

Sears put a "handy edition" of the work into their catalogue as a saleable article of merchandise. Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, and a man deeply interested in promoting education, thus got acquainted with the Encyclopædia publishing business. When, in 1920, the company then owning Britannica went bankrupt and the plates were threatened with destruction, Mr. Rosenwald persuaded his company to put \$1,000,000 into the business and save it. Eventually Sears invested \$2,500,000 in the Encyclopædia. For the last five years it has made money for the company and proved itself a sound investment.

Notwithstanding that fact, Sears didn't want to maintain the responsibility of publishing so scholarly a work. The president of Sears calls the relationship "anomalous and accidental." After all, Sears' business is selling farm implements and radios and clothing and such things. So, even though the prestige of the publication among scholars had grown under mail-order-house management, the board of that organization offered it to the University of Chicago as a gift.

Now the university finds itself owner and publisher of the "Encyclopædia Britannica Year Book," the "Britannica Junior," and the "Britannica World Atlas." At the same time it has acquired a business with some 600 door-to-door salesmen, a publishing staff of 35, and with some 3,500 editorial contributors—leading scholars of the world.

But it has acquired something more than a paying business. It has accepted a grave responsibility as the compiler of knowledge for the English-speaking peoples. The Britannica is not now, and never has been, English. The three gentlemen who originated it were Scots and were thinking, no doubt, of the Empire when they called it Britannica. Now there are distributing companies in England, Canada, and in South Africa. Before the war about one-third of the sales were in the dominions, two-thirds in the United States.

The publishers of the fourteenth edition recognized its international scope when they dedicated it to "two heads of the English-speaking peoples," Franklin D. Roosevelt and His Majesty George VI.

The editorial staff has an elaborate system of checking, double-checking, and rechecking to keep the work accurate. Scholars, experts in their fields, read what other scholars have contributed and do not hesitate to criticize. The editor strives for accuracy and impartiality, but world events have a way of upsetting his efforts. Of course, some articles never go out of date. Mr. Yust doesn't have to worry about the timeliness of Macaulay's famous article on Samuel Johnson, written for the Encyclopædia. That is literature. Nor does Professor Albert Einstein's article on his own theory of space-time, which he wrote for Britannica, need editing.

On the other hand, authors of historical and economic articles who may be leaders in their fields can go out of date. The eminent economist who wrote an article in the prosperous 'twenties, saying there would be no more depressions, was a big name in his field, but his statement caused the publishers some embarrassment, when they came across it during the difficult days after the crash of '29.

Because time does change men's ideas and knowledge, sometimes rapidly, the publishers see to it that every article is read critically once every five years, by some one who knows the subject thoroughly. They would rather catch outmoded statements and errors themselves than wait for some vigilant reader to write in. Criticism, however, is always welcomed. When Mary Beard, historian and feminist, complained to the editor that women didn't get their share of biographies, Mr. Yust checked up and found she was right. Of the 13,000 biographies in the work, less than 800 were of women. Mr. Yust immediately invited Mrs. Beard to direct his staff in determining which feminine notables had been omitted and should be included in future printings.

Some corrections are of minute errors. A Chinese scholar wrote in the other day to note that the apostrophe in a certain Chinese proper name faced the wrong way.

"The correction will cost 78 cents," said Mr. Yust. He thinks it worth it.