Meeting, June 1964

The "Multiversity" Press

Since my remarks are announced as the "President's Report" you may be expecting a review of the past year's activities. But the Committees which have done the work, and more particularly the Special and International Committees and the five ambassadors returned from their travels abroad, have given us extensive reports for debate and action. So I shall be less concerned tonight with the past. I want instead to think aloud, if you will let me, about our character and mission as university presses.

As I have pondered our collective endeavors this year, I have become uneasily aware of two impressions. First, much of our utterance about university publishing seems to be rather unthinking repetition, though in altered phrases of course, of the principles and policies that animated this Association in the 1930's and 1940's. Has the academic world in which we work and which we aim to serve undergone so little change in the last twenty years that we have no need of change ourselves?

My second impression is that we have not, as a group, concerned ourselves much with assessment of the university world to which we belong. Our preoccupation has been with the other face of our Janus head: the publishing business. The organizations with which we have sought alliances and improved relations are the ABPC, the AIGA, the ABA, the ATPI, and the NACS. If there is in all our literature more than a passing reference to the alphabet of organized scholarship--the ACLS, the SSRC, the AAAS, and the ACE, to mention no more--I have not come across it. Some of us go to the conventions of learned societies to exhibit and sell our books, or to scout for manuscripts, but do we ever attend their discussions of professional problems--so as to sense the drift of the winds of scholarship, the tack it is sailing, the squalls and doldrums it is encountering?

Yes, I confess that the favorite wisecrack of a few of us is that the farther we can stay away from our faculties the better it is for our balance sheets. I have said it, in defense or in rationalization, too often myself. But whatever reasons may move us to be cautious with our more enthusiastic faculty authors, we can hardly afford to be indifferent to the academic enterprise as a whole. We are inevitably and proudly involved in it; so we ought not to be uninformed or misinformed about it.

Most of us, I venture to say, formed our idea of a university and our image of the ideal scholar in the academic climate of the 1930's, and probably in the literary atmosphere of the humanities. From these verbal disciplines of

nearly a generation ago stem our predilections and prejudices in learning, our impressions and convictions about scholarship. (And some of us--forgive me--would rather fight than switch!)

For the more nostalgic among us the true university is still the academic cloister that Cardinal Newman so eloquently described and defended in the year 1854. Based on the Oxford that was, it should be a community of teachers and students dedicated to the preservation and refinement of inherited knowledge and wisdom. It should be a universe apart, its scholars other-wordly, at home only in the library, its methods of learning only those of philosophical reflection and debate, its finest achievements the handsomely made books written in the most polished literary style.

Others of us in those 1930's adopted Abraham Flexner's research organism as our idea of a modern university. Our model, like Flexner's, is the German universities that were. We take for our goal the pursuit rather than the preservation of knowledge, place the graduate school at the center of the university, and recognize the methods of science as legitimate scholarship even though we do not wholly understand them. Yet we still cherish the notion that the House of Intellect is the exclusive dwelling place of the liberal arts. Flexner himself thought the university of the 1930's was embracing too much. He wanted to exclude such energetic intruders as schools of business and education because he feared they would degrade the university into a "service station" for the public.

Both Flexner and Newman have devoted disciples today, not only among us but on our college faculties, though Hutchins or Conant may be quoted more often than their classical masters. We at Chicago have recently watched with some impatience the debate between Newmanites and Flexnerites on our faculty board of publications over the legitimacy of our publishing books from the university's school of business!

Yet Flexnerites and Newmanites are equally behind the times, equally out of touch with the realities of today's university--which Clark Kerr, in his book The Uses of the University, published by Harvard, has dubbed "the multiversity." Much of what I am now saying is derived from President Kerr's seminal lectures. I cannot pretend to like the word he has coined, but I find it provocative in its implications.

The multiversity did not spring into being with World War II, or with the launching of Sputnik; it has been in the making for more than a century, the product of interweaving strands from the industrial, democratic, and scientific revolutions. Most of us, though living within this development, have not seen it whole. We have disapproved and deplored, even fought, many phases of it, have perhaps applauded some aspect of it here or there. But the total transformation has come upon us almost unaware.

The most obvious characteristic of the multiversity, of course, is its gigantic size. Since it must serve both the population explosion and the knowledge explosion simultaneously, its budget mounts to the tens and hundreds of millions, its students to the scores of thousands, its faculty and staff and the courses they offer to the thousands.

Equally dismaying is the number and diversity of its activities. Not only do its divisions and departments multiply beyond belief, but they are supplemented by a bewildering array of institutes, bureaus, schools, and interdisciplinary committees, projects, and programs. Like knowledge itself, the multiversity seems to be leaping outward in all directions.

Most basic and significant, probably, is the multiversity's crucial position in our contemporary culture. Knowledge has always been popular in democratic America, but organized as it is today in what Fritz Machlup, in his startling study published by Princeton, calls the "knowledge industry," it now accounts for nearly one third of our Gross National Product and is growing at a rate two and a half times faster than other segments of the economy. The multiversity, incorporating many parts of this knowledge industry, has become an institution of service to virtually all sectors of our national and community life. It maintains contacts with dozens of industries and all levels and agencies of government. It operates extension programs of one kind or another, not only throughout its own state or region, but in many other countries around the globe.

All our universities have taken on to a large extent these characteristics of the multiversity. But the fullest manifestations of the change have so far appeared only in the twenty institutions that President Kerr calls "federal grant universities": those into which have poured billions of dollars of government support for basic and applied research.

This mushrooming partnership of the federal government with higher education will certainly be the major factor in shaping the academic enterprise for decades to come. The sums disbursed to date, huge as they are, are expected to double or even triple by the end of this decade. And there is every sign that federal support will be distributed far more widely in the future, with more geographic and institutional balance, so that many more universities will become federal grant institutions and larger portions of the funds will be allotted to the social sciences and the humanities.

If I have wearied you with this review, frustratingly brief as it is, of a development you know all about, forgive me. I wanted its outlines before us as we consider what it may imply for the publishing arm of the multiversity--for scholarly publishing and publishers in these days when the poetic Groves of Academe have become a booming, buzzing factory in the knowledge industry.

Is it conceivable that we in the presses can continue unchanged, serene in the conviction that scholarship and scholars are what they were--or what we thought they were--and arrogantly insistent upon imposing our standards of form and content, outworn though they may be, upon the products of a new scholarship, or else denying these the right to be published? Can we be content--or, more selfishly, can we afford--to let the new publication problems of the multiversity be solved by other agencies while we seek to remain the pure, cloistered university press of old? Or might we find fresh challenge in leaving our traditional paths and treading gingerly out along some of the new highroads of learning? Ought we not to become multiversity presses in fact--though not, I trust, in Clark Kerr's harsh new name.

I ask these questions of you tonight because I have been asking them of myself. No one, I assure you, could be more old-fashioned than I am, bred an American

historian who preferred teaching to research and never thought them necessarily twins or even related. I never knew the sciences, and cannot keep up with the behavioral sciences. I grow restive in discussions of "small groups" and "systems analysis" and "games theory." I abhor the prospect of programmed learning and translation by computer. I even have to discipline myself, as some of you well know, to support with sympathy the consuming interest of many of our members in the cultural problems of Asia and Africa and other such far places.

But I am coming to wonder with increasing frequency, and perhaps more proper humility, whether I, or we, as university, not private, publishers, have any right to impose our prejudices and the dead hand of our own past upon a vital, burgeoning scholarship that grows of its own genius. Perhaps our daily devoir ought to be a thoughtful repeating to ourselves of Cromwell's plea before the Battle of Dunbar: "I beseech ye in the bowels of Christ think that ye may be mistaken."

I am of course not wise enough to predict what the coming of the multiversity will or should mean for the future of university publishing. I can only suggest a few ideas that have occurred to me, and urge that all of us, collectively and individually, ponder the possibilities. If, as some of us think, it is time for the presses to become not only servants to the learned world but members of the family, partners in the enterprise, then we should cease to be merely reactive and reflexive. We should make it our business to learn what the problems of current scholarship are and apply imagination to the solving of them. I hope we all took note that Ileen Stewart of the National Science Foundation, speaking at Honolulu in 1962, asked for the advice and help of those publishers who "are willing to think in terms of 1970 and 1980 rather than 1960."

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Since university presses draw both their readers and their authors largely from faculties and graduate schools, we are chiefly concerned with the explosion in these academic populations. It has been impressive. The number of college and university teachers has increased more than fivefold since the beginning of the century and now stands at about 250,000. In the same period enrollment in the graduate schools has multiplied more than fifty times, reaching a total of 332,000 in 1960. It is expected to exceed half a million by 1970. Graduate courses now make up a full half of all courses offered in higher education. The number of Ph.D. degrees conferred annually was 3300 in 1940, had jumped to nearly ten thousand by 1960, and is expected to reach 13,000 by 1970.

Granted, as Seymour Harris reports in his economic analysis of higher education, that only half of these Ph.D.'s go into teaching, and that only half or less of those will produce books beyond their dissertations. Even so, our group of potential scholarly authors is, or soon will be, increasing at the rate of from 2000 to 3000 a year. How are we to cope with their output?

Shall we, like some colleges, decide to stabilize and say, "So many will we publish and no more. Let the rest go elsewhere or go without?" That, I

fear, is what some of us have been doing more and more of late. Under the pressure of inadequate resources both in staff and funds, we have been denying publication to the kind of book we came into existence to publish, and the result has been a proliferation of other agencies for scholarly publication: the learned societies themselves, state and local historical societies, research libraries and library associations, museums, and several well-known foundations.

In that much neglected ACLS study of 1959, "Problems of Scholarly Publishing in the Humanities and Social Sciences," Rush Welter reported that the difficulties of publishing creative but specialized work in such disciplines as archeology, linguistics, philology, and musicology strengthened his belief that "there is relatively little room in modern university publishing for the manuscript of clear scholarly merit that cannot count upon at least a modest public sale." And Mr. Welter quoted one press director who told him flatly, "If our market were restricted to scholars and libraries, we would go out of business in six weeks."

Well, I ask you, are we scholarly publishers or not? What is our basic and distinguishing market if it is not the scholars and the libraries? It is perhaps symptomatic of a malaise among us that this Association maintains a standing committee on Bookseller Relations but none on Library Relations.

In any case, the current phenomenal increase in university personnel and research will force us, I think, to re-examination and decision. Either we must find ways to march with the swelling ranks of scholarship, or we should give up our noble claim to the special function of publishing the works of scholars for other scholars.

We shall need increasing tolerance for the young scholar, because, at least in the sciences and social sciences, many of the older scholars are undergoing a sea change. They are becoming administrators and consultants. With research grants almost thrust upon them by both government and industry, their life has become a frenzy of organizing and managing projects, bossing teams of assistants and technicians, traveling hither and yon for committee meetings and conferences. More and more of the professors will find themselves engaged in this rat race, and it will leave them little time for research and writing of their own.

The team research directed by these men may well produce greater masses of data than of interpretation. The volume of statistics pouring from calculators and computers is likely to be appalling, but it will not all land on our desks. Government agencies will probably issue the bulk of it. Still, we cannot hope to escape the torrent entirely.

Already it has made conspicuous one of our major failures: in scientific and technical publishing. The most confirmed humanist could hardly deny that the determining force of our day is, for good or ill, the scientific revolution. And I wonder how much, even by stretching and straining, we university presses can claim to have contributed to it.

Our record in science may be improving, but it is still not good. A quick tabulation of the titles listed in SBA in 1963 reveals that 943 of them were in the humanities, 475 in the social sciences, and only 192 in the sciences,

including medicine. Only 53 could be considered reports of basic research in the hard sciences.

We may defend ourselves by emphasizing that science and technology are products of the laboratory more than of the library, and that they therefore lend themselves more to the short journal piece than to book-length reports. But why, then, have we not published more scientific journals? Of 299 hard-core, basic research journals surveyed by the National Science Foundation in 1960, 244 were published by learned and professional societies, 36 by commercial houses, and only 19 by university presses.

We may as well admit, among ourselves, that we have shirked this job, have tended to shun the difficulties of scientific and technical publishing--principally, I suspect, because we do not feel at home with the concepts, vocabularies, and formulas of science. We are better equipped to deal with plain English!

But we are needed in science publishing. Prompt publication is the central nervous system of science, and its health is threatened when the backlog of papers awaiting space in its major journals approaches 50 per cent of the annual volume. Yet, given the "information crisis" with which the leaders of organized science are currently so much concerned, more books and journals of the usual sort may only aggravate the difficulty. The point is that some of us ought to be engaged with the National Science Foundation and the AAAS in studying the problems and devising solutions. We have been invited to help. Who has responded?

And what of the social sciences? It may surprise you, as it did me, to learn that since World War II the biggest percentage increase in number of Ph.D.'s granted has occurred, not in the physical and natural sciences--though these remain ahead in absolute numbers--but in the social sciences. These are not the verbal subjects they once were, however. They have married statistics and more recently the higher branches of mathematics. Some of them have been transmogrified, in whole or in part, into those ill-defined, confused and confusing branches of learning called the behavioral sciences.

Perhaps it is here that we of the presses have been least tolerant, most impatient, in our attitude toward the new scholarship. Because these scholars seem to be dealing with matters we think we know something about, we want them to write their books in our literary fashion. We laugh at their quantitative approach and their struggles with technique. But they see themselves as pioneering scientists and consider method infinitely more important than style of writing, even sometimes more important than their results. So we brush aside their manuscripts as too specialized, too full of tables and charts and what we consider verbal and grammatical infelicities. Whereupon they turn to commercial publishers who respect their work and grow enormously prosperous upon it.

The moral of all this seems to be that in these days of the knowledge explosion and the multiversity we may need editors with new kinds of information and new skills. A high degree of verbal literacy and discriminating literary judgment may no longer be enough.

It is chastening to sit in on a discussion among physical and behavioral scientists, to feel lost in their world of course, but especially to hear them come to an impasse of mutual bewilderment, until one of them says, "Here, this is what we are trying to say," turns to the blackboard, and at white heat fills it with a string of mathematical equations. Their faces light up; now they understand and can go on. You have to recognize then that in some levels of scholarship today words are inadequate, that there are scholars who can truly think and communicate only in the language of numbers and symbols. The company of these scholars is growing fast, we are told, and if we are to meet them on anything like their own level, we must have those among us who can share their language.

At a minimum we shall need editors who can themselves discriminate in the newer areas of knowledge--and the older ones too--between good research and the products of pedestrian technicians, between good scholarship and the mere transcribing of research notes--which, Frank Wardlaw tells us, Frank Dobie once vividly described as "the transferring of bones from one graveyard to another"!

But we should have editors who go even beyond that, I think, editors who will follow the journals and new books in a variety of disciplines so as to know the methods, trends, new ideas, and productive scholars in those subjects. Or--we may return full circle to our beginnings and rely once more on part-time service from academically trained minds in our own dooryards. At Chicago we are thinking of trying out a monthly seminar, at which one or two faculty members would meet at dinner with our editors to discuss the current state and immediate prospects of their specialty.

Lest you think I am being absurdly visionary, let me quote the hard-headed Edward J. Booher of McGraw-Hill in his recent attempt to assess "the days ahead" for commercial publishing, especially textbook publishing. "Knowledge is accumulating, expanding, and changing at fantastic rates," he wrote. "How will we meet these forces of change?...Publishing houses will be more completely staffed with top-notch subject-matter and educational specialists. They will maintain highly qualified research and editorial teams. They will assume infinitely more of the responsibility for 'research and innovation' ...(Their) success will be dependent upon...individuals of imagination and skill who will know how to utilize all the media available and weave them into an articulated whole."

University press publishing may differ in kind and purpose from Mr. Booher's publishing, but our need is no less than his for top-notch individuals of high talent, creative imagination, and dedication, capable of new thinking and resourceful innovation. We already have an exceptional number of such persons among us. We must recruit more, and give them all ample opportunity and scope to contribute the best that is in them.

Before I turn to a concluding consideration of ways and means, let me make sure that by omission I am not leaving a false impression. I certainly would not advocate that university presses abandon the beleaguered humanities! We shall always be, I hope, among their stanch supporters, and their better works will always, I am sure, find a ready place on our lists. We may serve them best, however, if we do not give them unthinking preference but take care to distinguish, with John Barden, "between the lesser and the greater humanists."

John Barden is a staff writer at the Case Institute of Technology. His bitterly sarcastic attack on the humanists in a recent issue of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists struck me as extremely unfair. But I could not agree more with his conclusion. Let me quote it to you: "Good poets, artists, historians, men of letters, scientists, technologists, and teachers, though their purposes differ, (all) favor discovery, creativity, and innovation. Their virtues are curiosity, imagination, abstraction, experimentation, and courage. Their interest is in knowing what is so and what to do, now. Discontent with what is so today drives them to things that are so tomorrow. Sometimes the drive is step by step. Sometimes the sudden flares of intuitive ideas spot the ways ahead. Surely the great inspirational source of intuitive ideas is the inherited learning of man, unclouded by sophistry, provincialism, doctrine, and mystery."

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And now, finally, the question I suppose you have all been asking silently since I began: Where are we to find the money for this multiversity publishing? I wish I could give you a magic answer, but I can only reiterate an old one. I think we must secure our funds for publishing where--and when--the universities get theirs for research.

This principle that the costs of publication should be included as an item in any grant for basic research is one we have long urged, largely in vain, upon graduate school deans and the philanthropic foundations. It is heartening to learn that the National Science Foundation, in its own just commonsense, has adopted this position and is recommending it to other government agencies. We may not unreasonably hope that the practice will spread from government-supported research to all the rest of it.

We should be taking action now, however, before procedures harden into custom, to ensure that the proper factors and percentages are included in that item for publication costs. I know from conversations with government lawyers and financial officers that unless we argue our case soon and persuasively, publishing will once again be equated with printing and we shall be given only enough to pay the printer.

So far, I believe, the cost-of-publication item in research contracts has been used principally to cover the page charges of scientific journals. Monograph publication has been financed largely on an ad hoc basis, book by book. The NSF does not consider this a satisfactory permanent solution. Nor, surely, do we. We have had enough of such improvised financing, which makes perennial beggars of us all, and which, more damagingly, transfers to the public and private fund-dispensing agencies the enabling decision as to what shall and shall not be published. We should seek to regularize and standardize the custom of publication subsidies so that we can make editorial decisions on the merit of the work, not the availability of funds. I truly believe our chances of achieving this goal are better now than they have ever been--if we make our voices heard soon in the proper places and by the right people.

I should like to see the Association, too, relieved of the need for grantsmanship. I should like to see it free to decide for itself what programs

and projects it will undertake, rather than devising them according to the predilections of the foundations. Perhaps we could move toward that freer state by initiating a little of the research and development which used to be a distinguishing hallmark of AT & T and DuPont but is now a commonplace known everywhere as R & D. We might begin with the formulation of a broad three-to-five-year program of development and a study of what sum beyond our own resources would be required to effect it.

Any such plan would, I hope, pay special attention to the needs of the majority of our members. The latest financial analysis made for us by Ernst and Ernst shows that the annual income from sales for six of our presses is more than a million dollars, while for twenty-five of us it is less than $200,000. There is no use pretending that these two groups have identical problems and interests, but they can and will go on trying to understand and tolerate each other!

Our Association has been egalitarian from the beginning. That has been one of its virtues and its strengths. Every member press, no matter how new or how small, has an equal vote in our affairs. As Roland Dickey told the Honolulu conference, "...each of us stands ready to help our friends with problems of every kind and size. The 'big brothers' in the AAUP have helped us little fellows with all kinds of advice." We ought to take care not to lose that mutual consideration and helpfulness among us. Those of us who have resources and energy to spare for aiding the fledgling university presses of Asia and Africa should not forget our own young presses or expect them to share our active concern for problems abroad with which they are still struggling at home.

I suggest therefore that to the programs of International Co-operation which have preoccupied the Association in recent years we in the coming year add a parallel track on which to resume progress with some of our unfinished domestic cooperation: for example, the Book Centers in New York City and Washington that we considered establishing some years ago; plans for joint space and direct mail advertising among smaller presses who cannot afford enough of it alone; intensive institutes or workshops in press business and accounting practices; similar workshops in creative and nonreflexive editing, and in new production techniques and quality control; a program of training fellowships that would permit our abler young colleagues to go back to school for short postgraduate courses in foreign languages, statistics, Russian civilization, science editing, or whatever subjects they and we will find useful in our publishing. There is no end of possible domestic programs. The problem is one of choice.