A Century of Science Publishing
E.H. Fredriksson (Ed.)
IOS Press, 2001

# Chapter 14
# The Move of U.S. Publishers Overseas

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The growth of science in the years after World War II followed an exponential curve. The War itself had proved a strong stimulus to science by virtue of the huge effort and resources invested in science to achieve both military aims, such as the Manhattan projects for making the atomic bomb, and radar, and non-military objectives such as the purification and manufacture of antibiotics. Concentration on such projects meant that the application of science to non-military objectives was very limited but once the constraints of wartime were lifted there was a wide expansion of the applications of science in all directions. For example, polythene, an ICI invention patented in 1931, had found its industrial application restricted to use as an electrical insulator in wartime but had a wide variety of other possible applications which were rapidly exploited once the end of the war came. On the basis of wartime restriction ICI were able to obtain a maximum extension of the term of their basic patent for polythene. Activities such as these contributed to the general optimism for science and technology and there was a big expansion in research in both the basic and applied sciences fuelled by an increase in the number of research establishments, government, academic and industrial.

A further huge fillip to investment in science arose as the result of the launching of the Russian Sputnik in 1957. The feeling was that the Western powers had been outwitted and left behind and this contributed to a strong belief that major further investment in science and technology was essential. In the UK the Robbins report led to the establishment of a whole group of new universities, each with a library which was a new customer on a large scale for books and journals and with science departments who would produce new authors and research papers, presaging good business for STM publishers.

Further factors were the decline of German and French as languages for the publication of science. Prior to 1939 German was a major language for the publishing of work in chemistry. The publication *Chemisches Zentralblatt* vied with *Chemical Abstracts* as a major publication of abstracts in chemistry, but it was affected badly by the war and never managed to re-establish itself subsequently, eventu-

ally ceasing publication. English became the lingua franca of science, much to the annoyance of De Gaulle, who insisted on French authors delivering their papers in French no matter what the occasion. I once was at a meeting where a French author spoke rapidly in French for 30 seconds, said: "That was my paper, I will now give an abstract in English", and spoke for a further 20 minutes. Despite De Gaulle the use of English has continued to grow and now classic German chemistry journals such as *Chemische Berichte* publish their papers in English.

In the wake of these factors the demand for new publications grew. Traditionally, journal publishing of research papers had always been in the hands of the learned societies (though, the most prestigious of them all, *Nature* had always been published by a commercial publisher). Each learned society was very much based on a single traditional scientific discipline (Institute of Physics, Physiological Society etc.). The demand for new journals occurred usually in one of two ways, either by sub-division of a broad disciplinary subject, or by covering a new inter-disciplinary subject which did not fall within the remit of a single learned society. As an example of the first one might consider the sub-division of chemistry, first into theoretical, analytical, physical, inorganic and organic chemistry, each with its own journal or journals, and then by further sub-division creating such journals as *Journal of Fluorine Chemistry* or *Journal of Mass Spectrometry*. As an example of the second, interdisciplinary, type, the field of the neurosciences is a good one. This field may involve anatomists, physiologists, biochemists, pharmacologists or psychologists and clearly at the outset no single disciplinary based society could cover the whole area, though a Society of Neuroscience has evolved since.

This background of change and potential expansion for English-language publications in science drew US publishers to look at establishing bases in Europe. It seemed logical to establish such bases in the UK, not least because of the growing predominance of English, and a number of US publishers established offices in London. In the early 1950's Academic Books was set up in London as a Sales Office under Fred Morgan and its success led to a publishing arm, Academic Press Ltd. being started under the direction of Charles Hutt.

Academic Press had been started in New York by Walter J. Johnson, a refugee from Nazi Germany who in common with other Jewish professional men had been forced to flee to the U.S.A. and to abandon the family publishing house of Akademie Verlag to their enemies. Johnson was joined by his brother-in-law, Kurt Jacoby, an exceptionally talented editor who was the architect of an impressive book list of monographs, edited treatises, series and serial publications ranging across the length and breadth of science. In particular series of up-to-date substantial reviews in specific fields such as protein chemistry were started in the 1940's,

with the generic title "Advances in …" and these became subscribed to annually by a wide range of libraries on a standing order basis. The need to gather together compendiums of techniques and methods in physics, chemistry and the biological sciences was also recognised by Jakoby and series such as *Methods in Enzymology*, edited by Colowick and Kaplan achieved wide currency and continue today, more than 300 volumes having been published and the scope extended greatly beyond that implied by the word 'Enzymology' in the title. Scientists responded to what they saw as an enlightened publishing policy and relationships were forged with the scientific community which lasted many years and which stood the company in good stead when new ventures were proposed. Advice and help were freely given and there was a willingness to take part. Some publishers today, when emphasis is laid on 'the bottom line' even in the short term, do not recognise the importance of retaining the goodwill of those who are both their contributors of raw material and their customers.

Jacoby also realised the opportunities that existed for commercial publishing houses to start new journals and a number of journals having a broad fundamental scope coupled with scientific validity such as *Journal of Colloid and Interface Science*, *Virology*, *Experimental Cell Research* and *Journal of Molecular Spectroscopy* began life and have continued to succeed.

Charles Hutt soon began making his own contributions to this international programme and from the London office he started *Journal of Molecular Biology*, for which he was able to persuade John Kendrew to become the editor, *Journal of Theoretical Biology* with Jim Danielli as editor (who owned a share in the journal) and *Journal of Sound and Vibration Research*. These were far-sighted projects which were still the mainstay of the London office of Academic Press thirty years later. In particular, *Journal of Molecular Biology* became the organ of choice for papers in a new field which took an outstandingly successful course. Kendrew, a Nobel Prizewinner as the first man to determine the three-dimensional structure of a protein, myoglobin, was a dominant figure and his strong personality played a role in establishing the reputation of the journal. It continued to lead the field for a number of years , but by the early 1980's had lost some of its lustre and ceased to seem the exciting journal that it had originally been. Kendrew's own research career was comparatively short (all his research papers were published within about fifteen years) and his interest remained in the physical structural side of molecular biology whereas the emphasis of excitement had shifted towards molecular genetics. Kendrew's main interest became scientific administration but he was reluctant to relinquish control of the journal which he saw as his baby. The effect was a loss of interest in the journal as a vehicle for publishing their work by those at the cutting

edge of molecular biology. The situation was saved by Sydney Brenner, who loyally shouldered the difficult burden of changing the thrust of *JMB* with characteristic energy and who by vigorous use of his contacts throughout the world transformed the journal and recovered much of the ground that had been lost, eventually replacing Kendrew as Editor-in-Chief. *JMB* continues as one of the leaders in its field under its present editor Peter Wright.

*Journal of Theoretical Biology* also proved in its early days to be a source of interesting ideas and comment, particularly in biomathematics, the biophysical areas and in such topics as theoretical population biology. Jim Danielli, devisor with Hugh Davson of the Davson-Danielli theory of membranes, was an active and controversial figure who kept the journal lively and prominent. After Danielli's long illness and eventual death it has never found the same prominence.

Academic Press London built up an extensive book programme of monographs, serials such as *Advances in Physical Organic Chemistry* and series such as *Methods in Microbiology*. These were generally of high quality In 1969 Johnson sold out to Harcourt Brace, though at first this made little difference to the independence of the London office. By the early 1980's however pressures on library budgets, partly occasioned by the ever-rising cost of journals, had caused the market for specialist books to shrink and sales per title were falling markedly. The commissioning of books from London had continued to expand; as many as 200 titles per annum were being commissioned. The effect on profits was such as to cause the US parent management to intervene and the heyday of Academic Press in London was over. As this piece is being written the sale of Harcourt Publishing, as the group now is, to Elsevier is going through the legal processes. So what started with the reincarnation in New York of a German publishing house is now in European hands and might in some ways be considered to have come full circle.

In 1960 John Wiley & Sons Inc. set up a European office in London. Wiley had already by then been established for more than 150 years as a publishing house in Manhattan. They started with general interest books and fiction, publishing such authors as Conrad, Melville and Poe, but with the expansion of US universities in the 1870's went into engineering and developed a high reputation for their scientific-technical publications. Wiley had marketed their books in the UK and in Europe through Chapman & Hall as agents since 1895, but now decided that they wanted to run their own affairs in Europe.

Wiley's high reputation was justified; in my own original field of organic chemistry Wiley had made fundamental contributions to the science with the introduction of new types of publication which provided the chemist with tools that had never before been available. They can be said to have published the first

graduate-level text with the two-volume text edited by Henry Gilman. *Organic Syntheses*, also edited by Gilman was an ongoing series which spelt out in detail exactly how to conduct preparations in the laboratory, so that they could be given to an assistant with confidence that the method described would work in his hands. *Organic Reactions* edited by Roger Adams was a series, originally appearing annually, which was invaluable in designing a synthesis. All of these and more made a big impact on the research chemist. They resulted from a close relationship between scientist and publisher which stimulated novel types of publication. Nor was this success confined to chemistry; physics and fields in engineering, mathematics, statistics and the life sciences were included.

Change was also coming to Wiley at home, as in 1961 they acquired Interscience Publishers. This company was another formed as a result of the immigration of the principals, Eric Proskauer and Maurits Dekker in response to events in Hitler's Third Reich. Dekker was part owner of Dekker & Nordemann, a large scientific book shop on the Continent. The Dutch publisher Elsevier decided to set up branches in London and New York and also to set up in New York Nordemann Publishing Co. to publish books which would be produced in the Netherlands but marketed outside. Before this operation could be finalised Hitler overran the Netherlands and Dekker and Proskauer found themselves cut off from their home base. Their only solution was to found a new company, Interscience and they went with vigour about the business of establishing relationships with leading scientists. Particularly fruitful relationships were with Herman Mark, whose polymer series dominated its field, and with Arnold Weissberger in organising a series of techniques of organic chemistry. But the most significant innovation to be introduced by Interscience to Wiley was the starting of new journals. In 1946 Interscience had started *Journal of Polymer Science*, building on the contacts that had been so successful in starting and expanding the book series. With its companion *Journal of Applied Polymer Science*, it remains predominant in its field. Until exposed to the influence of Proskauer Wiley do not appear to have considered seriously the possibility of setting up new journals.

Undoubtedly a big factor in this must have been the predominant position of the large US learned societies. The American Chemical Society and American Institute of Physics are both major institutions with mega dollar budgets who have been active in publishing high quality journals with the strong support of their members from their inception. Indeed, many learned societies in Europe as well as US regarded as their prerogative the publication of journals in their subject area. This could lead to abuse in cases where the author's findings were out of favour with those in charge of the Society and there are still scientists around to this day

who bless the name of Robert Maxwell, because a journal that he founded gave them an opportunity to publish otherwise denied to them. The only endpoint of research is to publish the results and there is a finite cost to the process of publishing research results. This was recognised in the United States by building in to research grants from Federal sources funds for publication. This led to the 'page charge' system in which US society journals charge a rate per page for the publication of accepted papers. In return, the society subscription rate for such journals is maintained at a lower rate than would be possible on a strict commercial basis. Hence US society journals are available internationally at a subscription price per page published which is relatively cheap by commercial standards. When I explained this system to William Jovanovich, at that time President of HBJ, he took great exception to what he considered to be the subsidising of competitive publications by the US taxpayer. No such funding was available to European scientists and if Europeans wished to publish in a US journal operating a page-charge system they either had to pay out of their own funds or seek a waiver from the publisher of the charge. This was often given, but some loss of priority for the paper might result. Page charges have been the motivation for start-up of a new journal. European scientists became disgruntled when they lost priority on submitting papers to *Journal of Chemical Physics* and this encouraged North-Holland to start *Chemical Physics* as a journal for full-length papers.

So opportunities to start disciplinary based journals falling within the remit of a society had to contend with such factors and this may explain why it took the advent of Interscience into the fold before journals became important to Wiley. Polymer science was a good starting point for it bridged chemistry, physics and technology, though the ACS has not hesitated to include it subsequently into its scope.

Wiley moved its European office from London to Chichester after a short while and has published from there across the board in engineering, mathematics, statistics, computer science, the physical sciences, life sciences and medicine. One of the main attractions it could offer to European-based authors and editors was a ready outlet and its consolidated experience of marketing in North America.

A journal publishing programme was developed which sought to identify a niche or emerging area of research, secure an editor and board in leading or influential positions in the area, possibly seek the support of a society in the field to ensure manuscript submissions and to provide a subscriber base possibly with member subscriptions tied in to the annual dues of the society.

Though a measure of success was achieved over the years in founding new journals it has to be said that the main expansion of journals within Wiley has

come from acquisition of other publishers lists. In the early 1980's Chichester acquired the journals of Heyden & Co, whose programme was based on the marketing of spectroscopic and other instrumental chemical data, whilst in 1989 the New York office acquired Alan R. Liss Inc. with an extensive journal programme in the life sciences. Then, in 1996 Wiley merged, through the Chichester office, with the German publisher VCH, whose chemistry programme fitted very well within the Wiley framework. It brought a cluster of prestigious journals, of which *Angewandte Chemie* offered a high penetration of the chemical research fraternity, and VCH provided also a substantial book list in chemistry.

The story of the two major US STM publishers considered above shows both similarities and differences between them. Both derive great strength from their geographical situation in the US and their access to the North American market, the largest market in the world by a long way for scientific publications. Both have established extensive relationships with the North American scientific community, the largest and best funded in the world and used this effectively in major publishing programmes. This strength has given power to their European publishing programmes as an asset attractive to European authors.

Wiley remains close to its US origins, with the Wiley family still owning 51% of the business, It has been very much a book-based business which came later to journals than AP. Its international position has become much stronger in recent years and it has diversified from books. Academic Press, within the Harcourt Group since 1969, was earlier into journals but then did not pursue journal expansion as aggressively as Elsevier did. It now seems that the AP business, which owed much to the European origins of its founders, has now come into European ownership. Both companies have made their impact internationally on STM publishing.