



Association Publishing

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AS THERE ARE MANY KINDS of foundations, so there are many kinds of "associations." This generic term is frequently applied to voluntary, nonprofit, cooperative organizations.¹ It is difficult to define precisely what these groups do; the term "association" is no guarantee that an organization will meet the three criteria (voluntary, nonprofit, and cooperative) mentioned above. Some associations prefer to use "guild," "institute," "league," or "society," while some privately-owned organizations use these terms as well as "association" itself in their corporate name.²

Voluntary, nonprofit, and cooperative associations have reached high levels of membership and financial support. In 1949 (and the figure has grown since then), there were 12,000 trade associations, 100,000 women's organizations, 70,000 labor unions, 15,000 civil service groups, and thousands of similar organizations for professional men and women.³ Most of these, in program and policy, reflect the "association" concept.

Almost all of the 12,000 national and local trade associations listed by the Department of Commerce in 1949, as well as 4,000 Chambers of Commerce and other groups, reported that they published bulletins of some sort. These bulletins are necessary if their membership is to be kept informed of relevant developments. Indeed, if a trade association may be defined as a "nonprofit, cooperative, voluntarily-joined, organization of business competitors designed to assist its members and its industry in dealing with mutual business problems,"⁴ then published information is necessary.

Many of these organizations publish bulletins which may often be inadequate for disseminating information efficiently. To overcome this problem, professional associations tend to issue regular journals, either monthly or quarterly, and a large number of these corporate bodies also provide pamphlets and books. The medium-size associa-

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Association Publishing

tion spends 10 to 20 per cent of its income on "printing,"⁵ although it is difficult to determine what this term includes. Bliss indicates that 94 per cent of the 634 associations of all kinds he examined produce publications,⁶ although "publications" is as hard to define as "printing." Librarians are familiar with the published materials of the American Library Association and the Special Library Association. Professors of modern languages are equally familiar with *PMLA*, the quarterly of the Modern Language Association, and other specialists have similar learned journals at their disposal. Some associations go beyond periodical printing and publish monographs or encourage the publishing or printing of materials in their particular subject area through awards and publicity. These books may be released through normal trade channels or university presses, or appear under the imprint of the association.

Most associations serve as centers of information for their membership, providing solutions to problems in their special fields. These groups also appeal to a large circle beyond their membership, and the dissemination of information to this larger group almost requires an expanded publishing effort. Often the publishing program of an association may be the basis for membership participation itself. "Dues" may reflect a charge for publications plus a nominal membership fee. Organizations with highly specialized journals reflect this pattern most frequently. But the marginal operations of smaller groups are not necessarily typical of association publishing.

The world's largest nonprofit, nonchurch publisher is the publishing arm of the YMCA, Association Press.⁷ Although it is superior in size, quality, methods of distribution, and income, it is an outgrowth of the association publishing concept and derives from the same aims. The Press began humbly in 1907 with twenty-eight pamphlets, although the YMCA had been publishing since 1865. It always regarded the printed word "as a prime weapon in its struggle to encourage sound bodies and good morals, as well as to train its nationwide staff in the techniques of instilling these virtues in the young men of America." In 1907, its twenty-eight new titles included *Jesus the Joyous Comrade*, *How to Deal with Temptation*, *How to Make Jesus Christ Real*, and *Why a Railroad Man Should Read the Bible*.

Today, Association Press publishes about fifty to sixty new titles each year. *Facts of Life and Love for Teenagers* has sold over a million copies. Dale Carnegie's *Public Speaking and Influencing Men in Business* is another best-seller, having gone through over fifty

printings. Recently, Association Press entered the paperback market with its Reflection Books. Association Press's gross income was probably over one million dollars in 1957.

It is interesting to note that the principles under which Association Press operates are essentially the same as in 1907, although they reflect certain advances in time and approach. Inevitably, Association Press uses methods of distribution common in the book trade. More and more of its titles appear in bookstores. With its paperback series, Association Press has begun to move in the same direction as the trade publishers.

Among the larger association publishers, the American Management Association's publishing program displays a similar pattern. The association, now in its thirty-fifth year, grew out of the consolidation of a number of personnel associations. The publishing effort began in 1923 with one publication, under the imprint of the National Personnel Association. A.M.A.'s "Marketing Series" began in 1924, and in the next few years, pamphlet series were added in finance, general management, and other fields. By 1946, the association published hundreds of pamphlets. Before 1950 it began publishing books. Three manuals for industrial supervisors appearing in the forties sold a total of about 50,000 copies. Currently, it publishes four periodicals and a large number of paperbound books of substantial size.

A.M.A. has recently embarked on a book publishing program that will result in a number of case-bound books per year—for the most part indistinguishable from the publications of trade houses. In 1957, A.M.A. published a two-volume study on the *Selection of Management Personnel*. It is boxed and well-designed, and it and other A.M.A. books are finding their way into college classrooms as texts.

The association actively promotes the sale of its books abroad through export representatives. A.M.A. books appear in combined book exhibits, are treated extensively in trade journals such as *Publishers' Weekly*, and are reviewed widely in the business press. Increasingly, A.M.A. uses normal trade channels to distribute these books, all of which epitomize the Association's efforts to increase knowledge of management theory and practice. Because of its function, it takes seriously its obligations to make this information broadly available.

Other associations, smaller in size, find their publications invaluable means of distributing information significant in their fields. The American Association for the United Nations publishes three paper-

Association Publishing

bound books a year, and will—either through a grant or some other means—occasionally have a trade publisher produce an important book. Thus its *United Nations—The First Ten Years* is available through Harper's. The editorial staff of the A.A.U.N. consists of only three people, but the size of the enterprise does not reflect the importance of its work.

Whether large or small, associations exhibit a familiar pattern. They first base their publishing on service to membership and/or the support of a cause or point of view. As a rule, the largest associations function as specialized trade publishers, the smallest, as thorough amateurs.

As the publishing activities of associations grow, they may develop an identity that goes beyond the parent association. Trade publishers may look upon association book lists covetously. However, by the time the trade publishers are interested enough to solicit the association's list, these books are valuable to the association in terms of member service, prestige, and often income. For these reasons, despite the commercial publishers' more efficient distribution system, associations generally guard their publishing prerogatives carefully. Perhaps, ungratefully, they may even make serious attempts to compete with commercial publishers in terms of book design, advertising, and distribution.

With a membership list as a nucleus, association publishers find direct mail advertising a natural medium. As their back lists grow and their markets expand, associations are functioning more and more like specialized commercial publishers, which emphasize mail solicitation to lists of customers without neglecting trade distribution. Advertising in the public press is rare although the use of the association's own journals for advertising is common practice. "House advertising" has the virtue of low or no cost, and association publishers, like publishers in general, have many financial problems.

Because of the "amateur" beginnings of much association publishing, despite the "giants" in the field and their important work, the listing of these titles in standard tools familiar to librarians is not as thorough as it could be. It happens frequently that publications of associations deserve general attention, but the specialized nature of the association and its channels of distribution act as barriers to wider use. To neglect the contributions of these publishers, which in many fields adds to the sum of man's knowledge, would inevitably result in gaps in library collections.

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