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A Brief History of Scholarly Publishing

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A Brief History of Scholarly Publishing

DONALD D. JACKSON
University of Illinois Press

- 50,000 B.C. Stone-Age publisher demands that all manuscripts be double-spaced, and hacked on one side of stone only.
- 1455 Johannes Gutenberg applies to Ford Foundation for money to buy umlauts. First subsidized publishing venture.
- 1483 Invention of *ibid*.
- 1507 First use of circumlocution.
- 1859 "Without whom" is used for the first time in list of acknowledgments.
- 1888 Martyrdom of Ralph Thwaites, an author who deletes 503 commas from his galleys and is stoned by a copy editor.
- 1897 Famous old university Press in England announces that its Urdu dictionary has been in print 500 years. Entire edition, accidentally misplaced by a shipping clerk in 1497, is found during quadricentennial inventory.
- 1901 First free desk copy distributed (Known as Black Thursday).
- 1916 First successful divorce case based on failure of author to thank his wife, in the foreword of his book, for typing the manuscript.
- 1927 Minor official in publishing house, who suggests that his firm issue books in gay paper covers and market them through drug houses, is passed over for promotion.
- 1928 Early use of ambiguous rejection letter, beginning, "While we have many good things to say about your manuscript, we feel that we are not now in position . . ."
- 1934 Bookstore sends for two copies of Gleep's *Origin of Leases* from University Press and instead receives three copies of Darwin's *Storage of Fleeces* plus half of stale peanut butter sandwich from stockroom clerk's lunch. Beginning of a famous Brentano Rebellion, resulting in temporary improvement in shipping practices.
- 1952 Scholarly writing begins to pay. Professor Harley Biddle's publishing contract for royalty on his book after 1,000 copies have been sold to defray printing costs. Total sales: 1,009 copies.
- 1961 Important case of *Dulany vs. McDaniel*, in which Judge Kelley rules to call a doctoral dissertation a nonbook is libelous per se.
- 1962 Copy editor's anthem, "Revise or Delete," is first sung at national convention. Quarrel over hyphen in second stanza delays official acceptance.

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