

Professor J. Lederberg
Department of Genetics
University of Wisconsin
Madison 6, Wisconsin

November 16, 1956

Mr. Thompson Webb
Director, University of Wisconsin Press
Campus

Dear Mr. Webb:

On the phone yesterday I proposed a series of cooperative "University of Wisconsin Monographs". I did not expect a considered opinion from you at that time, but I am pleased that you brought up questions that would apply. At this time, I am presenting this proposal more fully, for consideration by the University Publications Committee and yourself.

The proposal is that the Press undertake to collaborate (at the initiative of each prospective author) with various scholarly journals. Selected contributions would be published concurrently in its journal, in customary fashion, and separately under the Press' imprint. For economy, the same press run might be used, but bound in a distinctive cover. I will not discuss many relevant details that must be decided but which do not affect the inherent feasibility of the plan. The main objective is to secure the advantages of periodical and book publication at the same time, with the least impairment of customary practice in each. Only a limited number of titles would be suitable for this enterprise: they would be chosen in the light of their monographic character, anticipated demand, and existing gaps in material for graduate instruction.

1. Why collaboration? The proposal implies certain inadequacies in the separate forms of publication. The scholarly journal is a traditional vehicle for "short monographs": the major expense is borne by the specialized subscribers, who constitute a fixed certain and essential audience. However, periodical publications are not readily accessible to a wider or later audience, who may have a special concern in an occasional article of more general or enduring interest, or of special relevance for advanced instruction. On the other hand, the "book" is less certain to reach the specialist colleagues. Furthermore, current costs are almost prohibitive for the independent publication and distribution of short monographs, of say about 50 pages.

2. Why not reprints? The indicated shortcomings of the periodical can sometimes be met by reprints distributed free by the author. For most articles this is a nearly tolerable burden. For exceptional titles of monographic character, when the demand exceeds a few hundred copies, the expense and mechanical difficulties become formidable obstacles. Journals and Publishers evolved in the first place as more effective alternatives to the personal distribution by an author of his own work. Such necessary functions as sales and advertising cannot be executed on an individual basis without prejudicing the scholarly efficiency of the author.

Some journals (e.g., *Physiological Reviews*) have accepted the responsibility of selling reprints directly, for a certain interval after the publication. They cannot be said to do an efficient job of it. Most journals would not wish to offer every article, on the one hand, or have to discriminate which articles

should be kept on sale on the other. This must be considered as a reasonable alternative to the "University Monograph" proposal, but the journals have not gone very far on their own initiative.

3. "Should the University Press peddle some^{one's} reprints?" For some reason, this is likely to be said in a disparaging tone--perhaps the fact that reprints are distributed gratuitously tends to depreciate them. Reprints are as much a vehicle of scholarly communication today as any other form of publication. They are not a very effective method and just because of their inefficiency, I am proposing an alternative for the most urgent cases. The scholarly content of a reprint is measured by its intellectual input, not its price or unbound condition. The University Press should "peddle reprints" for the same reason it "peddles" any other creative work: the dissemination of knowledge and understanding.

4. Is there sufficient creative value? It can be argued that co-publication has less creative value than original; after all it serves to extend the value of an existing work, rather than make a new one. This can be conceded, and I would not propose that the Press anticipate an operating loss on co-publication; unlike more specialized work, the justification for including an article in the series will be precisely that the anticipated demand exceeds the scope of the original journal. Furthermore, the much smaller investment of Press capital and working time in the series should be taken into account in weighing its merits against those of independent works.

I may add that members of this faculty have no difficulty in "marketing" their manuscripts--some of them have to fight the book agents away. Does anything else speak more eloquently for the potential demand? Most of us simply don't have the time to write "books", in addition to keeping up with current writing of research articles and reviews. Speaking for myself, one reason I have hesitated to write at greater length has been the extent to which a "book" on bacterial genetics would be a rehash of other contributions already available to a more limited audience via the journals.

The Press would, of course, retain its traditional discretion in the choice of articles and could consult with the author prior to their completion. While the policy might be liberalized later, I propose the series primarily for contributions from this faculty; such a series might be expected to be consonant with the prestige of the university. An added merit may be its help to the faculty to become better acquainted with the work of its own members.

5. Cooperation from the Journals. Not every journal will be agreeable to furnishing an extra press-run for co-publication. However, this practice would be no more disadvantageous to them than the furnishing of reprints. The majority of journals are nonprofit enterprises and responsible to society members: I anticipate that most of these will be happy to collaborate with a university press for the wider dissemination of their academic output. For authors who are interested, the willingness of a journal to cooperate would be a consideration in choosing where to submit an article.

In the long run, of course, any profits should be shared with the journals--they would learn to demand it anyhow. It is not unreasonable that such profits should help to improve the scope of existing review journals.

6. Suitable articles. It would not be difficult to list many examples of papers that would have been appropriate candidates for co-publication when they were originally written, and which have remained in demand long after personal reprint stocks were exhausted. Here are two random examples:

Brink, R. A. and D. C. Cooper 1947 The endosperm in seed development. Originally published: Botanical Review, 13, 423-541.

Eisenhart, C. and Wilson, P. W. 1943 Statistical Methods and control in bacteriology. Originally published: Bacteriological Reviews, 7, 57-137.

Most other contributions would not be quite so long; doubtless there will be a lower limit of length below which the fixed costs would make the unit price prohibitive. As a guess, many of the articles I have in mind would be 35-75 pages long, and should be saleable at \$.60 - \$1.50.

7. Personal addendum. My thoughts on this question were initiated by current preoccupation with a fairly comprehensive review on Bacterial Recombination which I am preparing for Bacteriological Reviews. I know from personal experience and the interest of publishers that there is a severe demand for teaching material in bacterial genetics; this review would be equivalent to several chapters in a book I might otherwise be tempted to write. Why should this work be done twice? Of course the merits of the general proposal are independent of, and possibly exceed, those of my own intended contribution. Other colleagues may have material currently in prospect that would be equally or more appropriate, and might well be solicited in a pilot test of the Monographs proposal.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

/nhm