

Focus on UK Serials Group member

## Times Past and Times to Come

### The world-wide activities of Research Publications

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In Australia a family historian wants to consult a late eighteenth century copy of *The Times* for news of boat departures from Bristol; in Ontario a musicologist needs to compare early manuscript copies of Handel operas; in Taiwan an examiner needs a set of international patents in accessible form...

All the answers to these problems are met by the diverse titles and services offered by Research Publications (RP) to the library world. Made up of a number of smaller companies started during the last twenty years, each established to meet the demands of their customers and now united in increasing the accessibility of information to the library community, RP today meets the demands of four distinct areas of information research - newspapers, research collections, patents and periodicals.

The company first became known in Britain for the quality national and international newspapers it offered on microfilm. In 1972, Derek Jewell, then publishing director of Times Newspapers, founded Newspaper Archive Development Ltd (NADL) as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Times Newspapers. Until then *The Times* and its supplements were microfilmed and sold by Kodak, and the indexing of *The Times* was undertaken in the old Times offices in Printing House Square. NADL was established specifically to market earlier copies of *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* and the Times Supplements on microfilm and to expand and publish an integrated index to cover the two newspapers and all three Supplements. It was soon clear that there was a demand in the library community for archival copies of other British and international newspapers: so the list has grown over the intervening years to include the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph*, the *Financial Times*, and the *Independent* (from its foundation in October 1986) in this country, and such eminent overseas newspapers as *Le Monde*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *The Age of Melbourne*, *Asahi Shimbun* of Tokyo and the Spanish national daily *El Pais*. Historic

collections were also undertaken. One of the largest and most important for serial librarians was the filming of the Burney collection of Early English Newspapers from the British Library, later supplemented with copies from the Bodleian Library and now continued through the Newsplan project to film *English Provincial Newspapers of the Eighteenth Century*. More than 15% of the issues covered in this collection exist nowhere else in the world, and titles range as widely as the *Barbados Mercury*, *Birmingham Chronicle*, *Madras Courier* and *The Pennsylvania Packet*.

Colin Kyte, who had worked for several years in the library of *The Times*, became managing director of NADL and is still managing director of Research Publications Ltd today.

The major component of the company as it is now had meanwhile been founded earlier in the US. In 1966 Sam Freedman left the micro-photo division of Bell and Howell to establish his own company Research Publications Inc - dedicated to micro-filming unique or rare copies of books. Brought together in thematic collections, his projects aroused enormous interest and support at a time when generous funding of the expanding tertiary sector allowed libraries to develop at an unprecedented rate. The company developed co-operative relationships with the leading research libraries in Britain as well as in America - here with the British Library, Goldsmiths' Library and the Bodleian Library among others - and initiated major international collections, many of which are still in the course of publication and are available to this day. Onto these foundations various collections of serial runs have been added; *17th and 18th Century Periodicals and Academy Publications*, *Russian Revolutionary Literature*, *Asian Periodicals*, serial publications of the League of Nations and womens' suffrage periodicals - to name but a few - have been selected and assembled to meet the demand for permanent access to material that was often treated as ephemera on original publication.

Reading-based NADL and RP in Connecticut came together in the early days through the good offices of Milton Mandel, president of the Microfilming Corporation of America (MCA). Mandel had been manufacturing NADL's microfilm for some time, and when he left MCA to join Sam Freedman at RP, NADL switched its manufacturing to RP. In June 1979 International Thomson Organisation, owners of Times Newspapers Ltd, which included NADL, acquired Research Publications Inc. Joint editorial and marketing arrangements followed over the years to the extent that by the early '80s it was apparent that the complimentary goals of the two companies would be best achieved by the foundation of a single integrated organisation. Accordingly, in 1982, NADL changed its name to Research Publications Ltd, and became the Eastern hemisphere branch of the world wide library information company of today.

Shortly after joining Research Publications Inc, Mandel noticed that there was a substantial corpus of specially printed information - patent documents - which are as bulky in their hard copy format as are newspapers and books. Research Publications began a subscription service for US patents on microfilm, acquired a wide reputation for speed and quality of service and subsequently became sole contractor to the US Patent Office. This contract was renewed after a thorough selection process late in 1988. A complete backfile of US patents, from the first one issued in 1790 to the present day, is now available from RP on microfilm, as are the patents of most of the major issuing bodies elsewhere in the world.

Lawyers, unlike libraries, do not need a complete set of patent documents: they want individual patents to conduct a search, and many individual researchers only need patents relevant to their field. Complimentary to the microform range, the Rapid Patent Service of RP, based in Arlington, Virginia, just across the river from Washington, offers fast copies of individual patents on subscription and on an occasional basis, according to a customer-determined profile.

The fourth and most recent service introduced by RP is the supply in microform of learned journals. Some of the world's leading journals in the fields of science, technology and medicine, including those published by the American Chemical Society, British Medical Association, Elsevier S.A., Marcel Dekker Inc and John Wiley and Son Inc among others are included in the programme.

Already a list of several hundred titles as diverse as *Acta Anatomica* to the *Journal of Banking and Finance* has been filmed. It is RP's intention to supply both backfiles and current subscriptions to each title, in a programme aimed at serving the acquisition, space-saving and conservation requirements of many libraries.

RP is far from being a micro-publisher alone, publishing indexes to newspapers, television transcripts and United States declassified documents as well as printed guides to collections. All providing the key to speedy access and successful use of the great volume of information contained in RP's micro-publications.

*The Times* began indexing its pages in 1906 and prior to that there was *Palmers Index to the Times*, which extends back to mid-1790. The indexing of *The Times* was transferred to Reading in the early 1970's and as part of its services, NADL increased the indexing to encompass the contents of *The Times Supplements* and *The Sunday Times*. Additionally, the years of *The Times* not previously indexed (1785-1790) were indexed by NADL so that there is now a completely indexed backfile of *The Times* available from 1785 to date.

*The Times Index* plays a unique role, not only as a guide to the contents of the paper itself, but as a general guide to historical events over more than two centuries. Indexes to *The Financial Times* and *Le Monde* - both also available in full text on microfilm - were added in 1987, and in Reading a specialist team of twenty people is today dedicated to compilation of all three indexes. Although at present only available in printed form, the indexes lend themselves to other modes of delivery, online or CD-ROM. We are actively investigating likely demand for these and will welcome any views which are put to us.

Access to individual items within collections, whether a major on-going project such as *The Eighteenth Century* or *Music Manuscripts from the Great English Collections*, or a discrete title such as the *Manuscripts of Charles Dickens*, is vital to researchers. Most of the 4,000 reels and 20,000 fiche of collection material to be published by RP in 1989 will be indexed by temporary guides later accumulated, or (in the case of manuscript materials) by substantial specially-prepared full bibliographic listings, which often reveal the richness of a collection for the first time. Online cataloguing, via UTLAS, is carried out in-house for some collections, while externally others have

been, or are in process of being loaded into the OCLC database.

Over the same period that NADL was developed and became Research Publications Ltd, Harvester Microform was growing in Brighton to become a reputed publisher of primary source materials in humanities and social sciences. Acquired by RP in 1987, Harvester Microform had - among much else - for several years been collecting and publishing on film the output of many contemporary pressure groups. Grouped into subscription series such as *Britain and Europe*, *The Left in Britain* and *The Alternative and Underground Press*, well-known to serial librarians in Britain, these projects continue from RP and two annual series of 'grey' literature start this year. The medical reference series *Self-Help Groups and Health Information* recognises the great increase in demand for health information, and twenty one organisations have contributed

their output to the initial set. The environmental reference source *Acid Deposition and the Environment* gathered from thirty-five organisations in more than a dozen countries, also starts in 1989 : it offers students and researchers a large body of information in a field of increasing national and international concern.

Research Publications now has full editorial and marketing operations on both sides of the Atlantic. From each base the process of identifying, selecting, contracting, organising, producing, promoting and supplying are undertaken. Much radical change is affecting libraries at the present time and Research Publications will continue to grow and adapt itself to meet new circumstances as they emerge. But we shall not move from our commitment to careful selection, quality production, and close co-operation with the perceived goals of the library community we serve.