

1968

## Fine bookmaker to the world

Anonymous

Brian Seed

Roy Stevens

Follow this and additional works at: [https://egrove.olemiss.edu/dl\\_hs](https://egrove.olemiss.edu/dl_hs)

 Part of the [Accounting Commons](#), and the [Taxation Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

H&S Reports, Vol. 05, (1968 spring), p. 04-09

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Deloitte Collection at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Haskins and Sells Publications by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact [egrove@olemiss.edu](mailto:egrove@olemiss.edu).

*for Nearly Five Centuries  
the Oxford University Press has been...*

## Fine Bookmaker to the World



Copyrighted -- License  
from Black Star

It is a rare company that can say of its products that Presidents and Kings have sworn by them for centuries—that they consoled Abraham Lincoln, crossed the American continent in countless prairie schooners, sailed the seven seas, and still stand today beside almost every literate user of the English language as his source of knowledge and inspiration. There can't be many organizations that can make such a claim, but one is the Oxford University Press.

The oldest publishing house in the English-speaking world, Oxford University Press with its many overseas branches is a global enterprise that has played an important part, though a quiet one, in the unfolding drama of our civilization. For books accumulating man's knowledge and expressing his aspirations have exerted a force as mighty as armies in changing men's beliefs and their way of life. In producing such books the Oxford University Press has helped to establish our modern world.

Now approaching its 500th anniversary, the Press in England and elsewhere in the British Commonwealth has been a client of Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths & Co. since 1939. The American branch of the Press, operating as a separate company with headquarters in New York, has been a New York client since 1940.

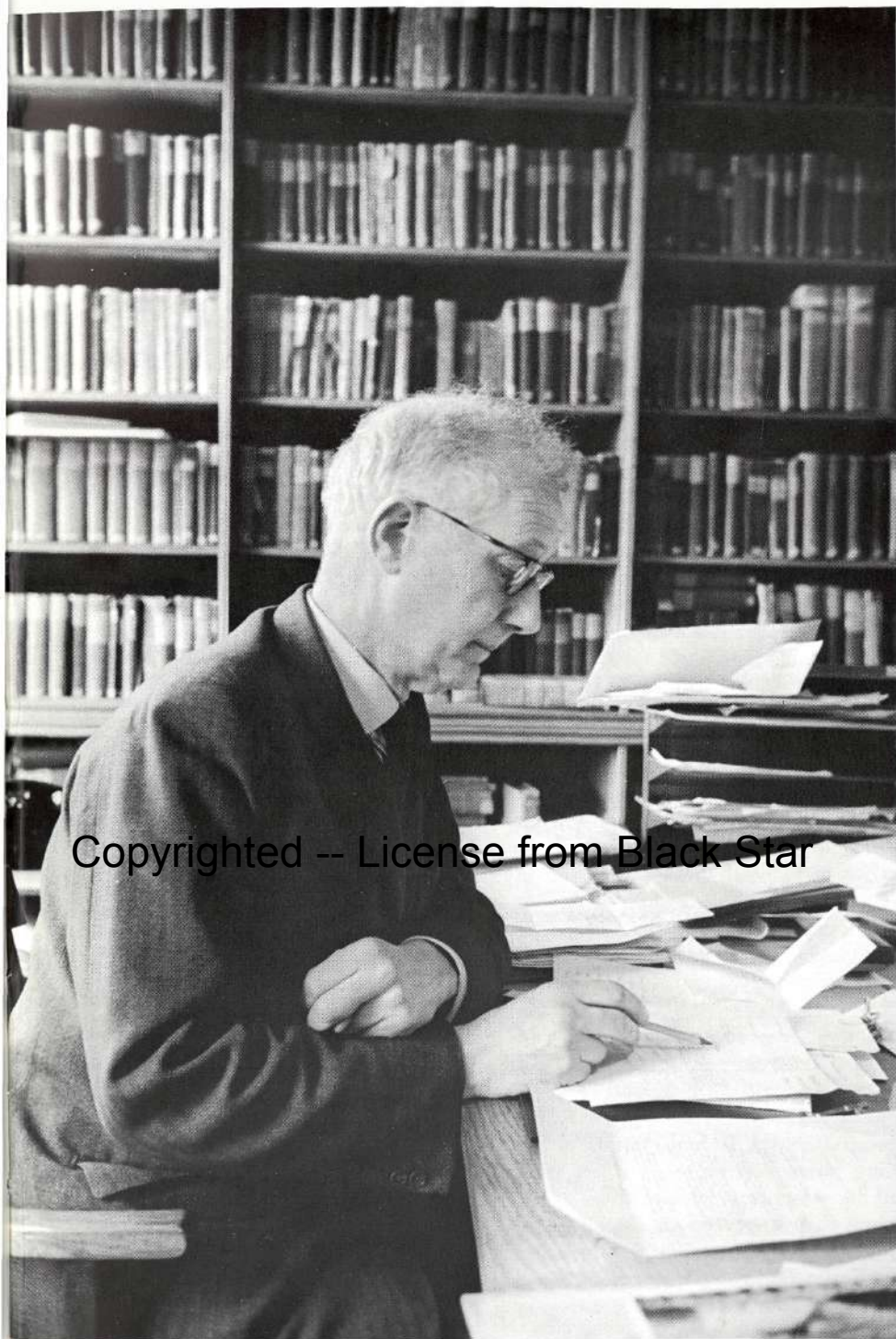
The Press is by no means an ordinary book publisher. In many publishing houses, merchandise ranging from the finest to the most sleazy can all pass under the name of "book," provided only that it has printed pages and a cover. Oxford, however, has won worldwide fame as a publisher of the highest quality books, noted for the lasting value of their contents, beauty of design and excellence of manufacture.

The Press did not win its reputation overnight; it took a few centuries to reach the top. The first known printed

book from a press at Oxford, a commentary in Latin on the Apostles' Creed attributed to St. Jerome, appeared in 1478. This was about twenty-five years after Johann Gutenberg's first work printed from movable type appeared, and just one year after William Caxton produced the first book printed in England. The Oxford book was the presswork of Theodorice Rood, who had journeyed to Oxford from Cologne, Germany. The Press then languished through a century of intermittent activity, this being a time when the crown closely controlled the use of the printing press because rulers considered it a danger to the stability of the realm.

Finally the Earl of Leicester, a favorite of Queen Elizabeth I and Chancellor of Oxford University, obtained a court decree in 1586 authorizing the University to print. From that date to this, the Oxford University Press has been in continuous operation. And how it has grown! Today the New York branch of the Press offers 6,000 titles in its annual catalog. In England it offers 10,000 titles of Oxford books in print, ready for shipment. In addition, the Press in England distributes many books originating in other publishing houses abroad, so that its total offerings in Britain run close to 18,000 titles.

Until 1880 the only office of the Press was at Oxford, except for the Bible warehouse in London. Then Henry Frowde, warehouse manager, was appointed the first "Publisher to the University," with the function to distribute books issued by the Press in Oxford. Before long the London department began to originate books outside the fields of academic scholarship, to which the Press had confined itself. Now the London department is one of the largest publishers in Britain. Its books bear the imprint "London, Oxford University Press," to distinguish them from those produced in the city of Oxford, which read: "At the Clarendon Press."



*Going over the books in the Oxford office are Mr. A. H. Rippington (l.), Auditor of the Press, and Mr. J. Ness Prentice (r.), partner of Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths & Co.*

*Books line the Oxford office of Mr. C. H. Roberts, chief executive officer of the Oxford University Press and Secretary to the Delegates. The University scholars who are appointed as Delegates act as the board of directors of the Press.*

*(extreme left)  
Hand inker, from the collection of early printing tools maintained at the Oxford University Press.*



Copyrighted -- License  
from Black Star

*Two early homes of the Press in Broad Street, Oxford. The Clarendon Building (r.) was built in 1713 and housed the Press until 1830. Its older neighbor, the Sheldonian Theatre (l.), was designed by Christopher Wren, England's greatest architect, and dates from 1664. When the Press was centered in the Sheldonian Theatre it occupied the basement.*

Since the founding of the New York branch in 1896, its first branch overseas, the Press has established others in Toronto, Melbourne, Wellington, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Karachi, Lahore, Dacca, Cape Town, Salisbury, Ibadan, Nairobi, Lusaka, Addis Ababa, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong and Tokyo. A number of the newly independent nations continue to use English in government and higher education because their leaders were educated for several generations with Oxford and other English books. But overseas branches of the Press now publish books in many languages other than English. In India, Pakistan and East Asia, Oxford publishes in fifteen languages, ranging alphabetically from Assamese to Urdu. Offices of the Press in South, West and East Africa publish in Afrikaans, Zulu and seventeen languages in between.

The most widely distributed of all titles have been the many editions of Oxford Bibles. As early as the 1630s, William Laud, Chancellor of the University and later Archbishop of Canterbury, secured a Royal Charter granting to the Press the privilege to print the Authorized King James Version of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. For some years the Press leased out its privilege to print these books. But in 1675 Dr. John Fell, Bishop of Oxford and Vice-Chancellor of the University, negotiated the return of the privilege, and forthwith directed the publication of the first Oxford Bible. Since its appearance, the Press has grown and prospered on the sound base laid by a tremendous production and sale of Bibles and Prayer Books.

Certainly the Oxford editions of the King James Version were widely used in the American colonies after 1675, when they appeared in England. By the time Oxford New York was founded in 1896, weekly shipments of Bibles to the U.S. often exceeded five tons. An earlier shipment must have included

the Bible for which Abraham Lincoln thanked the donor by sending her a portrait photograph from the White House, inscribed:

*"For Mrs. Lucy G. Speed, from whose pious hand I accepted the present of an Oxford Bible twenty years ago. Washington, D.C., October 3, 1861. A. Lincoln."*

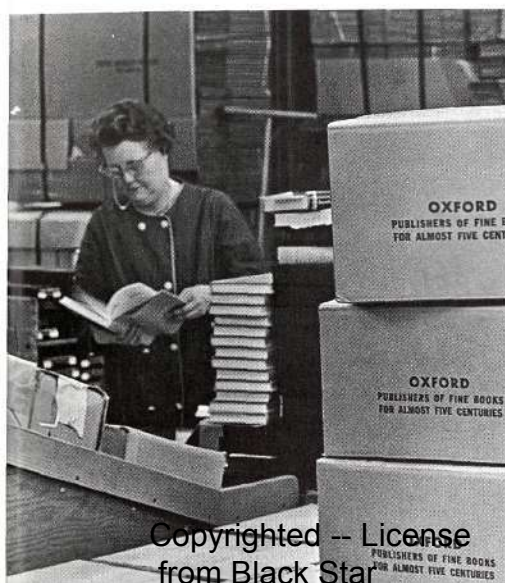
Even today, with many thousands of titles on the Oxford list, the manufacture and sale of the King James Version remains a most important part of its operations. Oxford in England had the honor of designing and printing the Bible used at the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. The Press keeps the only other two exact replicas as museum pieces.

More than one hundred different styles of Oxford Bibles are available, ranging in price from \$2.50 to \$150.00 and in binding from plain cloth to the finest leather available. In 1967, Oxford New York, using its special India paper, published *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (so named after the scholar who prepared the notes) which was only seven-eighths of an inch thick, even though it had 1,600 pages. An American telephone directory of that thickness would contain only half as many pages.

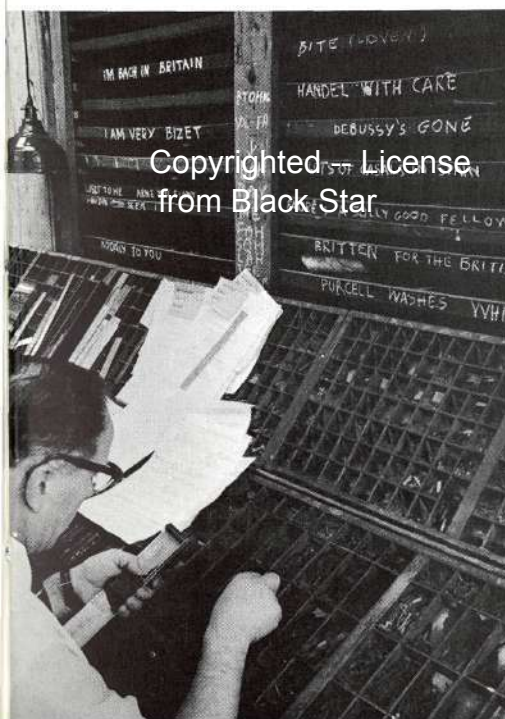
A distinguishing mark of Oxford books has been the beauty of the printed pages, in typeface and layout, thanks largely to the initiative of Dr. John Fell. In the mid-1600s he furnished the Press with the great collection of type punches and matrices, brought from Holland, from which graceful types known by his name are still cast and used at Oxford. Fell also had the foresight to encourage the establishment of a papermill at Wolvercote, on the outskirts of Oxford, to manufacture paper for Oxford books. The Press purchased the mill in 1870, and it still produces paper for Oxford publications, though in modern buildings.



Copyrighted -- License  
from Black Star



Copyrighted -- License  
from Black Star



Copyrighted -- License  
from Black Star

Being an old publisher, and a big one, Oxford can claim its share of great publications and "firsts." In 1612 it reproduced Captain John Smith's historic *Map of Virginia*, which served as guide to the Atlantic coast of North America for many explorers and settlers for decades afterward. In 1621 Oxford produced Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, a detailed analysis of the contemporary Englishman's behavior and moods. This pioneer work in popular psychology remained a standard in its field for a century or more.

Other bright stars in the Oxford University Press constellation were Robert Boyle, known as the "father of chemistry," whose law for the pressure of gases is familiar to every high school science student; and Christopher Wren, England's greatest architect, whose poems were printed by Oxford. In our own day, two of the most noted historians on both sides of the Atlantic are among Oxford's shining lights—Arnold J. Toynbee in England and Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison in the U.S.

*Examining an early bible of the Oxford University Press, Harry Carter, Archivist of the Press, sits behind a collection of the magnificently engraved Oxford Almanacks, which have been published annually by the Press since the seventeenth century.*

*Oxford's slogan on its shipping cartons attests to the age of the Press amid the newness of the New Jersey plant and its equipment. The Press was producing books well before Columbus set sail across the Atlantic.*

*Setting type for music at the Clarendon Press, Oxford, Mr. R. Roberts works below racks marked by print shop punsters ("I am very Bizet," "Handel with care," etc.).*

Others are scattered through the years too numerous to count, like a literary Milky Way.

Of all projects the Press has undertaken, the greatest is the multi-volume *Oxford English Dictionary*, on which work began in 1882. Its editors planned to dig to the roots of the English language, in order to produce the definitive last word on all English words. The first volume appeared in 1884; the thirteenth, a supplementary one, came off the press in 1933. A second supplementary volume is now in preparation. The magnitude of such a task of establishing linguistic conventions is such as to evoke sympathy in the hearts of accountants who have struggled so long to define accounting principles.

In size, cost, number of people employed, man-years worked, or by any other measure one may choose, production of this dictionary was a labor comparable to building a great Egyptian Pyramid, or Chartres Cathedral. Like them, it will last through the centuries. It may be extended, but never superseded, as a record of man's most important international language. The dictionary defines nearly 414,000 words, and contains nearly 1,830,000 quotations illustrating the use of English words throughout written history. The price? Three hundred dollars.

The Press is owned by the University of Oxford and is operated by a committee of University scholars, called Delegates, appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors of the University. None of the Delegates is paid for his services, although all of them by long tradition receive a gratis copy of every book published by the Press during their tenure. In these busy times that means about ten books every week. The Secretary to the Delegates, now Colin H. Roberts, is the chief executive officer.

The American branch of the Press is directly responsible to the Secretary

and the Delegates, whereas all other overseas offices report to London. Both in England and in New York, the big-selling books help to pay for scholarly publications of more limited sale. According to John R. B. Brett-Smith, President of Oxford New York:

"We don't look for best-sellers. With us, on the whole, they only happen by accident. If we tried for them, we would distort our whole objective."

The editorial office of the Press in New York is on Madison Avenue in mid-town Manhattan. But H&S men on the Oxford University Press audit are mainly concerned with the sales and financial headquarters and warehouse at Fair Lawn, New Jersey. Here Richard C. Alence, staff accountant in charge, directs the audit each spring under the supervision of Frank H. Tiedemann, New York Office partner, and Bob Gummer, principal. As this year's audit was in progress the busy, growing operation was expanding into adjoining office and warehouse space twice the size of its earlier quarters.

The American branch of the Press has no book printing press of its own, and no bindery. It contracts out the printing and binding of books to firms that can meet its demanding standards. Oxford buys its own paper and binding materials and supplies them to these contractors. (Printers provide the ink, and binders furnish their own glue.) Furthermore, Oxford owns the plates from which its books are printed. So on any one day Oxford assets may be scattered through fifty or sixty plants owned by other people. Or it may have valuable shipments of books in transit to its 20,000 direct customers. Or the warehouse doors may swing open to receive a giant container, trucked from the dockside, measuring 20 feet long and 10 feet square. The books from England that it contains may have a wholesale value up to \$24,000.

One factor that keeps the book in-

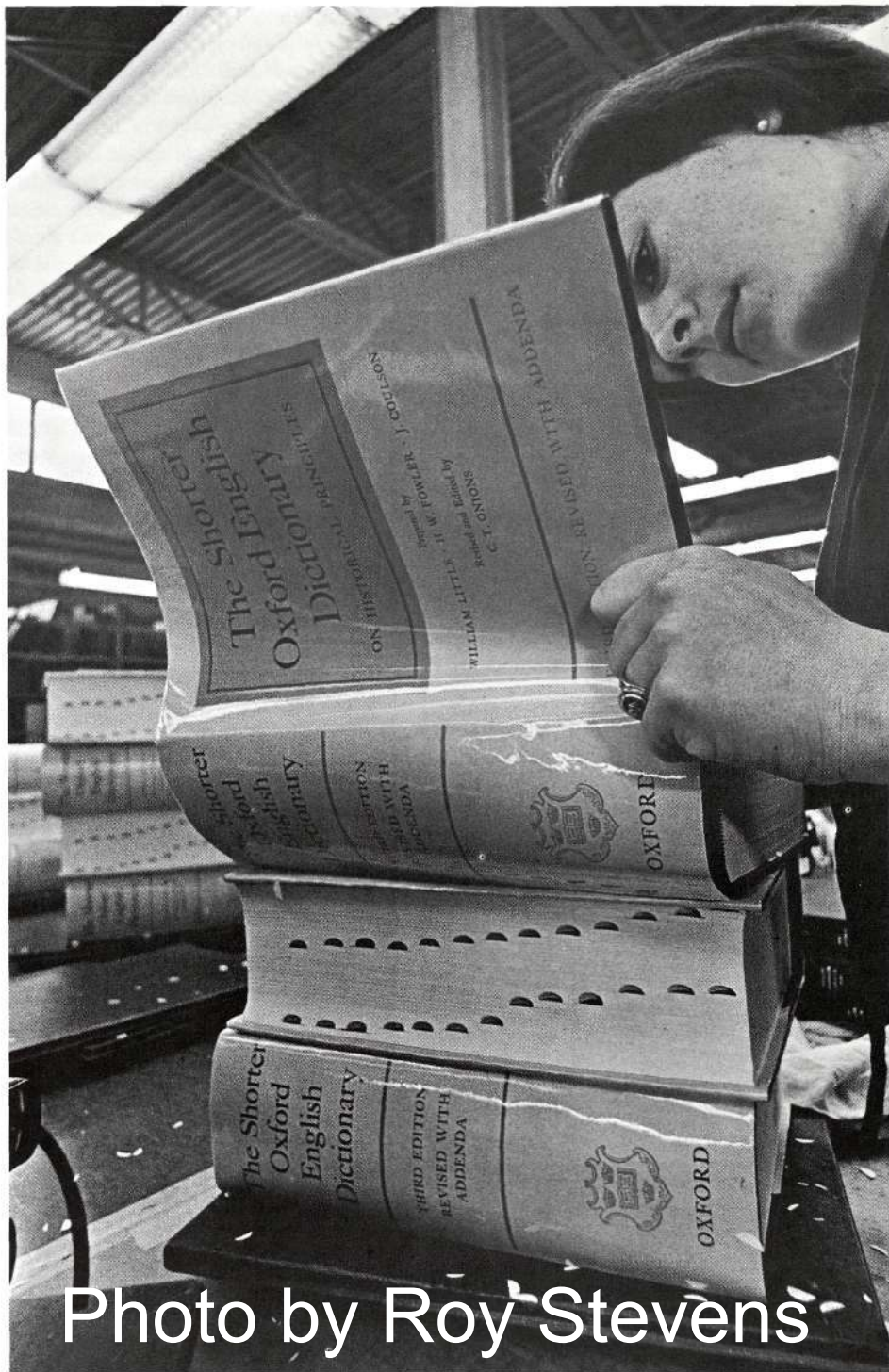


Photo by Roy Stevens

