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The University Press

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A university press has been described as the voice of the institution of which it is a part. It is a small voice, to be sure, as compared with the strident tones of a winning football team, but it has a certain advantage in that the written word remains long after football scores and scorers are forgotten.

Even in university circles there is a wide variety of opinion as to the function of the press, ranging all the way from the assumption that it exists solely for the purpose of publishing works which the commercial publishers refuse, to the belief that it should be a money-making institution which would bring both cash and credit to the university. The truth, as always, falls between these extreme views. A university press cannot make money from its publications alone, and its aim should be to publish books of permanent value, whether or not financially profitable. Its real function is to provide an outlet for the work of scholars, and to give their colleagues everywhere the opportunity of knowing what they are achieving.

Since 1927 the University Press has been a department of the University of Pennsylvania. It operates on an annual budget, and is controlled as to its publication program by a faculty committee of nine members appointed for three-year terms by the President of the University upon nomination by the Educational Council.

Speaking statistically, in eight and a half years of active operation the University Press, with an entire staff of three persons and a part-time shipping clerk, has published and marketed 171 books. In 1934, with twenty titles, it ranked sixth in output among the sixteen recognized American university presses. This probably establishes a record of some sort. Anyway it means that the manager doubles as editor, proofreader, salesman, and purchasing agent; that the designer is also the manufacturing and advertising departments; and that the secretary does the work of seven departments in
larger institutions. The Press has a mailing list of over eight thousand purchasers of its books, exclusive of libraries and the book trade.

Among the publications of the Press are the lectures of the Rosenbach Fellowship in Bibliography, the Johnson Foundation for Medical Physics, the Boardman Lectureship in Christian Ethics, and the Cooper Foundation of Swarthmore College. The Press has issued twenty-six volumes of the Industrial Research Studies, and acts as distributing agent for the publications of the American Philosophical Society, the University Museum, the American Schools of Oriental Research, and the Study of Population Redistribution, as well as the *Hispanic Review* and *Pennsylvania History*.

As the only organization of its kind in the Philadelphia district, the Press has issued a number of books by faculty members of neighboring institutions of learning. Among them are: Bryn Mawr, Bucknell, Delaware, Haverford, Lafayette, Rutgers, Swarthmore, Temple, and Ursinus.

Following the lead of the older university presses, the University of Pennsylvania Press has endeavored to maintain a high standard of design and workmanship in the books bearing its imprint. Now and then a volume is selected by the Institute of Graphic Arts as one of the Fifty Books of the Year, and reviewers frequently comment on the attractive appearance of its output.

Like all small publishing houses, the Press has its share of troubles—lack of funds, an occasional disgruntled author, a good book which refuses to sell in spite of favorable reviews and careful promotion; on the other hand it has the satisfaction of a steadily growing recognition by the reading public, and the incentive to justify the statement made recently by the *Cleveland Press* that it is “the most generally usefully productive of any university press in America.”