

# Paperback Books Now Big Business

(Editor's Note: The amazing growth of paperback books in the last 25 years is traced in the following dispatch, written for UPI by the head of one of the largest firms publishing paperbacks in the United States.)

By **KURT ENOCH**  
President of  
New American Library  
(Written for  
United Press International)

NEW YORK (UPI) — One of the more peaceful revolutions of the 20th century has taken place in the United States. That is the emergence and gigantic growth of paperback books during the past quarter century until today practically every American owns from one to hundreds.

About 250 million low-priced paperbacks and about 25 million high-priced paperbacks were sold in 1962. Hardcover sales, including book clubs, amounted to slightly more than 90 million.

Not New  
Despite the worldwide leadership of the United States in this field, paperbacks are not an American invention. They first appeared in Europe in the early 19th century. In their first emergence in the United States paperbacks underwent several short-lived phases. The Boston Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge started to issue them in 1829. In 1843, increased postal rates plus over production — a recurrent problem with paperbacks — caused their cessation. In 1873, the "Tribune" published "extras" in paperback form. The firm of Donnelly, Gassett and Lloyd soon followed suit with dime novels. Other publishers such as Harper Bros., D. Appleton and Co., Henry Holt, Dodd, Mead, and Funk and Wagnalls also entered the field. But the copyright law of 1891 put an end to all this when it required payment for publication of foreign material which had

previously been free of royalty fees.  
The more sustained European effort in paperback publishing carried into the 20th century. The best-known English-language paperbacks originated in 1837 in Leipzig with Tauchnitz which amassed, in 90-odd years, about 5,000 English-language titles by British and American authors. Albatross, a British-German firm formed in 1932, added 400 more titles, but World War II ended its activities. The Albatross format was adopted by Penguin, a British company which pre-dated by four years the first significant phase of American paperbacks — the appearance of the low-priced, mass-distributed Pocket Books in 1939. Following Pocket Books closely in the United States were Avon Book and the U. S. branch of Penguin — which in 1947 became New American Library — and others such as Bantam, Dell, Ballantine, Popular Library. In 1952 came the high-priced lines like Anchor, Vintage and the multitude of hardcover and university press paperbacks which are sold primarily in bookstores.

Many Titles  
In their two dozen years of existence in the 20th century in America, paperbacks have shown a vigor that defies analysis. In 1939, 34 titles were published. In 1962, there were 1,866 new titles in the low-priced field and 7,956 in the higher-priced field. The latest issue of "Paperbacks in Print," a catalog of selected titles, lists 21,300 paperbacks. In these 24 years the physical format has changed radically from poor paper, small type, flimsy bindings and lurid covers to high standards among the better paperbacks of good white paper, larger type, durable bindings and artistic covers.

But the most significant improvement has been in the contents of the books. Since 1939, when light fiction, mysteries, westerns and crossword puzzles predominated, the paperbacks

have steadily moved into more cultural fields. A staggering variety of contemporary and classic literature from all nations is now available in paperbacks. The latest writings on nuclear developments as well as those of the ancients, politics, government, history, poetry, drama, philosophy, religion, reference books by the score, language books, entertainment are among the paperbacks that crowd the newsstands in every city and hamlet in the United States.

Cultural Uprising  
Does this vast distribution of books indicate a cultural upsurge in the United States? I think it does, and our experience at New American Library provides evidence of the desire and taste for good reading. When we issued the first Mentor books, a series devoted to scholarly nonfiction classics, we encountered great skepticism from our distributors as to their salability in the mass market. We had to persuade them to make a try. The results amazed us. Books like Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey," "Mythology" by Edith Hamilton, "Patterns of Culture" by Ruth Benedict, have sold from a million to two million copies. Many truly scholarly works have been printed in editions of two or more hundred thousand. High-quality fiction, published under the Signet imprint, including such titles as "1984," "Darkness at Noon," "Catcher in the Rye," "Animal Farm," have found millions of readers.

Our most recent venture is a complete Shakespeare, in 38 volumes, one volume to a play with a separate volume for the sonnets and other writings.

One of the most important new fields for paperback publishers in the last few years is the educational market. Teachers have found paperbacks useful for themselves and their students. To the teacher, they offer flexibility of assignment as supplementary reading. Newspapers also are devoting

more space to paperbacks. Many now have an annual or semi-annual paperback supplement devoted to reviews and features. A year ago the New York Times carried a front-page Sunday story on the use of paperbacks in the schools. During National Library week the Columbus Citizen ran a front-page story on the addition of 5,000 paperbacks to its public library system. The newspaper in LaPorte, Ind. ran a story to

the effect that students in the high school there no longer had an excuse for tardy book reports because they now have paperbacks.

I cannot predict the future of this development which started as the paperback revolution, progressed to "the coming of age" and now has emerged into an era of abundance and diversity. I feel, however, that there is no limit to the possibilities so long as paperback publishers continue to supply the apparently insatiable demand of Americans for low-cost books on every conceivable subject.

SECTION B **MEDFORD TRIBUNE** PAGES 1 to 8  
MEDFORD, OREGON, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1963

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