In 1945, after a university committee appointed to study the advisability and practicability of establishing a Pennsylvania State College Press made its recommendations, the idea lay fallow until the director of the Department of Public Information published the first university-sponsored book in 1953. Director Louis H. Bell, the editor and designer of *Penn State Yankee: The Autobiography of Fred Lewis Pattee* (1953), became the first director of the Pennsylvania State University Press when the Board of Trustees decided to establish it on an experimental basis in 1956. The press’s first mandate was “to make the products of scholarship and research available to all, scholar and layman alike” through publication of “books and periodicals of quality and distinction…which would supplement the primary purposes of the University: understanding and scholarship.” Penn State was one of the few land-grant colleges in the country, and the only major university in the commonwealth, that did not yet have a university press. The trustees believed that the lack of a press put Penn State at a disadvantage in recruiting faculty. Initially conceived to publish Penn State faculty’s scholarly work, the press quickly diversified to include outside authors with the prime criterion being the scholarly quality of the manuscript. Bell resigned from the Department of Public Information in 1958 for health reasons but continued to run the press and taught some journalism courses. He died later in the year just prior to the press issuing its first book, Edward J. Nichols’s *Toward Gettysburg: A Biography of General John F. Reynolds* (1958).
To continue Bell’s work, the university named T. Rowland Slingluff, Jr., the director of the newly formed Department of Publications, as the acting director of the press. Slingluff came to the university in 1958 from Baltimore, Maryland, with degrees in international relations and experience editing engineering reports and technical articles. Slingluff accepted the permanent appointment as director the same year the press published its second title, Henry Johnstone’s *Philosophy and Argument* (1959). To assist the director in selecting manuscripts for publication, the university established the University Press Advisory Committee consisting of six faculty members appointed by the president of the university for three-year terms. Although there is no mandated number of members for the Committee as a whole, and the number has fluctuated from a low of five to a high of nine, one requirement is that each year there be one representative from the Faculty Senate Committee on Research and another from the Faculty Senate Committee on Libraries. Before 1990 these representatives had to be the chairs of the respective Senate committees, but the press director, Sandy Thatcher, convinced the Faculty Senate to change its rules to allow the chairs to appoint other members of their committees instead, so that the press could have more flexibility in getting people on the Committee with expertise in the areas in which it publishes. When Thatcher arrived in 1989, he began referring to the committee as the Editorial Committee of the Penn State Press and it has been called that ever since.

Initially, a single staff carried out all functions for both the press and Publications; the design staff continued to serve both divisions until the press became a separate unit in 1972. The press has never had its own printing facilities; book manufacturers throughout the world bid competitively for each job. The press belongs to a consortium of ten
university presses that shares an office in London, England, for distributing books worldwide. During Slingluff’s tenure, 1959-1972, the press published over 150 titles spanning a variety of disciplines reflecting the diverse interests of the university but developing particular strengths in art history and literary criticism. In addition, the Penn State Music Series, inaugurated in the fall of 1963, makes available transcribed and annotated scores of outstanding musical compositions that had long been unavailable for centuries. In 1965, RCA-Victor distributed the press’s first recording, The Cries of London and Music in Honor of Queen Elizabeth I, through its record clubs. The 1966 catalogue advertised four stereo LPs — Secular Spanish Music of the Sixteenth Century, Canzonets and Keyboard Music, Concertos by Albicastro and Boyce, and Johann Sebastian Bach’s Cantata 103: Ihr Werdet Weinen und Heulen. The series, edited by Denis Stevens, ended in 1971 with the score, In Ecclesiis: Motet for Soloists, Chorus, Instruments, and Organ Continuo, by Giovanni Gabrieli.

The press also began publishing journals, three of which were new, Chaucer Review: A Journal of Medieval Studies and Literary Criticism (1966), Journal of Speculative Philosophy (1967), and Philosophy and Rhetoric (1968), and assumed the publication of JGE: The Journal of General Education beginning with volume 15, July 1963. In 1960 the press became a member of the Association of American University Presses. With the university presses of Yale, Princeton, California, Mexico, Texas, and Harvard, the Penn State Press established the first inter-American scholarly book center, Centro Interamericano de Libros Académicos, in Mexico City in 1965. As a mark of its growing stature and permanent status, in 1963 the press moved into its own quarters on campus, a remodeled cottage that had once been the boyhood home of author Vance
Packard. It subsequently moved twice more, finally into a new facility in 1989 with adjacent warehouse storage space added in 1998.

After Slingluff resigned in 1972 to enter commercial publishing with his own press, the interim director, Forrest Remick, Assistant to the Vice President for Research, continued oversight of the press. The university conducted a review of the press’s operations and objectives and decided to move it administratively from the Publications office to directly under the office of the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies where it remains today.

In March 1973, the new director, Chris W. Kentera, received a mandate to increase the size and diversity of the press’s list. Kentera expanded the scope from primarily a concentration in European art history to a more representative mix of the whole university and increased the publication figures to thirty titles a year. By his retirement in 1983 the backlist reached nearly 600 titles. Kentera was the first director of the press to have extensive experience in book publishing in a variety of acquisitions and editing positions and the only one to have worked both in commercial and academic publishing. As the former director of the New York University Press, Kentera more than quadrupled that press’s annual output. At Penn State, Kentera inaugurated a series of Pennsylvania-focused regional titles called Keystone Books (guides to the natural and cultural history of the middle Atlantic states), and negotiated agreements to publish art history series for the College Art Association of America and for the American Academy in Rome. The Press initiated SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies (1981) and Journal of Policy History (1989). Comparative Literature Studies moved to Penn State from the University of Maryland beginning with volume 24 in 1987. Kentera
modernized order fulfillments with computerization and oversaw construction of a new warehouse. The press embraced more than the traditional contributions to scholarship by extending its mandate to experimental textbooks on new subjects such as acoustics, career education, industrial location, and public opinion. Kentera helped the press grow from a relatively unknown publishing company to one known worldwide for quality books. One of his strategies was sending editors throughout the world to attract authors and their manuscripts to the press. To market its publications, the press did a tremendous amount of direct mail advertising and sent representatives to association meetings and conventions since trade bookstores offered little display space to university presses.

One of the aims of Penn State president Bryce Jordan during his 1983-1990 tenure was to move Penn State into the ranks of the top ten public research universities in the country. In order to do that the University would need to enhance its reputation for excellence in the liberal arts. By 1985, Jordan promised an emphasis on the Penn State Press “which is among the better university presses in the country [with a] very distinguished record.” The hiring of Sanford G. Thatcher, former editor-in-chief at the Princeton University Press, as the director in June 1989 brought new insight into the press’s program. Under his tutelage, the press increased the staff size and further computerized operations. Recognizing the press’s strengths and weaknesses, Thatcher consolidated the two core areas and expanded the scope within liberal arts, especially philosophy, religion, American and European history, medieval studies, political science, and sociology. He favors “books that take new and interesting perspectives on the way our world is developing.” The press concentrates on Latin American and Russia/Eastern European area studies, and steadily publishes Jewish studies (Penn State Library of


Regional publishing has become a major part of the program with a focus on outdoor Pennsylvania, natural wonders, and history—many aimed at students and scholars but also appealing to the general reader. In 1998, to oversee the Keystone Books
series, the Press created an Advisory Board of people from Penn State and the Centre region who are specially attuned to the concerns of regional publishing. The inaugural membership included representatives from the local newspaper, a local bookstore, the public television station, Penn State History Department, and the university archives. They established a general profile and character for the series and suggest potential projects, evaluate proposals and manuscripts, and recommend other readers. Co-publishing ventures with historical societies, museums, and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission also bring new books into the Keystone series.

In addition to the regular production staff, the press uses interns from Penn State’s Department of English and the Private Industry Council of Centre County. The Graduate Fellowship in Publishing offers an outstanding graduate student in the English Department training in all phases of scholarly publishing. Under the auspices of the U.S. Agency for International Development, in 1965 the press received its first foreign trainee in scholarly publishing for an intensive short course in American methods. In the late 1990s the press, along with other university presses, realized declining income would seriously impact its publication program. Reluctantly, it ceased publishing literary criticism, except for series books. Looking toward the future with electronic publishing, the press discussed with its Big Ten colleagues and libraries ways to develop online publishing ventures but the joint venture did not materialize. Beginning in 2000, full-text online subscriptions to all Pennsylvania State University Press journals became available through Project MUSE. The press published its first CD-ROM to accompany the book, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution* (2000), in cooperation with the American Social History Project.
The university libraries began working with the press back in the 1970s when a librarian first served as a member of the editorial board. In exploring potential partnerships, the libraries and the press agreed to coordinate the publication of a book, *Times of Sorrow and Hope: Documenting Everyday Life in Pennsylvania During the Great Depression and World War II: A Photographic Record* (2003), while the libraries hosted a companion Web site that supports and expands the research value of the book. Another book and Web site collaboration between the press and the libraries focused on the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island (*TMI 25 Years Later: The Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Plant Accident and Its Impact* (2004)). To further solidify the partnership, the press and the libraries are exploring e-publishing in which the press will use print-on-demand technology for its backlist books linked from the libraries’ Web site. Another project is an online Romance Literature series, to replace the *Penn State Studies in Romance Literatures* (published 1991-2003, but discontinued when the sales diminished and the main editor left Penn State), co-sponsored by the press, libraries, and the departments of French and Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. Other new initiatives focus on art book co-publications with, and distribution for, the Palmer Museum of Art on campus and the Baltimore Museum of Art, and distribution arrangements with the Philadelphia Museum of Art.


Organized Section on New Political Science of the APSA, and Best Book of 2004 on Public Policy and Race and Ethnicity awarded by the APSA’s Organized Section on Race, Ethnicity, and Politics). Other awards won by the press’s books several times include the Kenneth Scott Latourette Prize in Religion and Modern History (three times), Best First Book in the History of Religions (twice), Eleanor Tufts Award for an Outstanding English Language Publication sponsored by the American Society for Hispanic Art Historical Studies (three times), and the Pennsylvania Historical Association’s Phillip S. Klein Book Prize (twice). *Book History*, edited by Ezra Greenspan and Jonathan Rose, won the 2000 Best New Journal Award from the Council of Editors of Learned Journals. The press also won several awards for book jacket design and scholarly typography from Book, Jacket, and Journal Show of the Association of American University Presses, and the 2003 PRINT Design Award for cover design.

While the publishing industry undergoes a revolution on a scale not seen since Gutenberg’s time—changes in copyright law, technological innovations in scholarly publishing, mergers, superstores, online Internet shopping, e-books, print-on-demand—Thatcher believes that “the Press will seek to steer a steady course and maintain its place as a principal provider of content of high intellectual value, whatever form it may take.” With academic partnerships and implementation of new technologies, the Penn State Press will build on its strengths and optimize the opportunities to continue publishing quality, award-winning scholarly books, journals, and series.

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Janet Dietz. E-mail to author, November 29, 2004.

—Susan Hamburger