

## CHAPTER 19

# New York

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THE New York branch, later the New York Business and later still OUP Inc., opened in 1896 as the first of the Press's overseas branches. It began as little more than a depot with a staff of travelling salesmen. Over the course of the branch's development the Press in effect used it to work out the appropriate relationship between overseas units and London. The United States was always the largest potential overseas market for the Press, and the branch became a significant source of sales and profits. In segments of the US publishing world, the branch became a highly visible actor. A simple organization at first, it became over time much more complex, an evolution that presented problems as well as opportunities. Singular individuals in top management had an active role in the branch's development, although at times the process seemed driven from below, directed by editors and other staff members.

The New York operation, first housed in premises at 93 Fifth Avenue, formally opened in September 1896 as a subsidiary of the London Business. Henry Frowde, the Publisher in London, had taken the initiative in its formation. He wanted to exercise direct control over the branch, and the initial plan was for the New Yorkers to act in his name. American legal counsel persuaded him that such an arrangement was, on balance, undesirable. What he gained in control, he or the Press, in the event of his death or retirement, might lose in other costs and practical difficulties. The US lawyers argued for incorporation of the branch, preferably as a New York corporation but in any case as a corporation proper, wholly owned by the Press.<sup>1</sup> That was accomplished in 1897.<sup>2</sup>

From the beginning the New York operation was focused on sales, particularly of bibles.<sup>3</sup> It was first managed by John Armstrong, a bible trade veteran from Nelsons,

The author gratefully acknowledges Thorin Tritter's generous help with this chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Seward, Guthrie, and Steele to Frowde, 31 October 1896, 'New York Constitution', OUP.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of First Meeting of Directors, 20 August 1897, 'Early Years—Oxford Archives', OUP/PUB/21/2/4.

<sup>3</sup> See the case as submitted to Montague Crackenthorpe and Howard Wright, n.d. [c.2 February 1897], 'New York Constitution', OUP.

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FIGURE 19.1 Cyrus Ingersoll Scofield, bible teacher and creator of the *Scofield Reference Bible*, c.1920. The *Scofield Bible* (OUP, 1909) was the landmark study bible in the United States.

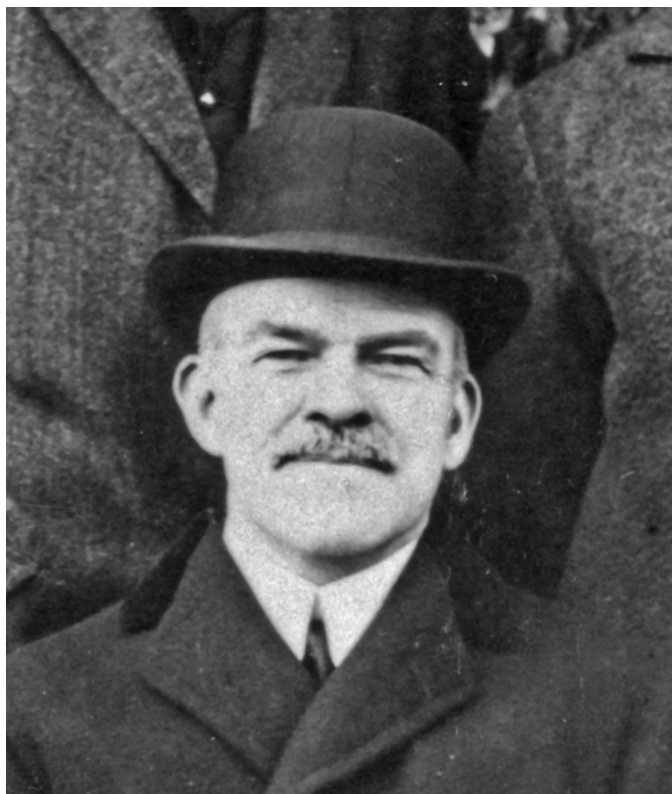


FIGURE 19.2 John Armstrong, manager of the New York branch, 1896–1915

the agent the Press had previously used for American sales (Fig. 19.2). In 1909 the modest office, by then located at 35 West Thirty-second Street, maintained no fewer than ten travellers, who between them covered the continent (Fig. 19.3).<sup>4</sup> Even though bibles dominated the business, halfway through 1898 figures supplied by Armstrong showed that Clarendon Press products made up almost 20 per cent of total sales to date.<sup>5</sup> Scholarly publishing in the United States was still in its early days, and the publishing policies of American university presses were quite inward looking.<sup>6</sup> Armstrong emphasized that textbook sales could be increased if he had the resources to send a traveller to colleges and universities.<sup>7</sup> Branch operations flourished, justifying Frowde's initial sense of promise. Revenues hit £40,000, Frowde's initial goal for the branch, by the second year, and the business was earning a profit by 1900 (see Table 19.1).

<sup>4</sup> *Publishers Weekly*, 27 February 1909, 929. The number fluctuated, but was still ten two decades later; see *Publishers Weekly*, 2 February 1929, 520. It is not clear whether these were strictly OUP representatives or whether they were commissioned salesmen carrying a number of publishers' lines.

<sup>5</sup> Armstrong [to Frowde], 3 June 1898, 'J. Armstrong Correspondence', OUP/PUB/16/2.

<sup>6</sup> Gene R. Hawes, *To Advance Knowledge: A Handbook on American University Press Publishing* (New York: American University Press Services, 1967); see also Chester Kerr, *American University Publishing, 1955: A Supplement to the 'Report on American University Presses'* (Washington, DC: Association of American University Presses, 1956).

<sup>7</sup> Armstrong to Frowde, 10 May 1899, 'J. Armstrong Correspondence', OUP/PUB/16/2. A Delegate visiting New York at the time agreed; see Henry T. Gerrans to Charles Cannan, 20 September 1900, OUP/PUB/16/2.



FIGURE 19.3 OUP New York, West Thirty-second Street

These early results were not due solely to the sale of books printed in England. Besides importing books and sheets, the branch arranged for US printings at least as early as 1898 for the Revised Version.<sup>8</sup> A few titles even originated in the States. In 1907, during a time of domestic theological ferment, OUP signed a remarkable midwesterner named Cyrus Ingersoll Scofield (Fig. 19.1) to create a new bible product for the Press. After a tumultuous early life that included appointment as a US Attorney at an unusually young age, resignation under the cloud of forgery accusations, abandonment of his wife and children, divorce, and remarriage, Scofield emerged as

<sup>8</sup> See 'Assignment of Copyright from Henry Frowde to OUP, American Branch', 20 August 1897, in a bound package from Cravath, Swaine, and Moore in the folder 'Copyright Agreements—between Oxford UK and Oxford NY—dated November 7, 1978', box 5/6, OUP Cary [North Carolina].



WORLDWIDE EXPANSION AND INFLUENCE

TABLE 19.1 New York branch sales, stocks, and profits, 1897–1917 (£)

Year	Sales	Stocks	Profit
1897	18,526	17,362	(2,519)
1898	42,251	23,443	(3,036)
1899	48,303	28,368	(6)
1900	53,748	24,216	893
1901	57,383	27,779	1,067
1902	57,897	23,111	1,791
1903	62,529	27,481	3,243
1904	65,934	26,273	3,476
1905	68,346	28,281	3,792
1906	71,959	24,530	4,852
1907	81,572	29,969	8,349
1908	81,736	34,631	7,334
1909	80,088	32,483	5,348
1910	93,846	37,982	7,636
1911	90,116	42,306	7,280
1912	94,283	41,397	7,295
1913	97,609	43,268	7,177
1914	98,156	40,693	8,509
1915	98,890	43,258	9,441
1916	108,378	43,341	14,123
1917	126,205	65,984	20,592

Source: 'Abstract of Accounts', 5/2, OUP Strong Room.

an evangelical minister of increasing prominence.<sup>9</sup> A correspondence course that he developed for home Bible study laid the groundwork for his drafting of a King James Bible text with elaborate references and commentaries. This became known as the *Scotfield Bible*.

In 1904 Scotfield had met Frowde in London, having been introduced by a British religious publisher who was a Plymouth Brethren connection of Frowde's.<sup>10</sup> Frowde showed interest in the project and began corresponding with Scotfield about publishing with Oxford.<sup>11</sup> Three years after the meeting with Frowde, Scotfield signed a contract with the Press in New York; the first edition appeared in 1909.<sup>12</sup> The

<sup>9</sup> There is no balanced biography of Scotfield. For one biased in his favour, see Charles Gallaudet Trumbull, *The Life Story of C. I. Scotfield* (1920); for one biased against, see Joseph M. Canfield, *The Incredible Scotfield and his Book* (Vallecito, Calif.: Ross House, 1988).

<sup>10</sup> Canfield, *Incredible Scotfield*, 115.  
<sup>11</sup> See Frowde to R. Scott, Esq., 25 October 1905; Frowde to Scotfield, 4 May 1906; Frowde to Scotfield, 15 April 1907; all in OUP Frowde letter books.

<sup>12</sup> For the contract, see Frowde to Scotfield, 5 June 1907, Frowde letter book, vol. 74.

title-page announced that the work used the Authorized Version, augmented with 'a new system of connected topical references ... to which are added helps at hard places, explanations of seeming discrepancies, and a new system of paragraphs'. The text addressed the enormous appetite of Americans for religious reading matter and self-study materials. It appealed to American fundamentalists more than the Revised Version, and Scofield's annotations were particularly embraced: as one commentator remarked, 'Many devotees came to see Scofield's annotations as part of the biblical text itself.'<sup>13</sup> The theological content of the annotations made the *Scofield Bible* a key text in dispensational premillennialism in particular and in fundamentalist Protestantism more broadly.<sup>14</sup> Demand was strong enough to merit a second edition just eight years later. Indeed, the *Scofield Bible's* appeal proved remarkably enduring, the intensity of competition in the religious publishing field in America notwithstanding, and the Press was still publishing derivative works in 1970.<sup>15</sup> The profits helped solidify bibles and related devotional materials as the heart of the New York branch's business. It should be noted that OUP was not the only essentially secular publisher to do well out of bibles and related titles during this period. In the 1920s Harper's, Doubleday, Macmillan, and Holt all had Religious departments, and *Publishers Weekly*, the main trade journal, established an annual 'Religious Books' issue.<sup>16</sup>

The *Scofield Bible* was far from the only publication taken on by the New York branch. In 1912 Armstrong reported having secured 'contracts for more than twenty new books, to be ready this and next year'.<sup>17</sup> Some of the most striking and durable examples came in the medical field. In 1917 New York began to publish the loose-leaf *Oxford Surgery*, a much-expanded version of a pre-war British production. The massive collective work, with single- and multi-chapter sections produced by more than seventy prominent academics and practitioners, was overseen by two general editors, the original British one and the new American one.<sup>18</sup> The loose-leaf *Oxford Medicine*, which was an almost entirely American production, began to appear in 1921 under the editorship of the Harvard Medical School professor Henry Christian. It was published on an even grander scale than the *Surgery*, eventually appearing in eight volumes (some with multiple parts), with contributions from more than 260 authors. The final volume did not appear until shortly after Christian's death in 1951. Both publications were serials of monographs, regularly extended to remain authoritative. The loose-leaf binding facilitated updating. Their authority grew with their length and careful indexing, and the works produced, through subscriptions

<sup>13</sup> William Vance Trollinger, Jr., 'An Outpouring of "Faithful" Words: Protestant Publishing in the United States', in Paul David Nord, Joan Shelley Rubin, and Michael Schudson (eds.), *A History of the Book in America 5: The Enduring Book* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 367.

<sup>14</sup> On the genesis of the *Scofield Bible* text and its theological significance, see Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1890–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 221–4.

<sup>15</sup> On the competition, see John Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States, 3: The Golden Age between Two Wars, 1920–1940* (New York: Bowker, 1978), 242.

<sup>17</sup> Armstrong to Frowde, 16 April 1912, 'Audit: New York Branch', OUP/GF19/100.

<sup>18</sup> F. F. Burgard and Allen B. Kanavel (eds.), *Oxford Loose-Leaf Surgery*, vol. 1 (1918), preface.

from physicians and libraries, an ongoing revenue stream that would have pleased any publisher.

Those and other early New York publications were financed through a complex system of debts and credits within the Press. The branch had originally been set up, as Frowde wrote in 1897, with 'no Capital or Stock of its own': it was sent 'supplies of B.B.B. [Bound Book Business] stock on consignment account'.<sup>19</sup> That arrangement had the merit of placing everything clearly under Frowde's control, but the New York Custom House authorities, with American manufacturing interests behind them, were hostile to goods sent on consignment to branch houses.<sup>20</sup> The books were subjected to punitive duties, and there was agitation to have such shipments banned by new tariff legislation. Placing the business on a separate footing, like the Press's other principal businesses, giving it its own capital, and having it purchase supplies outright from London would solve the problem, leaving only duties payable on the invoice prices (at the still not inconsiderable book rate of 25 per cent *ad valorem*).<sup>21</sup> But where would the money come from? In getting the branch started, Oxford sent goods worth £26,658 to New York and spent another £12,287 on freight costs, fittings, furniture, and the like, drawn from a £28,000 loan from the Delegates to the Bound Book Business.<sup>22</sup> The question was whether the loan would be assumed by the Delegates. By March 1897 New York had already paid back £4,000 to the Bound Book Business.<sup>23</sup> The Committee on Finance of the American Branch recommended that the Delegates transfer £10,000 of their loan to the Bound Book Business to the capital of New York, leaving the rest of the branch's balance for Frowde and New York to resolve over time. The committee also recommended

that the American Branch be treated as a Business additional to the five existing Businesses, viz. the Bible Press, the Learned Press, the Wolvercote Mill, the Bound Book Business, the Binding Business, and that its account be kept in a similar manner as to Capital, Profit and Loss, etc. and be incorporated annually with the accounts of these Businesses in the general accounts of the Press.<sup>24</sup>

Against the background of a fairly complicated financial structure, Frowde's oversight, and energetic local management, the branch produced steadily rising profits during its first twenty years (see Table 19.1). Even a fire at the branch in 1912 and Armstrong's unexpected death in 1915 failed to upset the trend.<sup>25</sup> William West McIntosh, another old Nelsons hand, succeeded Armstrong, and the transition seemed unproblematic at the time, McIntosh's relatively advanced age of 61 and modest managerial background notwithstanding.

<sup>19</sup> Frowde to Gell, 3 March 1897, OUP/PUB/21/2/4.

<sup>20</sup> See Frowde to Gell, 24 July 1896, 'New York Constitution'.

<sup>21</sup> Frowde to Gell 3 February 1897; Seward, Guthrie, and Steele to Freshfield and Williams, 27 March 1897; both in 'New York Constitution'.

<sup>22</sup> See Charles Ogilvy, 'Financial Notes Respecting American Branch', enclosed with Cannan to William Markby, 22 March 1897, 'Correspondence—Markby/Freshfield and Williams correspondence'.

<sup>23</sup> See Ogilvy, 'Financial Notes Respecting American Branch'.

<sup>24</sup> See Ogilvy, 'Financial Notes Respecting American Branch'.

<sup>25</sup> For the fire, see Armstrong to Frowde, 3 May 1912, OUP/GF19/100; for Armstrong's obituary, see *Publishers Weekly*, 14 August 1915, 492.

TABLE 19.2 New York branch remittances to Oxford, 1905–1917 (£)

Year	Delegates' portion of dividends	Trademark expense
1905	1,467	216
1906	2,201	258
1907	5,355	215
1908	4,515	294
1910	5,124	430
1911	5,088	416
1912	5,052	417
1913	4,907	456
1914	5,773	448
1915	6,494	675
1916	9,861	1,343
1917	14,755	2,894

Source: 'NY 1897–1972', OUP Strong Room.

The figures in Table 19.1 give a somewhat distorted view of the financial relationship between the Press and the branch. A large portion of the profits was returned to the Press through annual declarations of dividends out of profits. But monies flowed back through other channels as well. For example, 'Trademark Expense' was a fee ostensibly designed to cover expected taxation, but was paid regardless of the parent firm's tax obligations (Table 19.2 shows the amounts through 1917). In addition the branch channelled money to London and Oxford through its purchases of stock, paying not a cost-based fee but rather the same prices as any arm's-length trade counterpart. Such purchases amounted to a built-in profit to the Press in Britain.<sup>26</sup> Managers such as Armstrong and McIntosh may have had ideas for more ambitious projects, but the firm intent of the Press and Delegates was to siphon off whatever cash they could from New York.

### A turbulent decade: 1917–1926

The cost of Oxford's siphoning became apparent in the wake of the First World War. Humphrey Milford, Frowde's successor as Publisher, sent McIntosh a cheery note in the summer of 1917, reporting that the branch had made nearly \$100,000 during the previous fiscal year. 'This is a very fine result', wrote Milford, 'on which I congratulate you and all your colleagues heartily'.<sup>27</sup> Milford reported three months later, at the appropriate moment in New York's fiscal year, that the branch would declare a

<sup>26</sup> Geoffrey Cumberlege brought this matter up most directly during the difficult economic times of the 1930s, when he was managing the branch. See his response to Sisam's memoranda: no author [Cumberlege], n.d. [c. May 1933], 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/1/3/1–2.

<sup>27</sup> Milford to McIntosh, 26 July 1917, 'NYB 1917–1928', Royalty Storage Room, OUP Cary.



dividend of 10 per cent along with a further bonus of 85 per cent, sending \$95,000 of the profits back to England.<sup>28</sup> But matters stood quite differently a year later. Expecting a continued rise in sales, the branch bought more books from London, ending the year with invoices of nearly double the amount purchased just four years earlier. Sales, however, did not keep pace, and profits fell by nearly half—from £20,592 in 1917 to £11,732 in 1918.<sup>29</sup> More troubling still to Milford was that by the end of March 1918 New York owed London more than £72,000 for the books it had purchased but not sold.<sup>30</sup> The trend looked ominous. New York's debt to London had risen from £10,619 at the end of 1916 to £25,928 at the end of 1917, and then nearly trebled in the following quarter (though, to be fair, the debt had totalled £17,551 in March 1915).<sup>31</sup>

It is clear from the Publisher's letter books that the growth of the debt and its level occasioned some alarm, but it is less clear why. Pricing, considered as transfer pricing, might have been off, but some adjustment of discounts could have fixed that. Milford had his bills to pay, of course, but from New York's perspective the branch had been providing resources with which to pay them. Business and profits were cyclical. London and Oxford had siphoned cash out of New York when times were good, leaving, as a matter of shareholder policy, no reserve funds for the branch. When times were not so good, it was unfair to ask New York where the money had gone. 'Already banked in England' was the answer.

The accounting artefact had real consequences. The policy in London was to charge interest on New York's debt. But with the sum in question so large, the potential burden on New York's future operations was significant. To resolve the debt, Oxford agreed to a reorganization that trebled the capital stock to \$300,000. British shareholders took the bulk of the new shares, including \$140,000 worth of preferred stock paying 6 per cent interest and \$43,500 of common stock.<sup>32</sup> In exchange, the Press wiped away the branch's indebtedness.<sup>33</sup> The reorganization was focused on the balance sheet; it had little effect on the organization per se. From New York's perspective the reorganization did not free up much cash to fund additional publishing. The whole structure of British fees remained intact. Milford even imposed a new one for services handled by London, claiming, 'We have never really put things on a thoroughly commercial footing since the early days of the Branch when you were treated as a favourite son and let off very lightly.'<sup>34</sup> The new fee was in addition to the Trademark Expense and the Delegates' dividend, which in 1920 absorbed 90 per cent of New York's profits.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Milford to McIntosh, 17 October 1917, 'NYB 1917–1928', Royalty Storage Room, OUP Cary.

<sup>29</sup> 'NY 1897–1972', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>30</sup> Milford to McIntosh, 23 April 1918, 'NYB 1917–1928', Royalty Storage Room, OUP Cary.

<sup>31</sup> Milford to McIntosh, 23 April 1918.

<sup>32</sup> US shareholders were not diluted, taking \$16,500 of the new common stock. See Cannan to Cravath & Henderson, 16 May 1918, 'NYB 1917–1928', Royalty Storage Room, OUP Cary.

<sup>33</sup> See the release of indebtedness instrument included with Milford to Cravath & Henderson, 27 June 1918, 'NYB Special Notes 1918', 'NY 1897–1972', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>34</sup> Milford to McIntosh, 22 May 1918, 'NYB Special Notes 1918', 'NY 1897–1972', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>35</sup> Figures from 'NY 1897–1972', OUP Strong Room.

The overall US economy faltered during this period. America's participation in the First World War had been short, but post-war inflation was sharp. The recession that followed was small by historical standards (and quite small by the standard of what was coming) but large enough to depress New York's trading conditions. In 1919 the New York operation eked out a small profit. Fiscal year 1920 was, in nominal terms, much more successful—indeed, the most successful year to date; and 1921 was also good. The first break in the long run of annual profits then appeared, with fiscal years 1922 and 1923 producing substantial losses. London's profits suffered as well, and Milford began complaining again, with increasing stridency, about the low level of payments and remittances from New York.<sup>36</sup> In November 1921 he claimed that New York had become London's 'principal debtor', having remarked in an earlier letter: 'If we were an ordinary trade creditor, you would have been in the bankruptcy court by now.'<sup>37</sup>

Business began to pick up in 1923, and the troubles appeared over. The branch reported middling profits in 1924 (£11,903) and relatively good ones, a third again as high, in 1925 (£16,263).<sup>38</sup> It was possible to read the figures as signalling the branch's emergence from a difficult time back to solidly profitable operations. The branch certainly behaved as if that were the case, sending correspondence back to Milford about market research and discussing in ambitious detail possible new titles.<sup>39</sup> Then there was an abrupt change in 1926. There had been some warnings, in particular from a young Englishman sent to New York by Milford; his report complained about executive incapacity, general under-management, a lack of effective marketing, and a shocking degree of ignorance about the Press's product lines in the retail trade and among university professors in New York and Philadelphia.<sup>40</sup> The sterling value of profits fell by half from 1925 to 1926, which got the attention of Press executives in Britain. Matters worsened in 1927, when the branch produced a loss of £19,255, almost equal to its largest annual profit to date.<sup>41</sup>

New York's difficulties were keenly felt in London. In 1926, Milford was hard-pressed for cash amid the general economic difficulties of the period in Britain. He wrote to McIntosh, begging for funds. All he received was a minor £500. 'I do well to be angry', he told R. W. Chapman, the Secretary to the Delegates. 'A man with a spark of vision or imagination would have scraped up £5000 somehow.'<sup>42</sup> Branch debts to London were mounting again.<sup>43</sup> From Oxford and London the situation seemed grave, and New York staff members old and perhaps set in their ways. (McIntosh was by this point 73

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Milford to McIntosh, 21 January 1921 and 3 June 1921 (twice); Milford to Isaac Brown, 11 July 1921; Milford to McIntosh, 29 November 1921; all in 'NYB 1917–1928', Royalty Storage Room, OUP Cary.

<sup>37</sup> Milford to McIntosh, 29 November 1921; Milford to Brown, 11 July 1921.

<sup>38</sup> 'NY 1897–1972', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, 'Intelligent Suggestions By School & College Teachers', enclosed with A. C. Valentine to Milford, 4 March 1926, 'NY Branch Staff: "Officers"', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>40</sup> A. C. Valentine to Milford, 3 April 1926, 'NY Branch Staff: "Officers"', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>41</sup> 'NY 1897–1972', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>42</sup> Milford to Chapman, 10 May 1926, 'NY Branch Staff: "Officers"', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>43</sup> See Price, Waterhouse (NY) to Brown, 9 March 1927, 'NYB Special Notes 1918', 'NY 1897–1972', OUP Strong Room.

and also somewhat hard of hearing.) Milford and Chapman visited New York at the end of 1927, taking with them a young Press official named Geoffrey Cumberlege. When Chapman and Milford departed for home a few weeks later, Cumberlege remained in New York. McIntosh was quietly ushered out with an honorary degree from Oxford to smooth things over.<sup>44</sup>

The gathering troubles had been masked by the success of a single imported publication, the two-volume *Life of Sir William Osler* by the distinguished American surgeon Harvey Cushing, which won the Pulitzer Prize for biography in 1926. Osler was a co-founder of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine before taking up an appointment as Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford; he was also a Delegate of the Press.<sup>45</sup> The troubles were masked also by the absence of any disaggregated information in the formal accounts or by informal communication of what such detail would have shown. The powers of the branch accountant, who had been reckoned an able official at the time of the reorganization in 1918, had weakened by the mid-1920s. He was dismissed gently, and with a comfortable bonus for long service, in 1928.<sup>46</sup> But the problem was not just in the accounting function. The branch was so out of touch that in 1928 it learned of a downturn in the bible trade from 'reports from trade journals, our travellers, & other sources' rather than from its own employees.<sup>47</sup>

Geoffrey Cumberlege, the man whom Chapman and Milford sent to New York to put its house back in order, was an anomaly among Press managers. Neither a classicist nor a former don, he had attended a relatively humble Oxford college and attained only a third-class degree. He was, however, an Oxford man. He had distinguished himself during the war (twice decorated for bravery, including a DSO, and three times mentioned in dispatches), and had been promoted repeatedly.<sup>48</sup> The Press took him on when he was demobilized and quickly began to make use of his talents. Its operations in India were drifting and listless. Mere months after he began work Cumberlege was sent out to Bombay to set them right.<sup>49</sup> Nine years later he was, in effect, dispatched to New York on a similar mission.

The feeling in Oxford was that drastic belt-tightening was in order. Chapman saw 'no course but for C[umberlege] to lighten his debt[,] cut all avoidable expenses, [curtail] his advertising drastically ... and [postpone] any additions to staff'.<sup>50</sup> Cumberlege more or less followed that plan. He began by edging out some senior figures and replacing them with younger and less expensive ones.<sup>51</sup> Others he simply fired. He cut advertising expenditures, though there were limits to what he felt he could do. He drew a sharp distinction between productive and non-productive

<sup>44</sup> For McIntosh's degree, see McIntosh to Milford, 9 April 1928; Chapman to Milford, 21 April 1928; *Publishers Weekly*, n.d. [c. May 1928], 2612; all in 'NY Branch Staff: "Officers"', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>45</sup> See Chapter 10.

<sup>46</sup> Milford to Brown, 3 February 1928, file 'NY Branch Staff: "Officers"', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>47</sup> Cumberlege to Milford, 10 February 1928, 'NY Branch Staff: "Officers"', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>48</sup> *Publishers Weekly*, 29 September 1945, 1558; see also Peter Sutcliffe, *The Oxford University Press: An Informal History* (1978), 200.

<sup>49</sup> *The Record*, no. 24 (1979), 1, 3; see also Chapter 21.

<sup>50</sup> Notes by Chapman, perhaps to Milford, 26 January 1928, file 'NY Branch Staff: "Officers"', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>51</sup> Cumberlege to Milford, 10 February 1928, 'NY Branch Staff: "Officers"', OUP Strong Room.

expenditures, and was firm about the importance of maintaining the former.<sup>52</sup> In an elaborate correspondence with Oxford he explained his actions and attempted to buy time, and perhaps more. One month into his new appointment he noted, 'I am economizing ... [But] my economies are mere scratching with a toothpick.' Then came his plea, 'I can't see how we can get right without the money to lay healthy foundations.' In particular he believed he needed to start 'an Educational Department publishing from existing material books designed to fit this market'. The alternative—a way to reduce costs rather than increase revenue—was to 'shrink to our humble depository'.<sup>53</sup>

Cumberlege's measures in the late 1920s were painful but increasingly effective. The sterling loss for fiscal year 1929 (£4,169) was only one-third of what it had been in 1928 (£13,694) and only about one-fifth of the 1927 nadir.<sup>54</sup> Discounting the Trademark Expense, interest payments, and fees, which together amounted to the considerable sum of £10,271, the business generated a comfortable surplus, nearly 2.6 per cent of sales. On its own account books, kept in dollars and sent to London for adjustment at the end of the year, the branch had gone from a loss of \$42,546 in 1928 to \$3,312 in the black for 1929.<sup>55</sup> Bad-debt recovery continued to be a problem, and accounts receivable were down. Its Music and Medical Departments were losing money, but together they amounted to less than 15 per cent of the business. Bibles, which accounted for 42 per cent of sales, ended the year with a surplus (though only 1.5 per cent on sales). The Clarendon Press Department, which accounted for 44 per cent of sales, was solidly profitable (earning 5.2 per cent on sales). Finally, the debt to London was cut. Accounts seemed to be improving, indebtedness to London notwithstanding, and the New York business at last to be moving forward.

Indeed, viewed from the end of fiscal year 1929, the 1920s were a volatile but, on balance, rewarding decade. Milford, after noting the very large sales of British titles for which New York had been responsible, saw much to celebrate. Looking back over 1922–9, 'during which the Branch has not been so prosperous, and we have all been anxious about it', he conceded that 'it has not done so very badly'.<sup>56</sup> After listing the remittances and payments from New York—'the Branch has paid the Delegates £26,003 in dividends and £41,255 in Trade Name Expense; has paid the London Business over £600,000 for goods, £27,365 for interest, and £12,095 for services rendered'—he concluded, 'I think therefore that the Branch has thoroughly justified its existence so far, from a financial point of view. From a broader point of view, it has certainly assisted in the far wider diffusion of Oxford books in the United States of America than would have been possible by any other means.' From 1896 to 1927 the branch generated surpluses of £156,683, 88 per cent of which, or £138,393, had been

<sup>52</sup> For a later, very clear statement, see Cumberlege to Milford, 11 May 1932, 'NY Branch Staff: "Officers"', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>53</sup> Cumberlege to Milford, 10 February 1928, 'NY Branch Staff: "Officers"', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>54</sup> 'NY 1897–1972', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>55</sup> These figures and those that follow are drawn from 'Oxford University Press New York Balance Sheet (Subject to Final Adjustment)', 31 March 1929, OUP Cary.

<sup>56</sup> Milford to Chapman, memorandum, 27 June 1930, 'General Fund—New York Reorganization', OUP/GF6/31.



declared as dividends.<sup>57</sup> The vast majority of those funds were sent to Oxford. In short, the flow had been healthy. Unfortunately, as Milford was making his assessments in the summer of 1929, he did not know what was coming.

## The Depression

The collapse of the American economy, which began in the financial markets in October 1929, hit the entire retail sector. The impact on the New York branch was brutal, and over the next few years grew only worse. Branch net sales in the fiscal year ending in 1930 were up slightly from fiscal 1929, but then conditions began to tell. Sales fell from just less than \$1.5 million that year to \$1.2 million the next and then to less than \$900,000 in fiscal year 1932. In the trough year of 1933, the figure was \$653,721, down nearly 55 per cent from the peak.<sup>58</sup>

The collapse of profits was even more alarming. The small operating profit of 1929 melted into a substantial loss in 1930 (\$33,911), which increased by two-thirds in 1932 (\$55,698). The figure was down another 15 per cent in 1933, and not much different in 1934.<sup>59</sup> At their nadir, losses amounted to 10.5 per cent of sales. Despite such landmarks as the sale of the one-millionth *Scotfield Bible* in 1930, even the Bible Department lost money in 1932 and 1933.<sup>60</sup> The peak-to-trough reversal in profits was not as extreme as it had been in the mid-1920s, but it was much more sustained; and the state of the economy surrounding the branch was much grimmer. The branch's general position might have seemed even worse had the New York profits been subject to federal corporate income taxation. But the Internal Revenue Service took the position that the relevant entity for tax purposes was the University rather than the Press or the New York Branch per se and that US activities of the University should be free from tax liability.<sup>61</sup> So profits from New York were unburdened. That was a blessing, but at the time not an overwhelmingly significant one.

The trading environment was desperately bad. A *Publishers Weekly* editorial caught the spirit well. 'Nineteen thirty-two has been the worst year that American business has ever recorded. When the year began we thought that we had been suffering from a depression, but we now class 1930 and 1931 as comparatively bounteous years.'<sup>62</sup> Cumberlege tried to capture the near-apocalyptic atmosphere in the United States:

Wheat is selling cheaper than sawdust. Cotton, too, is at the lowest point in history. Coffee has been burned in bonfires and has been used as fuel in furnaces. It is in such

<sup>57</sup> 'NY 1897–1972', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>58</sup> These figures come from 'Oxford University Press New York Comparative Profit and Loss Accounts' (all dated 31 March) for 1930, 1931, 1932, and 1933; all in OUP Cary.

<sup>59</sup> Other branch losses from the same period were \$62,617 in 1931, \$69,136 in 1933, and \$24,750 in 1934; see 'Oxford University Press New York Comparative Profit and Loss Accounts', OUP Cary.

<sup>60</sup> Frank E. Gaebel, *The Story of the Scofield Reference Bible, 1909–1959* (1959), 5–6.

<sup>61</sup> Treasury Department to Oxford University, 1 August 1930, in 'Federal Income Tax Exemption Correspondence—Folder 1-3', OUP Cary.

<sup>62</sup> 'Where We Stand', enclosed with Cumberlege, memorandum, 23 January 1933, OUP/OS/1/3/1–2.

a world that we are trying to sell books. A world where over twelve millions of unemployed are being kept alive by charity and where everyone lives in fear.<sup>63</sup>

To keep the business going, another recapitalization was required. The problem was no longer just losses, but payment of the Trademark Expense and provision of adequate capital for the business to go forward.<sup>64</sup> Nicholas Waterhouse, OUP's senior contact at its London accountants, felt that operating capital needed roughly to be trebled. That could be done without a payment of cash, but by yet again erasing New York's debts to London, which stood by January 1931 at more than \$870,000.<sup>65</sup> The process went forward, the remaining private shareholders were bought out at par, and the New York operation was reincorporated on 31 March 1931.<sup>66</sup>

The mounting losses, combined with the reorganization, led officers and the Delegates to question the position of the New York operation. Some focused on declining revenues and high fixed costs, wanting either radical retrenchment or outright closure. They suggested going back to the model of an agency, perhaps even a London-based agency, to service the American trade. The Oxford defenders of New York argued that business was in a bad down cycle but nonetheless just a cycle. The country was large and its population growing. There were many universities and colleges. Profitable operation would return.

The second group gained the upper hand. The Secretary, Chapman, had written in 1930 about the need to wait things out in New York: 'Difficult and embarrassing as the situation in New York is, in these hard times, I am clearer than I have ever been that we ought to go on.'<sup>67</sup> There was competition from American university presses and New York commercial houses.<sup>68</sup> But there were also recent successes: Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager's *Growth of the American Republic* (1930), which 'may make a new era' (it did); Abraham Flexner's *Universities: American, English, German* (1930), which Chapman said 'will be "front-page" news' (and in fact became a touchstone); and John Livingston Lowes, who, Chapman reported, 'has offered us a book' (which became the influential *Art of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1931)).<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, Chapman wrote, 'to withdraw from active publication in New York (at a time when Cambridge is taking steps to improve its position there—Macmillan Co. have opened a "Cambridge Department") would strike our American friends as a retrograde step, and would gravely embarrass our relations with English authors who look to America for a substantial part of their sales.'

Cumberlege, for his part, fought with passion and with an insider's command of the facts. His first problem remained the financial results in New York, and he

<sup>63</sup> Cumberlege, memorandum, 23 January 1933.

<sup>64</sup> Waterhouse to Milford, 9 July 1930, 'NYB Special Notes 1918', 'NY 1897–1972', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>65</sup> Notes by Cumberlege, n.d. [c. January 1931], 'NYB Special Notes 1918', 'NY 1897–1972', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>66</sup> Waterhouse, document, 23 January 1931, 'NYB Special Notes 1918', 'NY 1897–1972', OUP Strong Room; for tax concerns, see Price, Waterhouse & Co. (NY) to Price, Waterhouse & Co. (London), 8 August 1930, 'General Fund—New York Reorganization', OUP/GF6/31.

<sup>67</sup> Chapman, memorandum for Finance Committee, drafted 25 November 1930, 'General Fund—New York Reorganization', OUP/GF6/31.

<sup>68</sup> Donald Pritchett Bean, *Report on American Scholarly Publishing, with Exhibits* (Chicago: mimeograph, 1929), table 11.

<sup>69</sup> Chapman, memorandum for Finance Committee, drafted 25 November 1930.

continued along painfully familiar lines. Some departments were consolidated and staff levels further reduced. Gravely concerned about the fate to which he might be abandoning colleagues, he made broad-based cuts in salaries instead of wider layoffs.<sup>70</sup> Inventories were repeatedly considered and reduced. Through Cumberlege's efforts, bad debts declined and the branch's recovery began, but the losses did not disappear. The question was what to make of them. Cumberlege pointed out that the New York operation did not pose any great danger: 'The Branch pays all its bills promptly and earns all the discount it can as a reward for its promptness; and it also [now] has a large balance standing to its credit with the London business.'<sup>71</sup> Moreover, he pointed to the future: 'America must rise from its depression and while the Branch will lag ... it will be in a good position to take advantage and to make profits or break even at least when the turn comes.'

The Assistant Secretary, Kenneth Sisam, was the chief naysayer. After watching the worsening results and hearing the worried discussions of the Finance Committee, he feared further delay would amount to little more than dithering. Consistently sceptical, he favoured, among other options, making the New York branch into something like a mere depot and having the Press buy a London export house. Like Cumberlege, he waged his war by memorandum, writing in May 1933: 'Why shouldn't the Delegates face the facts and go to the root of the matter? It is no use spending money and energy on shoring up a dying business.'<sup>72</sup>

Cumberlege replied point by point and gave no quarter: 'Oxford and London has always wanted, I suppose, a profit at both ends and it is seldom possible to achieve that these days. For nobody who has any experience in publishing and manufacturing can pretend that England has not been selling to America at a profit—sometimes considerable.'<sup>73</sup> He warmed to his theme: 'For six years America shows a loss; how much that is real or imagined can only be decided in England.' He then pointed out that despite the current gloom, Oxford and London would be much worse off without New York:

Consider the situation you would have to face if there was no American branch ... I doubt whether 5% of your publications could be placed; those that were would be sold by you in editions of 250 to 500 sheets ... at prices that would make you shudder. ... With luck you might get for sheets one-third the published price. ... The cost of hawking these books round would be huge.

There would be the expense of review copies for precious few reviews. All the educational sales in the United States, which he estimated at half the Clarendon Press sales, would vanish: 'No Professor is going to adopt a book whose home is 3 to 6000 miles from his University.' The Press would almost entirely lose the Christian

<sup>70</sup> See Cumberlege to Chapman, 23 September 1930, 'NY Branch Staff: "Officers"', OUP Strong Room; also Cumberlege to Milford, 26 January and 15 February 1933, both in 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/I/3/1-2.

<sup>71</sup> Cumberlege, 'Report on American Branch', May 1933, 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/I/3/1-2.

<sup>72</sup> Sisam to Milford, 3 April 1933, 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/I/3/1-2; see also Sisam to Milford, 30 January 1933, 'NY 1930s'.

<sup>73</sup> [Cumberlege], response to Sisam's memorandum, n.d. [1933], 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/I/3/1-2.

Science, Bible, and India paper business. And so on. In sum Oxford needed to establish what the loss of New York would truly mean before deciding drastically to reduce operations.

Cumberlege's main point, however, went beyond Sisam's framing of the question. Taking full advantage of OUP's reputation required more than simply selling books at the maximal level. There was no need for the branch to confine itself to authors and works commissioned in Britain. There were increasing numbers of American academics who, with proper editorial supervision, could produce texts of the requisite standard, and American authors and editors were well placed to understand the needs of the American market. The real opportunity of America did not lie in selling hand-me-down products. There was a great business to be had, but the branch would have to build it. According to Cumberlege, it was the time to lay foundations, not destroy them. Even Sisam had noted that point earlier, writing after a visit in 1930: 'The Branch must not only economize on present operations, but seek new sources of income. The most desirable—even essential—is the building up of a series of advanced educational books written by Americans and produced in America ... There must be more naturalization of the business in America.'<sup>74</sup>

Cumberlege won over the Finance Committee and proceeded, with the help of the reorganization of 1931, to chart a 'naturalization' of publishing. There were new individual titles, along with series such as the Oxford Library of French Texts and its counterparts for German and Spanish. Besides Morison and Commager's *Growth of the American Republic*, which rapidly developed into a franchise of extraordinary persistence, the branch did well with a translation of the *Odyssey* by T. E. Shaw (T. E. Lawrence), the Press's first entry onto American best-seller lists.<sup>75</sup> Sir Paul Harvey's *Oxford Companion to English Literature* sold well, as did the *Oxford Companion to American Literature*, commissioned from James Hart. In addition there were the state guides sponsored by the New Deal's Federal Writers Project. Many of the authors of those were skilled, producing volumes of distinctive character—derivative works were still in print in the late 1960s. Branch losses fell sharply from 1933 (\$69,136) to 1934 (\$24,750); profitability returned in 1935 (\$10,575) and then rose steeply: \$34,538 in 1936, and \$50,118 in 1937.<sup>76</sup>

Cumberlege became convinced about the need to reach out to domestic authors to publish for the secondary and tertiary educational markets. Sometimes manuscripts just drifted in, but the branch began actively pursuing authors with advice from Commager and other academics.<sup>77</sup> This was helpful. But Cumberlege came to feel that he needed staff. After a long and elaborate courtship, he hired as

<sup>74</sup> Sisam, memorandum, 4 November 1930, 'General Fund—New York Reorganization', OUP/GF6/31.

<sup>75</sup> On Lawrence's *Odyssey*, see Cumberlege, memorandum, 23 January 1933, 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/1/3/1–2.

<sup>76</sup> 'Oxford University Press, New York, Inc. Statement of Profit and Loss, 31 March 1935' and 'Oxford University Press, New York, Inc. Financial Statements 31 March 1937', both in OUP Cary.

<sup>77</sup> For a manuscript that drifted in, see the file '(John) Pick: Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet'; on the relationship with Commager, see [Vaudrin] to Commager, 26 January 1940, 'H. S. Commager: General (suggestions for the American series in the World's Classics)'; both in Editorial Correspondence Files, OUPNY.



general editor and education manager Howard Lowry, a midwestern English professor who, after leaving the Press, joined the faculty at Princeton and then became President of Wooster College, in Ohio.<sup>78</sup> Lowry's job as manager was to develop a list in American history and literature. He devoted himself to the task with gusto and enterprise—even as a college president, he continued to write in with author suggestions—as did his successors.<sup>79</sup> The growth of the College Department and the extension of its activities institutionalized those efforts.<sup>80</sup>

Cumberlege also tackled overheads. Domestically commissioned and manufactured works were, ironically, both a source of profits and an impediment to them. Warehousing was a conspicuous expense. This was the case for much of the New York publishing industry. Doubleday contacted OUP about sharing costs in the United States, but Cumberlege instead discussed doing so with the British publisher Longmans, a natural partner, given the characteristics of two firms' product lines.<sup>81</sup> The first proposal struck the Delegates as one that gave away too much authority. A revised version more clearly laid out how service and sales functions, along with Manhattan ground rents, were to be shared. At the end of 1933 the two sides signed a contract for a five-year alliance, which generated savings that helped push the branch back into profitability.<sup>82</sup>

The national economic recovery, which started after 1933, helped the branch. Sales increased every year from 1934 through the decade. Bible sales were largely responsible and, given the ongoing difficulties, were certainly a comfort to Cumberlege. By fiscal year 1937, overall net sales had topped the million-dollar mark for two straight years: \$1,003,257 in fiscal year 1936 and \$1,144,473 in the next year.<sup>83</sup> Cumberlege took the sales figures as a sign that the crisis in New York was over. Having intended to stay in New York no longer than necessary, he sought to return to England. After much casting about and a growing belief in London and Oxford that the job required an Englishman, OUP sent Paul Willert to serve as Cumberlege's assistant and understudy. The slender Willert was the son of Sir Arthur Willert (*Times* correspondent in Washington, 1916–18) and a product of Eton and Oxford. He had worked with the publishers Ullstein and Hachette, and had served for three years in production and editorial departments at Heinemann.<sup>84</sup> In 1936 Cumberlege departed for Amen House in London as assistant and intended successor to Milford.<sup>85</sup> Willert took over as manager in New York.

Willert's tenure in New York, however, was brief. He rejoined his regiment in some haste in 1939, leaving the treasurer, Henry Walck, to act in his stead

<sup>78</sup> See Cumberlege to Milford 31 July 1934, 'New York Branch—Officers—1901–1970', OUP Strong Room.

<sup>79</sup> 'Lowry, Howard Advisor', Editorial Correspondence Files, OUPNY.

<sup>80</sup> 'OUP Staff: Geoffrey Cumberlege becomes Printer to the University and OUP Manager', *Publishers Weekly*, 29 September 1945, 1558.

<sup>81</sup> For Doubleday's proposal, see Gundy to Milford, 19 June 1933, OUP/OS/1/3/1–2.

<sup>82</sup> 'Agreement between OUP NY and Longmans, December 29, 1933', OUP/OS/1/3/1–2.

<sup>83</sup> 'Oxford University Press New York, Inc. Financial Statements', 1936 and 1937, OUP Cary.

<sup>84</sup> Ella Oelrich Oral History, OUP, Oxford; *Publishers Weekly*, 10 October 1936, 1508; Milford to Chapman, 4 April 1926, 'NY Branch Staff: "Officers"', OUP Strong Room. See also the editorial note at the end of this chapter.

<sup>85</sup> See Cumberlege to Milford, 10 May 1936, OUP/OS/1/3/1–2.



FIGURE 19.4 C. C. Johnson (Canada), F. Eyre (Australia), and H. Z. Walck (New York)

(Fig. 19.4). Walck had joined the Press in 1937 after working at Prentice-Hall and Putnam. While still in charge, Willert passed on few instructions to a man who was by training an accountant and had little management experience. Writing from England on a day's leave, Willert told Walck that during the war 'you will have to regard yourself as independent and in collaboration with the other heads of departments you will have to run the Branch entirely on your own', adding encouragingly, 'Of your ability to do this I have never had any doubt.'<sup>86</sup> That same day he wrote to one of those department heads: 'You might question the wisdom of putting an accountant in charge of a publishing house. It is certainly not an ideal solution, but ... there is nothing else that I could do.'<sup>87</sup>

Luckily, Walck took the helm during a period of economic revival. His first major task concerned ending the five-year contract with Longmans. Given their improving prospects, neither firm saw the need to continue the alliance. By 1939 branch sales had almost reached the level seen in 1929, and the business had been profitable for four consecutive years. Oxford gave the requisite six months' notice in August, and Walck soon had full control of the branch's fortunes.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Willert to Walck 10 September 1939, 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/1/3/1-2.

<sup>87</sup> Willert to Vaudrin, 10 September 1939, 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/1/3/1-2.

<sup>88</sup> Walck to Willert, 6 March 1939; the notice is in Milford to Mills, 3 August 1939; Longmans' gracious reply is Mills to Milford, 11 August 1939; all in 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/1/3/1-2.

## Wartime and the beginnings of the long boom

The scale of America's mobilization, once it entered the Second World War, was remarkable. From a standing body of about a quarter-million men under arms, the numbers rose rapidly to a peak of more than twelve million.<sup>89</sup> Soldiers, as ever, spent a great deal of their time waiting; both they and those still at home appear to have spent significant amounts of their free time reading. The general buoyancy of bible sales is one indicator of this. The Book-of-the-Month Club offers a different but still striking example: it distributed 3.3 million books in 1939, and close to 7 million in 1944.<sup>90</sup> The Council on Books in Wartime secured scarce paper and binding materials, general rationing notwithstanding, and many publishers produced cheap editions in large numbers.<sup>91</sup> It was a good time to be an American publisher. As one historian of the period put it: 'Publishers were able to sell out almost anything they issued.'<sup>92</sup> In New York, OUP's sales were still heavily dependent on the Bible, but that was good under the circumstances. The branch was positioned to benefit from war.<sup>93</sup>

One major challenge facing the branch was conscription: many younger employees were of draft age, and even some older staff members were potentially vulnerable. One of the latter, William Oman, the editor of Educational Books, volunteered.<sup>94</sup> Long-time and skilled employees were sometimes summoned on less than two weeks' notice.<sup>95</sup> In a letter to Milford, Walck listed a series of related problems: favoured industries lured workers away with higher wages than the branch could offer; in some job categories it was difficult to keep any employees for long; and the government had begun requisitioning typewriters—by November 1942 he expected to lose a quarter of those at the branch.<sup>96</sup>

Notwithstanding such difficulties, the business prospered. Sales rose, and by 1945 (when they hit \$2.6 million) were double their 1939 and 1940 levels (\$1.2 million and \$1.3 million).<sup>97</sup> The *Scofield Bible*, which continued to be a top seller, sold its two-millionth volume.<sup>98</sup> Profits also rose steadily, 1942 aside. Walck explained in 1942 that during the Depression 'we spoiled our customers by giving them too much service, too long credit terms, etc.', but it was 'time to cut such things down

<sup>89</sup> *Historical Statistics of the United States, Millennium Edition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), series Ed26.

<sup>90</sup> See Book-of-the-Month Club S-1 Registration Statement dated 20 March 1947, US Securities and Exchange Commission.

<sup>91</sup> See John B. Hench, *Books as Weapons: Propaganda, Publishing, and the Battle for Global Markets in the Era of World War II* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

<sup>92</sup> John B. Hench, 'A D-Day for American Books in Europe: Overseas Editions, Inc., 1944–1945', in Nord, Rubin, and Schudson (eds.), *History of the Book in America*, 5:186.

<sup>93</sup> Sisam to Milford, 26 March 1942, file 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/1/3/1–2.

<sup>94</sup> Walck to Milford, 30 March 1942; see also Walck to Milford, 22 May 1942; both in 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/1/3/1–2. On Oman, see 'OUP Staff', *Publishers Weekly*, 6 June 1942, 2115.

<sup>95</sup> Walck to Milford, 25 November 1942, 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/1/3/1–2.

<sup>96</sup> Walck to Milford, 7 May 1942, 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/1/3/1–2.

<sup>97</sup> 'Oxford University Press, New York Inc., Financial Statements', 1939, 1940, and 1945, all in OUP Cary.

<sup>98</sup> R. Todd Mangum and Mark S. Sweetnam, *The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Paternoster, 2009), 169.

to a sensible basis'.<sup>99</sup> The net profit figures for 1944 (\$110,116) and 1945 (\$96,402) were, even taking wartime inflation into account, still nearly four times the amount produced in 1940 (\$19,701). Wartime inflation notwithstanding, net profits grew far faster than inflation.<sup>100</sup>

There were a number of high-level changes at the end of the war. Milford at last felt able to retire; Cumberlege duly took his place. In New York Walck was formally appointed Vice-President, that is, head of the establishment; his title was changed to President in 1948.<sup>101</sup> Cumberlege, Walck, and A. L. P. Norrington, the Secretary, gathered in New York in September 1946 for the branch's fiftieth anniversary (Fig. 19.5). One final move came in October 1950 when the New York Business was separated from London and placed directly under the authority of the Delegates and the Secretary. Views on the new arrangement differed on the two sides of the Atlantic. Norrington saw the move in part as a matter of administrative convenience—it was 'not intended to increase the independence or autonomy of the branch'.<sup>102</sup> As he told Sisam, recounting a conversation with Walck, 'I rammmed in the point that the principal effect of the change of status of NYB will be, not to emancipate them from supervision by Amen House, but to transfer control to the Delegates'.<sup>103</sup> Colin Roberts, a Delegate (and Norrington's eventual successor as Secretary), agreed: the measure was meant 'to bring the affairs of the largest branch more frequently beneath the eyes of the Finance Committee', of which he was a member.<sup>104</sup> Yet according to Roberts, in New York the move was 'interpreted as liberation from the status of a branch and emancipation from the control of Amen House'.<sup>105</sup> An equally important element of the change was the explicit expectations of a transfer of 40 per cent of net profits to Britain each year.

The New York operation, like the whole of the Press at this time, was undercapitalized.<sup>106</sup> Much maintenance had been deferred during the war years.<sup>107</sup> In various parts of OUP's business there were obvious needs for expenditure on the physical plant. Those claims competed with demands from publishing units wanting to invest in new publications. Sisam noted in 1946 that the Press's parent was not making things easy: 'Nor is the University willing to relax its claim on us to produce unremunerative books [that is, scholarly works with little chance of profitability] after so many years on which that primary purpose has had practically nothing'.<sup>108</sup> There were also problems specific to New York. The Exchange Control authority in Britain objected to the Press retaining all branch profits in New York.<sup>109</sup> Worse, British taxation was due on New York profits

<sup>99</sup> Walck to Milford, 7 May 1942, 'NY 1930s', OUP/OS/1/3/1-2.

<sup>100</sup> 'Oxford University Press, New York Inc., Financial Statements', 1940, 1944, and 1945, all in OUP Cary. For the consumer price index, see *Historical Statistics*, series Cc1.

<sup>101</sup> Directors Meeting, minutes, 2 September 1948, OUPNY.

<sup>102</sup> Norrington to Finance Committee, 20 November 1949, quoted in Colin Roberts, memorandum, 'The New York Business', January 1955, "Resignation" of HZW', 'NYB Private Papers 1955-1958', Secretary's Store, OUP.

<sup>103</sup> Norrington to Sisam, 9 November 1950, Sisam Correspondence, OUP/C/3/11/3.

<sup>104</sup> Roberts, 'The New York Business', January 1955.

<sup>105</sup> Roberts, 'The New York Business', January 1955.

<sup>106</sup> Walck to Cumberlege, 3 October 1946, OUP/OS/1/3/1-2.

<sup>107</sup> Sisam to Cumberlege, 30 September 1946, and Sisam to Walck, 15 October 1946, both in OUP/OS/1/3/1-2.

<sup>108</sup> Sisam to Walck 15 October 1946, OUP/OS/1/3/1-2. <sup>109</sup> Sisam to Walck 15 October 1946.





FIGURE 19.5 H. Z. Walck (New York), G. F. Cumberlege (London), and A. L. P. Norrington (Oxford) at a dinner celebrating the New York branch's fiftieth anniversary, 27 September 1946

regardless of the payment of dividends, so using dividend retention to build up capital in New York imposed strains elsewhere in the system. Matters were not simplified by the fact that OUP books published in Britain were sold to New York on the basis of a fixed and unchanging percentage of the sterling price, the 30.5 per cent devaluation of sterling against the dollar on 19 September 1949 notwithstanding. Even with good prospects, there would be capital constraints for some time.

Yet the operating environment remained favourable. Wartime tax regimes having come and gone, the US corporate income tax exemption was renewed. The Press was even reimbursed for substantial proportions of taxes paid during the war. A change in the tax code in 1950 complicated matters, leading to extended correspondence and negotiations, but no actual payments, for many years.<sup>110</sup> The widely predicted post-war consumption crisis never materialized. The US government announced a policy goal of full employment, and the GI Bill boosted university enrolments and hence the demand for textbooks.<sup>111</sup> The presence of commercial publishers in core

<sup>110</sup> See Chase and Bierman to John Brett-Smith, 24 August 1959, 'Federal Income Tax Correspondence—Folder 1-3', OUP Cary.

<sup>111</sup> See *Historical Statistics*, series Bc 523 and 525.

university press markets declined markedly.<sup>112</sup> The New York branch published a range of broadly appealing books, most notably the later parts of Arnold Toynbee's *Study of History*, the coverage of which by *Time* magazine provided enormous free publicity.<sup>113</sup> The two-volume abridged edition had sold 200,000 copies by 1948, and his *Civilization on Trial* another 50,000.<sup>114</sup>

A significant event during this period was the re-establishment of Oxford's authority over the branch. That control was not in question when Cumberlege and then Willert were in charge. But on Walck's watch, the Secretary and Delegates began to express concerns about branch publications not meeting OUP standards. Cumberlege suggested that someone trained by Oxford and more imbued with its values be sent to New York.<sup>115</sup> That person could then function as the representative of the Clarendon Press in America.<sup>116</sup> Something of the sort was going to be necessary. America, with its size, economic growth, and burgeoning university sector, was, according to Norrington, 'the potential source of an increasing number, and probably an increasing proportion, of the kind of learned books with a world-wide market'.<sup>117</sup> He noted that the branches were allowed to publish 'books that were of purely local use and interest'; the titles had to be 'in the Delegates' field', 'not strictly University Press books' yet 'not at variance with the Delegates' standards'—and they had to 'make money'. Given the increasing costs of college textbook publishing and the directive about profitability, Walck moved the business towards trade publishing.<sup>118</sup>

Perhaps Walck misunderstood the messages from Oxford; Oxford thought so. When he proposed buying entire new lines to build the trade list, Walton Street responded carefully. Norrington emphasized that what was distinctive about a university press, and what ultimately justified the Press's existence, was 'the publication of books which would not be published by an ordinary commercial publisher'.<sup>119</sup> All departments of the Press were judged by their contribution to that goal, either by direct activity or by generating funds to cross-subsidize it. Norrington felt that it would be 'practically impossible to make a living as a trade publisher ... without concentrating on best-sellers and/or books with large "subsidiary" possibilities'. Even then, 'the risks [were] great and the outlay large'. He much preferred New York to concentrate on 'a few books of high quality and permanent value' rather than on anything like a general list.

Meanwhile the US publishing world was embracing a new way to generate sales. In the early 1950s Jason Epstein, a recent graduate of Columbia University, persuaded his employer, Doubleday, to start a line of paperbacks that would draw heavily on

<sup>112</sup> Chester Kerr, *A Report on American University Presses* (Washington, DC: Association of American University Presses, 1949), table 2.

<sup>113</sup> See Chapter 11 for a full account.

<sup>114</sup> Memorandum, 'New York Branch', November 1948, OUP/OS/1/3/1–2.

<sup>115</sup> Cumberlege to Secretary, 20 December 1950, 'Division of Province between C.P. and N.Y.B.', OUP/FF23/1.

<sup>116</sup> Norrington to Walck, 19 January 1951, OUP/FF145/AN.

<sup>117</sup> Norrington to Walck, 19 January 1951.

<sup>118</sup> See Norrington to Dan Davin, 'Provinces', 23 May 1952, OUP/FF145/AN; see also P. J. Spicer to Roberts, 'Economics Books in the U.S.', 5 October 1960, OUP/FF145/AN.

<sup>119</sup> Norrington to Walck, 27 April 1954, OUP/FF145/AN.



FIGURE 19.6 OUP Library, Madison Avenue

out-of-copyright classics and be marketed to a university and trade audience.<sup>120</sup> Paperbacks were hardly unknown in America, but in the immediate post-war period they were mostly mass-market novels distributed through shops and newsstands. As a product for trade and university readers, paperbacks were a new line, requiring different channels of distribution.<sup>121</sup> The New York branch was particularly well situated to take advantage of that development, since it could use all material to which the OUP held copyright. Demand was expected from the growing number of ordinary educated readers as well as from universities with course reading lists to fill.

The New York Business entered the paperback world before Oxford or the London Business, but slowly nonetheless. Firms that had earlier committed to the market began to approach the branch for reprinting rights.<sup>122</sup> Initial responses were ad hoc and cautious—the branch lived off the backlist titles that were wanted. By 1956 New York had sold rights to half a dozen titles and was contemplating another four.<sup>123</sup> Articles in the trade press about university curricula and

<sup>120</sup> Epstein's influence on US publishing was considerable; he was for many years editorial director of Random House, and co-founded both the *New York Review of Books* and the Library of America.

<sup>121</sup> Roberts, 'American Paper Backs', 16 March 1956, 'Paperback Editions', OUP/CG64/353.

<sup>122</sup> See, for example, Walck to Roberts, 'The Royalty Rate on Paperbound Editions', 1 May 1956, OUP/CG64/353.

<sup>123</sup> Walck to Roberts, 'Yours 30 November', 5 January 1956, OUP/CG64/353.

merchandizing at college bookstores were useful evidence in making the case across the ocean, and the internal economic logic was clear enough.<sup>124</sup> Authors also cared.<sup>125</sup> Management began to scan its lists to assess the possibility of New York's proceeding on its own.<sup>126</sup> Success would depend partly on title selection and partly, it was said, on whether New York could sell the books in other Press territories.<sup>127</sup> New York committed to go ahead in May 1956, and the Galaxy line was launched that autumn with three titles that had been very well received in hardback: T. E. Shaw's translation of the *Odyssey*, R. G. Collingwood's *The Idea of History*, and C. Wright Mills's *White Collar*. New cover art was needed, but no new typesetting was involved. Trim sizes and margins were smaller than in the hardcover edition, and the paper, while said to be of good quality, was lighter in weight (Fig. 19.7).<sup>128</sup>

The move into paperbacks was a step towards a new future, as was the decision to build a new warehouse to store the branch's growing stock and provide space for back-office operations. Storage facilities in New York City had been cramped since the mid-1940s, and the problems had only worsened. Warehousing was divided between two locations: one for bulk storage and one for shipping. Neither was well suited for efficient operations. Moving stock between them on city streets, along with loading and unloading, was time-consuming and expensive. Rents were high and expected to increase.<sup>129</sup> In 1955 the branch purchased property in suburban Fair Lawn, New Jersey, and built a 48,000-square-foot structure to accommodate its growing needs (Figs. 19.8 and 19.9). The entire project cost more than \$500,000 and marked the first time the branch operated in facilities it owned.<sup>130</sup> Despite the investment, there remained considerable unease in Walton Street concerning New York's prospects and decision-making. Dividends were again flowing, but successes like Rachel Carson's *The Sea around Us* added to Oxford's worry that the branch was becoming reliant on best sellers. If the Press officers in Oxford had read the branch's internal documents about *The Sea around Us*, their unease might have been greater still. The trade editor at the time, expected the book to sell a maximum of 6,000 copies. In fact, the book spent eighty-six weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list, and cumulative sales of the first edition alone were nearly a third of a million copies.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>124</sup> See CEP [Charles Pettee] to Secretary, 'Paperback Reprints', 21 October 1955, OUP/CG64/353. The letter refers to an article in *Publishers Weekly*, 15 October 1955, and the particulars of OUPNY sales to students in the famous Humanities 1 survey at Columbia, the local Ivy League university.

<sup>125</sup> See Chester to Brown, 'Paperbacks', 2 April 1959, 1, 'Oxford Paperback Misc.', OUP/CG25/194.

<sup>126</sup> See, for example, CEP to Delegates, 'Paper Backs', 3 November 1955, 'Paperback Editions', OUP/CG25/194.

<sup>127</sup> Roberts, 'American Paper Backs', 16 March 1956; Roberts, 'N.Y.B. Paper Backs', 28 March 1956, both in OUP/CG25/194.

<sup>129</sup> R. D. Burnette 'To Move or Not to Move', 2 April 1953, OUP Cary.

<sup>130</sup> Oxford University Realty Corporation, 'Closing statement of purchase by OUP Inc of site in Fairlawn', 18 February 1955, 'Oxford University Realty Corporation', Cary Box 6/6, OUPNY.

<sup>131</sup> On the original assessment, see WR to PV [Philip Vaudrin], 'Return to the Sea' [the original title], 'Carson, Rachel Original Revision', Editorial Correspondence Files, OUPNY; and 'The Sea Around Us' title record, Out-of-print printing, sales, and inventory records, OUP Cary.





FIGURE 19.7 Oxford paperbacks

### The direction of the branch

The appointment of Colin Roberts as Secretary set the stage for serious evaluation of the New York branch. He wrote a memorandum in 1955 setting out his initial thoughts about its prospects.<sup>132</sup> The New York location was a mixed blessing; Boston's atmosphere was more academic, and Penguin, he noted, had set up its American headquarters in Baltimore, maintaining only a modest New York office to take care of necessary activities. America, he thought, was hardly a promising sales territory. The size of the country made it difficult to sustain 'bookshops of a European pattern'. The American book trade was organized differently from the British in significant respects, none of them favourable to publisher profitability. Discounts to booksellers, for example, were much higher, and retailers could return unsold books. In addition, pricing for books published in Britain was constrained because retailers could order direct from England; in addition there was increasing competition among bible publishers. The worst part, according to Roberts, was that 'prestige demands that N.Y.B. has its own trade or general list, and the competitive economics of New York publishing demand that the list be a large one'. Trade publishing in the United States was driven by titles with large sales—'Far more than in the U.K., the whole effort of American publishing is bent towards





FIGURE 19.8 OUP warehouse, Fair Lawn, New Jersey, 1956

discovering a best seller and N.Y.B. ... is not exempt from this tendency'—which meant that for the New York branch 'the success of *The Sea Around Us* has been a doubtful blessing'.

Roberts assessed the financial results from New York, which he thought had been neither conspicuously profitable relative to British operations nor cause for real alarm. But he still felt that the Press, for all its investment, could ask for a greater return. To Roberts, the branch was misdirected. Its focus on general readers left it with unsatisfactory relations with colleges and universities, which in turn undermined its ability to sell Clarendon Press and London books.<sup>133</sup> Walck maintained that he needed a trade list in order to be able to sell London books, but Roberts noted rather tersely that Cambridge University Press's New York office made a profit without any trade department or trade books.

Walck wanted to use the refund of wartime excess profits tax to address Roberts's concerns by buying new academic lines. Roberts had other uses in mind for the money: 'The tax refund should go to shortening payment times [for stock published in Britain] and Fair Lawn.' And he dismissed Walck's idea outright:

Buying an existing list, or part of an existing list, from another publisher is not at all a good idea. We do not want to publish books just for the sake of publishing books, and

<sup>133</sup> Roberts, 'The New York Business'.



FIGURE 19.9 Conveyor belt, OUP warehouse, Fair Lawn, New Jersey

it remains to be seen whether New York can work itself into a sufficiently profitable way of life to make active publishing worthwhile at all.<sup>134</sup>

To Roberts, Walck seemed out of touch with the goals of the Press.

In 1956, dissatisfied with the quality of New York's list, Oxford directed Walck to 'channel its expansion' into college textbooks.<sup>135</sup> The status quo was no longer satisfactory: 'The business is oriented towards general publishing, whose results are neither profitable nor particularly creditable.'<sup>136</sup> Instead, the idea was for New York to build up its College Department, if necessary at the expense of the Trade Department.<sup>137</sup> Walck, once the steady hand left in charge by Willert, good with figures and strong on orderly process, by this point appeared to disadvantage. Stocky and balding, he was now said, disparagingly, to look like an accountant and increasingly, it was felt, to act like one rather than like a publisher. And although some parts of the orderly process were durably valuable, others, including important details of cost-accounting protocols, may have seemed conservative but in fact systematically distorted decision-making.<sup>138</sup> Reports began to trickle in to

<sup>134</sup> Quoted in Norrington to Publisher, 'U.S. Federal Tax Refund', 20 March 1954, 'Division of Province Between C.P. and N.Y.B.', OUP/FF23.

<sup>135</sup> See Roberts, evidence to the Waldock Committee, 1 March 1968; for the beginnings of this change, see Roberts, 'The New York Business'.

<sup>137</sup> See Roberts, evidence to the Waldock Committee, 1 March 1968.

<sup>138</sup> On Walck's positive qualities and helpful initiatives, see Byron Hollinshead's oral history for OUP.

Roberts about Walck's weaknesses. An American professor who served as the college adviser to the branch described the resignation of several key staff members in the College Department, attributing the departures to Walck's leadership.<sup>139</sup> Walck appeared to be fulfilling the letter of his instructions, but missing the intent. Several junior officers had the impression 'that all that matters is to get large numbers of [college] titles and books as quickly as possible'.<sup>140</sup> The most serious indictment came from the director of another university press, who 'insisted that HZW [Henry Z. Walck] has become a rather painful joke in the profession because of his social as well as intellectual inadequacies'.<sup>141</sup>

Roberts concluded that Walck had to go, notifying him in a kindly worded letter in April 1957 that the Delegates would give him twelve months' notice beginning in October, when he came up for reappointment.<sup>142</sup> About a month after hearing the news and accepting it, Walck asked whether he might buy the juvenile division, on which the branch had lost money many more years than not.<sup>143</sup> Roberts and the Delegates agreed, thinking it might make parting easier. The sale price was set as the value of stock plus \$10,000 for goodwill.<sup>144</sup> Walck left formally in April 1958, passing the reins to Cumberlege, who had arrived the previous November to manage the business on an interim basis. Five months later John Brett-Smith was appointed the new president of the branch.

By the time of Walck's departure sales had risen almost 80 per cent since the end of the war, going from \$2.4 million in 1946 to \$4.3 million in 1957.<sup>145</sup> Profits had declined in the constrained post-war years, but began a persistent though irregular climb after 1951.<sup>146</sup> According to Cumberlege, about two-thirds of the growth was real rather than merely nominal. Financially, Walck appeared to have run a steady ship, but particularly after Oxford became more active in its monitoring of the business, he had seemed to veer off course.

Roberts had legitimate concerns. There were disconcerting signs in the financial statements. The percentage of assets tied up in inventory had risen alarmingly from 50.6 per cent in 1952 to almost 65 per cent by 1959.<sup>147</sup> Rising inventories and the development costs of the Fair Lawn warehouse caused an ongoing cash shortage in New York.<sup>148</sup> The larger problem became apparent only when the branch was compared with other publishers. A comparison, for example, of net profits as a percentage of working capital or the return on stockholder equity made the branch's results look anaemic (see Tables 19.3 and 19.4).

<sup>139</sup> Edward W. Fox to Roberts, 10 February 1957, 'NYB Private Papers', 'HZW "Resignation" 1955-1958', Secretary's Store, OUP.

<sup>140</sup> Roberts, 19 September 1956, 'NYB Private Papers 1955-58', 'HZW "Resignation" 1955-1958'.

<sup>141</sup> Edward W. Fox to Colin Roberts, 10 February 1957, 'NYB Private Papers', 'HZW "Resignation" 1955-1958'.

<sup>142</sup> Roberts to Walck, 3 April 1957, 'HZW "Resignation" 1955-1958'.

<sup>143</sup> Walck to Roberts, 8 April and 12 May 1957, 'HZW "Resignation" 1955-1958'.

<sup>144</sup> Roberts to [Finance Committee], 29 May 1957, and Roberts to [Finance Committee], 20 June 1957, both in 'HZW "Resignation" 1955-1958'.  
<sup>145</sup> *OUP Inc. Annual Reports*, 1946 and 1957, OUP Cary.

<sup>146</sup> *OUP Inc. Annual Reports*, 1945-57, OUP Cary.

<sup>147</sup> Harold deJager to Brett-Smith, 3 September 1959, enclosed with *Annual Financial Report 1959*, OUP Cary.

<sup>148</sup> Roberts to Cumberlege, 18 August 1959, enclosed with *Annual Financial Report 1959*, OUP Cary.

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TABLE 19.3 Net profits to working capital for OUPNY and competitive publishers, 1954–1959

Year	Oxford	World	Wiley	Harpers	Macmillan
1954	4.5	11.8	6.4	12.0	10.9
1955	7.0	22.0	11.4	15.8	12.1
1956	0.3	29.4	11.6	17.0	14.8
1957	5.5	26.4	17.5	14.2	14.4
1958	11.3	24.0	18.5	N/A	15.1
1959	2.4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: DeJager to Brett-Smith, 3 September 1959, enclosed with Annual Financial Report 1959, OUP Cary.

TABLE 19.4 Return on stockholder equity, 1959 (%)

Publisher	%
OUP New York	1.6
Book-of-the-Month Club	23
World Publishing Company	11
Henry Holt	22
Harper & Bros.	9
Macmillan	12
John C. Winston	14
Rinehart	10
John Wiley & Sons	13

Source: DeJager to Brett-Smith, 3 September 1959, enclosed with Annual Financial Report 1959, OUP Cary.

The explanation for the poor performance was not hard to find. Oxford's bible sales had been declining relative to the competition since 1952, and even though the rest of the business grew, the branch overall was not growing as quickly as other American university presses. The situation varied across departments: Religious was growing faster than its competitive counterparts, but not so College, Medical, or Trade publishing, the last being where Walck had focused his attention and resources.<sup>149</sup> The branch was growing, but the market was growing faster. The opportunities were being seized by others.

<sup>149</sup> DeJager to Brett-Smith, 3 September 1959; for the Trade comparison, DeJager merged figures from the branch's Galaxy, Music, and Wholesale Departments.



## Development with profitless prosperity

The man who succeeded Walck, John Brett-Smith, was an Englishman who had been moved to New York in 1955 and groomed as Walck's replacement. He was a complex figure. He had a lifelong interest in rare-book collecting, and when an important catalogue arrived he retreated behind a closed office door. He inherited a notable collection of Restoration literature from his father, which he improved and eventually sold to the Cambridge University Library.<sup>150</sup> He did not seem to colleagues to have either an editorial or a marketing background, and he showed, they felt, little real flair for business. He talked about 'masterly inactivity' as a virtue—before acting, he liked to see how things were shaping up and developing.<sup>151</sup> He was often not easy to get along with and could express himself in ways that made constructive dialogue difficult.<sup>152</sup>

Brett-Smith attained the presidency but—as was said of Richard Nixon not too much later—the presidency eluded him. He clearly liked being in charge, but was not a natural leader.<sup>153</sup> For example, at the key interview with a candidate for head of manufacturing (the person responsible for producing books on time and at a reasonable cost), Brett-Smith joined a group of senior managers but asked no questions during the meeting and was felt to have been essentially absent. His juniors ran the meeting, did the work, and in effect made the decision.<sup>154</sup> Similarly, his direct interaction with editors seems to have been infrequent. He gained a reputation for not liking to meet authors.<sup>155</sup> Walck may have shown no particular feel for the book business, but Brett-Smith was not much of an improvement: he seemed to take little interest in the business as a business.<sup>156</sup>

All this said, the 1960s were for the most part a lenient environment. The long-running negotiation with the US tax authorities finally moved towards resolution, and a relatively favourable one at that: bible sales were to be taxed, but nothing else was. The formal tax exemption was, as qualified, to be reinstated.<sup>157</sup> As part of the Johnson administration's Great Society initiative, federal funds flowed into the nation's schools and universities, spurring market growth. It was not hard to acquire good books, and Brett-Smith presided over generally much improved results. Profits and dividends were markedly higher also. In fiscal year 1959, the branch reported net sales of more than \$4 million. In 1970 the figure reached \$12 million. In between there were some simply remarkable years (see Table 19.5).

<sup>150</sup> See John Brett-Smith's obituary, *The Times*, 13 August 2003. <sup>151</sup> Hollinshead oral history.

<sup>152</sup> Brown to Roberts, 12 November 1962, Publisher's letter books, 1 November 1963–14 February 1964, OUP/DUP/PUB/2/70.

<sup>153</sup> See the oral histories of Jerry Case, Byron Hollinshead, and Gerry Sussman, OUP.

<sup>154</sup> Case oral history, OUP.

<sup>155</sup> Sussman says bluntly in his oral history that Brett-Smith did not make small talk.

<sup>156</sup> For more internal critique, see the summary of Roberts's interviews with Halpin, Meyer, and Case dated 18 October 1971, OUP.

<sup>157</sup> Abbott Sellers and John Jones, US Treasury, to Jacquin Bierman, Chase and Bierman, 2 September 1965, 'Federal Income Tax Exemption Correspondence—Folder 1-2'. OUP Cary.



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TABLE 19.5 New York net sales, profits, real profits, and dividends, 1960–1970 (\$)

Year	Net sales	Profits	Real profits	Dividends paid
1960	4,675,795	84,103	48,639	9,600
1961	5,179,851	112,796	64,579	34,000
1962	6,837,777	384,827	217,848	45,000
1963	7,011,277	230,821	129,130	112,000
1964	6,979,072	321,195	177,315	90,000
1965	8,009,502	396,305	215,105	120,000
1966	9,903,307	561,435	296,284	150,000
1967	9,751,815	242,807	124,529	225,000
1968	11,325,732	302,755	149,029	122,000
1969	10,765,819	125,864	58,796	120,000
1970	11,784,800	267,700	118,066	50,400

Note: Net sales, profits, and dividends are in nominal dollars. For real profits, 1928 = 1.00.

Source: New York branch, end-of-year financial statements.

The branch published titles in increasing numbers (see Table 19.6). It produced a revised *Scofield Bible* in 1967 and the *New English Bible* in 1970. Morison's one-volume *Oxford History of the American People*, in contemplation for more than a decade, appeared in 1965. Its sales totalled \$611,300 in fiscal year 1966; the next-highest seller brought in about \$149,000, the next \$58,000; everything else was under \$30,000.<sup>158</sup> Edward Fox's *Atlas of American History* (1964) followed his *Atlas of European History* of 1957. But something new was stirring. Notable trade books on American culture and history, including Edmund Wilson's *Patriotic Gore* (1962), Joseph Frazier Wall's *Andrew Carnegie* (1970), and a paperback edition of C. Vann Woodward's *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*, as well as a second revised edition of Woodward's highly influential *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1966), all emerged from the branch. Initially unfamiliar names such as Robert Dallek, John Demos, Gordon Levin, Lawrence Levine, Leonard Levy, and Merrill Peterson became features on its list. The afterlife of such productions in paperback, assigned on undergraduate reading lists as supplements to textbooks, more than doubled in nominal terms between 1964 and 1969. Profits were more mixed, but were freighted with heavy inventory write-downs and allocated overhead expenses.<sup>159</sup> Harold Seymour's *Baseball: The Early Years*, the first volume of his history of the game, came out in 1960. Erik Barnouw's path-breaking *History of Broadcasting in the United States*, whose three volumes were published between 1966 and 1970, and the first volume of the composer and music teacher Gunther Schuller's landmark *History of Jazz* (1968) stood as monuments of this new direction in OUP publishing. At first eyebrows were raised in Oxford at those topics, but the books

<sup>158</sup> New York branch, *Annual Financial Report 1969*, 33, OUP Cary.

<sup>159</sup> New York branch, *Annual Financial Reports*, 1964 and 1969, OUP Cary.

TABLE 19.6 Titles published by the New York branch, by place of origin, 1960–1970 (#)

Year	US	Imported	Total
1960	60	257	317
1961	67	299	366
1962	59	336	395
1963	82	439	521
1964	70	394	464
1965	93	375	468
1966	95	472	567
1967	94	373	467
1968	141	444	585
1969	137	426	563
1970	155	629	784

Source: New York branch, end-of-year financial statements.

were profitable, critically well received, and seemed appropriate for the Press in its domestic context.<sup>160</sup>

The growth from 1960 to 1970 came not as a matter of grand strategy but, so to speak, from below. Young editors such as Byron Hollinshead and Sheldon Meyer, first hired in the mid-1950s, came into their strength. As one colleague recalled, ‘They were like new blood—let’s go, let’s go, let’s go. There are new avenues we could be running down, and we’re not running down them.’<sup>161</sup> Knopf and Harper’s were the prime publishers of trade history at the time, but there was a new opportunity after Knopf merged with Random House in 1960 and Alfred Knopf himself moved towards retirement.<sup>162</sup>

Hollinshead, who increasingly appeared as a far-sighted and highly disciplined businessman, put his energies into building the College Department, particularly in history, which had become dependent on the ageing *Growth of the American Republic*. His efforts resulted in titles such as Nicholas Riasanovsky’s *History of Russia* (1963) and Chester Starr’s *History of the Ancient World* (1965), both of which proved to be durable successes. Somewhat unconventionally, Hollinshead worked closely with Meyer, a creative and outgoing editor who made unusually broad, energetic, and effective efforts to reach out to academic authors at a time when authors still generally came to publishers.<sup>163</sup> Meyer pioneered a different model and pursued it tenaciously. Playing on the Oxford name, he approached (as Hollinshead had, but far

<sup>160</sup> Gary Giddins, ‘Oxford and All That Jazz’, *New York Times Book Review*, 26 October 1997, 59.

<sup>161</sup> Case oral history.

<sup>162</sup> William Leuchtenburg, *American Places: Encounters with History; A Celebration of Sheldon Meyer* (2000), x.

<sup>163</sup> Leuchtenburg, *American Places*, xi–xiii.

more systematically) former Rhodes scholars who had gone into academic life. He consulted thesis advisers in major graduate schools to help spot talent. He asked his authors about those who had been in seminars with them and might have promise. He then initiated contact.<sup>164</sup> Sometimes he used the College Department travellers, suggesting that they tell a particular assistant professor that the Press was interested in getting his or her book.<sup>165</sup> Often, however, he went himself. He liked people and he was curious. The question 'What are you working on?' came naturally. In recalling his conversations with Meyer, the historian Robert Dallek summed up the editor thus: 'Sheldon was a master psychologist. He really knew how to work with a young author, how to bring him along.'<sup>166</sup> Meyer fought for his authors within the Press, and many of his choices were outstanding.<sup>167</sup> Oxford became a conspicuous publisher in the areas of American history and culture, attracting other potential authors. By 1983 OUP New York's prominence in the field was notable enough for William Leuchtenberg to single out the firm and the two editors by name in a presidential address to the Society of American Historians.<sup>168</sup>

Brett-Smith's initial focus in his early years was to increase sales of branch books overseas and to secure the renewal of tax-exempt status for the business, but he became preoccupied with a fight against British booksellers who sold Clarendon Press books to American customers. He had mixed results with the first matter, since the Finance Committee permitted overseas sales on an experimental basis in 1963–6, but ultimately ruled it unsuccessful and reverted to the status quo ante.<sup>169</sup> The qualified tax-exempt status was, as already mentioned, reinstated. Although that accomplishment was Brett-Smith's most lasting and important contribution to the business, he is instead remembered by almost all for what became an almost incessant complaint about 'selling-round'.<sup>170</sup> He spoke and wrote frequently about the impact of the direct transatlantic trade on the branch's bottom line, despite its insignificant impact on the Press overall. Actors beyond the Press's control (Blackwell in Britain, Richard Abel in the United States) actively facilitated the trade, and the fact remained that customers interested in British books could compare prices and purchase whichever version was cheaper. The Press was, in the end, paid either way.

From a distance, then, the main feature of the decade appeared to be general expansion along not unfamiliar lines. But there were notable changes. Despite new products and editions, which in themselves brought in, at least briefly, large amounts of revenue and profit, bibles ceased being the anchor of the business.<sup>171</sup> They were displaced by the business of the Trade and Education Departments, which rode directly on the back of swelling college enrolments. Paperbacks made their way into the black, extending production runs and providing a larger base of sales with which

<sup>164</sup> Leuchtenberg, *American Places*, xi. <sup>165</sup> John Wright, interview by the author, June 2011.

<sup>166</sup> Robert Dallek, interview by the author, June 2011.

<sup>167</sup> Bill Halpin oral history, OUP.

<sup>168</sup> William Leuchtenberg, interview by the author, June 2011.

<sup>169</sup> FC minutes, 16 December 1963 and 26 March 1968.

<sup>170</sup> Hollinshead and Case oral histories.

<sup>171</sup> For discussion about the first year that profits from books exceeded those from bibles, see *Annual Financial Report 1964*, 9.

TABLE 19.7 Authors' advances, 1960–1970

Year	Advances (\$)	Advances as % of net sales	Avg. advance (\$)
1960	45,748	1.0	762
1961	58,977	1.1	880
1962	79,897	1.2	1,354
1963	89,671	1.3	1,094
1964	139,950	2.0	1,999
1965	156,912	2.0	1,687
1966	206,487	2.1	2,174
1967	190,300	2.0	2,024
1968	276,271	2.4	1,959
1969	328,084	3.0	2,395
1970	445,566	3.8	2,875

Note: Average advance is per US title published.

Source: New York branch, end-of-year financial statements.

to support fixed costs. In the warehouse, computers began to replace and augment paper records in the mid to late 1960s.<sup>172</sup> That all seems positive and simple on the surface, but there was more going on beneath.

The changes of the 1960s, along with the blossoming of domestic publishing, required new organization (which occurred in 1968) and an increased scale of operations, both of which brought practical or financial problems in their wake.<sup>173</sup> Adding to the challenge was increased competition, which extended to vying for authors and resulted in a visible rise in advance balances (see Table 19.7). By the end of the decade, the branch accounts were breaking out sales by distribution channel (see Table 19.8). Changes in overall patterns of distribution came to have considerable significance. For example, the rise of wholesalers, when combined with the expanding size of the local list, made inventory control a necessity as well as a continuing problem.

The largest strain, however, came from trying to find capital to finance operations. Increasingly, suppliers were being paid on thirty-day terms, while customers were paying on sixty days. The difference was financed from commercial banks, an expensive necessity even when prices were stable.<sup>174</sup> It was nonetheless embraced: the need was dire. And the business sought further expansion. In the mid-1960s, for example, Hollinshead learned of increased sales to high schools. This was, to an important extent, a consequence of the diffusion of Advanced Placement teaching. (In the United States, secondary school students can earn college credit by

<sup>172</sup> *Annual Financial Report 1967*, 15–16; updates in *Annual Financial Report 1968*, 16–17, and *Annual Financial Report 1969*, 2–3.

<sup>173</sup> On reorganization, see Brett-Smith to Secretary, 'Reorganization', 8 October 1968, OUP/CG35/179.

<sup>174</sup> Hollinshead oral history.

TABLE 19.8 New York branch net sales by channel of distribution, 1968–1970 (%)

Year	Wholesale	Retail trade	Libraries	Educational institutions	Misc./Other	Total
1968	14	64	4	10	8	100
1969	15	71	7	0	7	100
1970	24	61	5	3	7	100

Source: New York branch, end-of-year financial statements.

scoring well on Advanced Placement examinations.) Both Brett-Smith and Roberts opposed the branch moving into high school publishing per se, but they wanted to address the demand for its existing titles.<sup>175</sup> In addition, Brett-Smith foresaw growth on the margins of the College Department, particularly through an expansion of direct-mail marketing. Dramatic expansion was planned in science: by 1968 New York and Oxford had 'considered that the next move should be in the field of science and science textbooks'.<sup>176</sup> Given the branch's humanities orientation, such a move would require a significant investment in staff.

Inflation at the end of the decade, driven by the imperatives of the Vietnam War and President Johnson's domestic policy programmes, made expansion and change more difficult. The branch's operation had become heavily reliant on bank borrowing, so the inflation-fuelled rise in interest rates became a significant problem. By the end of the decade, how to manage those loans was discussed as frequently, and as carefully, as general expense management. Expenses rose faster than sales, in part because the branch did not raise its prices fast enough. In 1969 the branch was reporting 'profitless prosperity'. Despite good sales, inflation and high costs meant there was not enough income to cover the expense of new projects. The liquidity demands of pending projects such as the *New English Bible* seemed intimidatingly large.<sup>177</sup> Cash was sought everywhere, and in 1969 a proposal even emerged to dissolve the New York corporation and reincorporate it as a Delaware membership corporation with a view to establishing its charitable status more firmly, securing exemption from certain state and city taxes, and making the solicitation of foundation support for particular publishing projects easier.<sup>178</sup>

At the end of the decade Colin Roberts in Oxford could look back with satisfaction at the vigorously expanding demand of the 1960s and the dramatic growth of the New York Business. But there were reasons for concern. The value of perennially steady sellers was declining; the cost of replacing them was going up. By 1970 the Fair Lawn warehouse was showing its age, and significantly more space was required.

<sup>175</sup> See Hollinshead, 'High School Publishing', 11 January 1966; Roberts, 'High School Publishing', 25 January 1967, both in 'Division of Province between C.P. and N.Y.B.', OUP/FF23.

<sup>176</sup> Roberts, evidence to the Waldock Committee, 1 March 1968, paragraph 12.

<sup>177</sup> See *Annual Financial Report 1969*, 3, OUP Cary.

<sup>178</sup> DeJager to Management Committee, 20 December 1971, President's Office Correspondence Files, OUPNY.



Among the staff, people of great talent, particularly on the editorial side, were in positions in which they might make a difference—but would they? Branch leadership was weak, and there was a lack of a strategic vision. Even with lower expectations of growth for the coming decade, it was unclear whether, without a major infusion of capital, the business could continue as it had done. And how the branch would fare if the economic environment were to decay was completely unclear. By 1970 the New York branch had become a significant and, indeed, an important publisher. But its future was by no means secure.\*

\* Editorial Note: Paul Willert and OUP New York, 1936–1939

Only after the present volume was in page proof did the editor and the author of this chapter discover Paul Willert's political and ideological commitment as a Communist. This biographical note therefore reassesses his career and its meaning for the history of the Press; a scholarly article on its wider significance is in process for separate publication. As is clear from this chapter, Willert seemed to play only a minor part in the business of the Press at the time, in part because his short tenure came to an end at the outbreak of the war. In the early to mid 1930s, however, before joining OUP he had made two visits to Germany under the command of the German Communist Party and, indirectly at least, the Soviet secret police. The question is how, if at all, did Willert's Communist connection affect his work while head of OUP New York?

Paul Odo Willert (1909–1998) was the son of Sir Arthur Willert of *The Times*. He was educated at Eton and Balliol (1930). In the early 1930s he worked in publishing, not least for a brief spell at Ullstein-Hachette in Berlin. In 1936, at the age of 27, he was appointed by Humphrey Milford to succeed Geoffrey Cumberlege as head of OUP New York. Milford was the only officer in the Press with the nerve as well as the authority to make the appointment. He himself had been about the same age when Charles Cannan dispatched him to London. Milford did confer with R. W. Chapman, who in turn discussed Willert with the Delegates. Willert's political views were not an issue: Milford and others perhaps vaguely knew of his left-wing politics but regarded his political beliefs as a harmless foible. Milford enquired no further. Nor did anyone else at OUP. Politics, in the OUP ethos, were a private concern.

Willert appears as 'Noel' in Whittaker Chambers's *Witness* (1952), the key, revealing work on espionage in the United States at the time, in part because of its general accuracy. Chambers described Willert as 'so grossly upper class that I suspected him of doing a caricature of the type' (Chambers, *Witness*, 51). Willert was nevertheless a 'gentleman' and had 'prestige'—the words used by Cumberlege to describe the principal requirement for the job, along with being an Oxford man. Cumberlege had a difficult time when Willert arrived to take up the job on 1 May 1936. The senior members of the OUP staff in New York were baffled to the point of disbelief at the appointment of someone so young. Cumberlege stayed on to ease the transition. 'It needs a great deal of tact to explain him', Cumberlege wrote to Milford—but, he added, 'I think he is going to be all right' (10 May 1936, OS/1/3/1-2).

During his New York years Willert offered accommodation to members of the Soviet secret police in his apartment. But that was a different part of his life. Although he kept Party propaganda in his desk drawer at OUP, his Communist connections evidently had no effect or influence on his work at the Press. The internal reports on OUPNY's books reveal no political bias, and certainly no books conveying a favourable impression of the Soviet Union. Writing shortly after Willert's departure, Milford hoped that the new branch manager would uphold a principle that had implicitly become Willert's own guiding rule: OUP New York should not 'produce books with any extreme political bias. Ours is the middle way' (11 Sept. 1939, OS/1/3/1-2).

Willert broke decisively with the Party at the time of the Hitler–Stalin non-aggression pact in August 1939. He served with distinction during the war, from 1939 to 1940 with the Special Operations Executive in France, and from 1941 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force, rising to the rank of group captain. After the war, from 1946, he worked as an executive for Rolls-Royce Aero Engines.

From time to time Willert had problems with the demon drink, at least in his New York years. But his later skills and leadership, in France as a propagandist boosting French morale and then as a group captain in the RAF—and still later at Rolls-Royce as a pillar of the Establishment—were already apparent during his tenure in New York. He tried to bring the different parts of the branch into greater harmony. He embraced measures to reach further into the college market. He aimed to publish more reference works. Above all he championed the principle that the branch should become a major publishing house in its own right. In the overall history of the Press, he stands as an efficient and innovative manager with his honour intact.

W. R. L.

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