

# H. W. Wilson Co. . . Librarian to the World

The H. W. Wilson Company, a Board member, is internationally famous but ironically, it is not generally known throughout the Borough of the Bronx where it maintains its headquarters in four buildings at 950 University Ave.

The company is the world's largest publisher of library indexes and reference books. Its publications literally "cover the earth" with 123,000 subscribers ranging from the United States to Switzerland, from Wales to Iraq, from Ceylon to Ecuador, from Fiji to Tasmania, from Siam to New Zealand, and from Ireland to Palestine.

It has some 50,000 active accounts, requiring some 130,000 bills in the course of billing the year's sales of nearly \$3,000,000.

Wilson indexes are a major part of the total circulation of approximately 123,000 subscriptions. The company is one of the largest customers of the Bronx Central Post Office with a postage bill in the neighborhood of \$10,000 a month.

About 2,600 books are catalogued for cards every year, and 32,000,000 cards printed, servicing some 18,000 libraries with

professional cataloguing service. The company has on hand over 60,000,000 different catalogue cards covering 10,000 titles, with a total stock of over 12,000,000 sets of printed catalogue cards for immediate filling of orders.

Today, the company is headed by Howard Haycraft who in 1953 succeeded the late Halsey W. Wilson, founder and first president of the firm. A member of the Wilson Company staff since 1929 and vice president since 1940, Mr. Haycraft has long been identified with publishing and library circles. He is known to an even wider public for his studies in the art and history of the detective story. He is the author of "Murder for Pleasure: The Life and Times of the Detective Story," which is generally considered to be the standard and definitive history of that form of literature.

Under the able stewardship of both the founder and the present management group headed by Pres. Haycraft and Vice-Pres. Charles J. Shaw, the company has steadily grown and prospered to phenomenal proportions. A chief characteristic throughout its history has been its need for added space and facilities to accommodate an ever-increasing expansion

in the services it renders as "librarian to the world."

The Wilson Company recently erected a new five-story, red brick building, directly to the north of its three large buildings on University Avenue, to permit more efficient publication of the numerous — and voluminous — bibliographic tools that are librarians' stock-in-trade. Architect of the new building was M. W. Del Gaudio, a long-time resident of the Bronx and formerly a Director of the Bronx County Trust Company before its merger with Chase-Manhattan, and the builder was George Hoffmann & Sons, Inc., 349 East 149th Street.

Peak efficiency was an important consideration in the Company's decision to expand. Rising production costs more than doubled for some publications in the last decade and forced such steps toward long-range streamlining as greater consolidation of the Company's holdings, arrangements of departments in logical relation to those with which they work most closely, increased room for such space-consuming operations as annual (and larger) cumulative volumes, allowance for later flexi-

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*Newest building in the H. W. Wilson Company's group is shown at far left directly adjoining the firm's three other buildings on University Avenue. Structure on extreme right features the company's famous lighthouse which it has adopted as its trade-mark.*

## WILSON COMPANY

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bility, and provision of greater storage area.

The problem of space, as apart from the particular need for efficiency in today's era of high-cost publishing, is not a new one for The Wilson Company. Ever since that day in 1898 when Halsey W. Wilson first began publishing by setting up an editorial office in his Minneapolis apartment, room for the company's growing and increasingly numerous publications has been a recurring problem.

By 1905 the fledgling firm—its Cumulative Book Index which today lists the names of every book published in the English language, augmented by the five-year-old Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature and the new Book Review Digest—was bursting at the seams. Temporary relief was obtained by the company's move, that year, to a separate Minneapolis building. There work went on for another 8 years, until a desire to be near Eastern publishing and materials centers prompted the concern—then swollen by another four publications—to relocate in White Plains, New York, with a basic staff of company officers and 25 editors and 12 carloads of machinery and equipment. The company's Industrials Arts Index, International Index, Agricultural Index, and the Wilson Library Bulletin all had their birth in White Plains, a location that proved unsatisfactory after only four years. In 1917 the company moved to its present location in the Bronx.

By the time the adjacent eight-story building, surmounted by the company's famous lighthouse, had been erected to the south 12 years later, things had reached a stage of acute over-crowding—following a pattern of wondering what to do with all the new space. But it was not a problem of long duration, for within seven short



HOWARD HAYCRAFT

years the company was forced to construct its third building, six uncrowded stories directly north of the original building. The year was 1936.

In the ensuing 22 years, new publications sprang up, existing ones expanded, many new library-customers were added, subscribers of long standing sizably increased their orders, equipment was added to handle increased volume, and the staff was nearly doubled to the present 470 employees, a large proportion of whom are Bronx dwellers.

Reaction to the Company's fourth, newest, and northernmost building is therefore a contrast to the agoraphobia inspired by some earlier expansions. With every square foot already planned for, the question of what to do with the additional space has not arisen.

In the first place, the new building includes an unloading platform large enough to accommodate even huge trailer trucks. Heretofore, it was usually necessary for paper to be delivered to a middle-distant storage point, and then relayed to The Wilson Company on smaller trucks. With some 400 tons of paper annually consumed by the company's publications, its efficient handling is no small factor. The new accommodations mean that paper, arriving

directly from the mill, can be stored on the premises and rolled with ease to the adjacent press room, eliminating costly transfers and the time and labor involved in moving large quantities of paper by freight elevator within the Company.

Top priority on space in the new building was given to some of the most drastically overcrowded departments. A large share of space, for instance, has been allotted to the mushrooming catalog card sales department, whose staff currently sends out an incredible 5,000,000 sets of catalog cards per year. Between 1938 and 1953 the staff of this department had increased from 1 to 35; since 1953 it has grown to 88, in addition to the separate editorial staff of trained librarians who classify and catalog the books and prepare the original card copy for the printing department. More prompt handling of orders has resulted from making adequate space available for this department. The new building also permitted expansion of the bindery, supplementing hitherto inadequate space for the big 2-, 3-, and 4-year cumulations of the company's indexes.

Addition of the new building also eases work for overcrowded departments in other sections—for instance the bookkeeping, billing, sales correspondence, and mail departments whose work, and space requirements, have grown with the company's business. It also makes it possible for the staff to perform better an incidental educational function by enlarging the area for receiving visiting groups of library students who come to observe Wilson indexing and publishing methods.

With the opening of the new quarters has come rearrangement throughout the company's four buildings, so that each department is close to the materials it most uses and the other publications with which it works most closely. The principle is that of a scientifically designed, step-saving

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## WILSON COMPANY *(Continued from Page 15)*

modern kitchen, with elimination of waste motion, time-consuming steps, and duplication of effort.

Flexibility has been another important consideration in design of the new building, with departments so arranged that they can be interchanged or relocated at will, to meet changing requirements. The building also is designed to permit economical installation of an additional elevator if required by future needs.

As Wilson Company President Howard Haycraft has put it, "The Company's expansion into a fourth building is designed to combat mounting publishing costs with more efficient production, while maintaining the standards of service which librarians all over the world have come to expect from The Wilson Company."

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