

in developing our relationship with the non-Mormon public, though. As the Church becomes more diverse and wide-ranging, we must be more careful about the images we create of ourselves in the public mind. We must be careful not to mislead the public. For example, Brigham Young University is now the largest church-related university in the world, a source of considerable pride to us. It is also a place where students are well-groomed and modestly dressed, which stamps it as something of a rarity. If we over-publicize this latter fact, however, at the expense of stressing the academic achievements of the school and its faculty, we run the risk of placing BYU in the league of certain evangelical institutions of lesser academic quality. This could hurt BYU graduates as they hit the job market, and as a Church PR matter, alienate an important segment of the public that might otherwise be kindly disposed toward us.

As another example: Many non-Mormons have adopted the Family Home Evening Program, and others have recommended it on a community-wide basis. Our leadership in building family ties will bear fruit both in potential con-

verts and in general good will. On the other hand, if we place too much emphasis on Home Evening, the public may come to perceive it as some kind of unique ritual, similar to the Jewish Sabbath performed by Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*. People will say they like it but still feel turned away.

And we must understand that mere publicity in itself is not as effective as some might think. Many church-originated stories end up on the religion page of the newspapers, which is the least read page in the paper.

All in all, Church leaders have great PR material with which to work and our relationships with our various publics should steadily improve. But we will need more skill than ever before in our history. I think the Church's decision to produce an hour-long TV special in prime time markets demonstrates a keen awareness of this. It augurs well for the future of the Church public relations. Ultimately, however, we will all need to bear in mind that the Church's image depends upon and always will depend upon the individual behavior of its members.

## If It's Written by A Living General Authority, It Will Sell: A Report on Mormon Publishing

According to Duane Crowther, founder and manager of Horizon Publishing, "Church publishers are 'lengthening their stride' to keep pace with the rapid growth of the Church. All five of the publishers of traditional church books are expanding their facilities. Deseret Book has completed its attractive new building in downtown Salt Lake City. Hawkes Publishing built their own facility last year. Within the past decade Bookcraft moved into a new location and is again pondering expansion. BYU Press

is in a modern new plant, and Horizon is negotiating the purchase of a permanent home almost three times larger than its current building."

Standing as influential and omnipresent as ever is Deseret Book Company, making no secret of its official role as publishing arm for the general authorities and purveyor *par excellence* of LDS gift books. Their books cover a wide range of subject matter—from scripture to homemaking to some recent history titles by luminaries from the

Historical Department of the Church. Priced well-below national books of like quality, Deseret books have taken on a new look in the past few years. Design and editing have been upgraded. At BYU Writers Conference during the summer of 1976, Manager Jim Mortimer, publications editor Lowell Durham Jr., copy-editor Eleanor Knowles and designer Michael Graves talked about the purposes and goals of the company. "We try to make a profit, but we are not seeking a gold mine. Our question is 'Will it fit the bill as a gift for the newly released Bishop?' " Deseret sees its customers as "browsers" with an orientation toward the scriptures. It sees itself as honest and positive, working within narrow limitations but valuing quality. Says Durham: "Everything has parameters. I believe in restrictions, and I believe we can work successfully within these restrictions." He likened his work to the poet working within accepted forms like the sonnet. Though Deseret is not yet open to poets and fiction writers, "the time may come". Meanwhile, Durham advises writers to worry less about the restrictions of the market and more about "adding good books to our libraries."

The publishing arm of Brigham Young University—the BYU Press—has also upgraded its content and design. Prize-winning work by McRay Magelby's graphics staff and creative editing by Ernest Olsen and Gail Bell have carried the Press beyond narrow educational titles and so broadened its scope that some titles now sell nationwide: *Edgar Rice Burroughs*, (by Irwin Porges) a lavish book about the creator of Tarzan, has been picked up by a national paperback company, and *Roughing It Easy* (by Dian Thomas) has become the outdoor food bible of the country. Books on interior design, preschools, dancing and wood-burning provide the financial stability needed to support the intellectual, scholarly and fine arts titles. Such literary offerings as *Modern Poetry of Western America* and *Barbed Wire* are doing well, however, and Don Marshall's second volume book of short stories *Frost in the*

*Orchard* is now scheduled for publication. Among recent scholarly titles, Davis Bitton's long-awaited *Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies* and Monte McLaw's history of the *Deseret News* are just off the press.

Contrary to popular opinion, these "central five" do not begin to exhaust the list of publishers who now handle Mormon-related works. Greg Prince and Stan Hall of Bethesda, Maryland, have just set up "Times and Seasons Books," a mail-order Mormon book business, because "many in-print Mormon books are unknown to Mormon readers and many out-of-print and reprinted titles are poorly advertised." Their survey ("probably incomplete") lists 47 publishers, 36 of which are outside Utah. "The misconception is easily understood. Even *The Subject Guide to Books in Print* lists fewer than half the titles."

Among "unofficial" book sellers and publishers, Sam Weller of Zion's Book in Salt Lake City is legendary. Mormon booklovers know well the vaults above the store where he keeps out-of-print treasures, the used book corridors in the back, and his ever-present willingness to talk about anything "Mormon" in print or out. Ten years ago Weller organized his own publishing company geared to facimilie reproductions of out-of-print classics. He began with Jensens' famous *Biographical Encyclopedia*, and has since branched out to such originals as the best selling *Utah's Ghost Towns* by Stephen Carr. "It's too expensive, though," he says, recalling his latest venture—a reprint of Eliza Snow's biography of her brother Lorenzo. "It cost four dollars a copy just to print, and when I sold it for ten, people complained about the price. The original would bring \$75.00 in the rare book market." Although he does not intend to give up publishing, Sam says "this year I'll pull in my horns."

Weller's experience parallels that of Garth Mangum of Olympus Publishing Company who decided to "sample the Mormon market" with a book on modern polygamy (*Polygamist's Wife*) by his wife

Marion Mangum. Since Olympus concentrates on educational and manpower titles, a different promotion scheme was in order. While Marion tracted bookstores in the mountain west, California and the northwest, Garth mailed out brochures to *Dialogue* subscribers. Though most of the bookstores agreed to carry it—especially after learning that Deseret Book had agreed—most buyers felt that \$7.95 was too much to pay. When the Mangums' friends announced that they were on the waiting list at the library, Marion said, "Well, if I don't have a best seller, I do have a best reader." Meanwhile, the response to their brochure consisted mainly of manuscript offers. Their conclusion: "There are more writers than readers out there."

What does all this mean to the writer of fiction and poetry, essays and novels? Many of these writers feel there is a market for their work. Publication in magazines and journals encourages them, but over and over they hear "There is no market" or "Mormons won't pay." Many writers have therefore chosen the self-publishing route. Only a few go so far as to set up printing presses in their own homes; most simply hire reputable presses and do their own editing, promoting and distributing. Eight members of the Exponent II staff in Boston decided to do just that when their book of essays, *Mormon Sisters*, (Claudia Bushman, ed.) was unable to find a publisher. They formed Emmeline Press (named after Emeline B. Wells) and set out "boldly and naively" by borrowing 6,000 dollars and mailing flyers to the Christmas market. "We misjudged the reliability of firms who contracted for composition, printing and binding," report Heather Cannon and Carrell Sheldon. "Compositor errors, printing and binding costs and missing pages caused delays and flaring tempers. We struggle now with financial reports, tax returns, advertising, distribution and inventory records. Still, our book is a tangible reality that we are able to share with many people. There *IS* a market for our book, and in four months we have already re-

covered one third of our costs. As for the future, we vacillate between fatigue and lofty thoughts of future projects."

Marilyn McMeen Brown reports that from the time she began "as a little girl, loving books and writing them tediously with a pencil and crayons, I dreamed that someday I might publish my own poems in a little pamphlet. In 1966 I paid \$300 for two fonts and an ancient press hooked to a washing machine motor. Then I went to visit my friends Carol Lynn and Gerald Pearson. 'Let's put out a book of our poems,' I said.

"We are already beginning on *Beginnings*," Gerald replied. So I ended up shadowing Carol Lynn's pioneering effort by establishing Art Publishers in 1969. I soon decided to give up the washing machine motor. I hired a professional press and bought a stamp that said "Books Fourth Class." Gerald helped me set up an invoicing system. I spent \$1,000 to print 2,000 copies of *Rainflowers*. While I did not expect nor get the instant success of *Beginnings*, I was pleased to find that young people bought my poetry, and that I had to reprint only four months later."

Gerald Pearson, interviewed in *Mountainwest* magazine, said "Our conception was that if we took out a loan and published 2,000 copies of *Beginnings*, we would be able to sell them within a year . . . but between *Beginnings* and *The Search*, we have sold almost 150,000 copies. In June 1975, Doubleday picked up Carol Lynn's books and 'were satisfied with initial sales.'"

Emma Lou Thayne, well-liked author of three books of poetry and a novel, had heard the old saw, "There is no market for poetry in the Church," so she arranged to have her first book printed by Parliament Press, the pay-your-own-way arm of Bookcraft. Now *Spaces in the Sage* is in its fourth printing and her other books are catching up. She attributes her success partly to the activities of an interested sales manager at Bookcraft, partly to word-of-mouth momentum, and partly to her own participation in the fireside-Standards Night-Relief

Society-Sacrament Meeting-Devotional circuit. "An audience for a speaker must certainly, even inadvertently, become readership for an author."

Still waiting in the wings is Douglas Thayer, well-known writer of short stories who has decided to publish his *Under the Cottonwoods and Other Mormon Stories* with the help of his wife Donlu, a free-lance editor. "There are several good presses in Provo. We will sell the hardback for under \$5.00 and the paperback under \$4.00 because all the knowledgeable people say that Mormon readers won't pay more." He hopes that his action will encourage someone else to establish a "regional house" for the Mormon market. "Because I want to keep writing, and Donlu wants to start writing, we prefer not to put much time into publishing, unless, of course, we can make millions at it."

This brief overview illustrates the lively interest in publishing that lives among the Mormons. Over all hangs a sense of frustration, and underneath, as Douglas Thayer puts it, are "the bones of those who tried and failed." Peregrine Press, a great hope for some writers, pulled out of the Mormon market after printing some beautiful books, including Emma Lou Thayne's novel. And yet the Pearsons were able to sell 150,000 books of poetry!

Garth Mangum tries to explain this paradox. "If you are already publishing titles that sell, in a market you know, any new book must bring in at least 5 to 8 times the cost of printing. Since Mormons won't pay that price, in order to start a regional Mormon press, you must have a great deal of money and a heavy sense of commitment. Because official companies like Deseret Book and quasi-official ones like Bookcraft are able to publish so far below the national cost, prices are depressed and most smaller publishers are unable to compete."

Duane Crowther reports however, that "church" publishers are starting to lift their prices into the competitive range. He sees this as good for business—because it will offset inflation and allow for promotion—and good for writers too. "Writing is one place where the Saints can do many things of their own free will and bring to pass much righteousness." He thinks that authors will be helped by President Spenser W. Kimball's recent directive that authors obtain permission from general authorities before their words are cited. "While allowing the Brethren to reserve their own materials for their own books, it will serve to reduce the 'scissors and paste' collections that have flooded the market in times past."