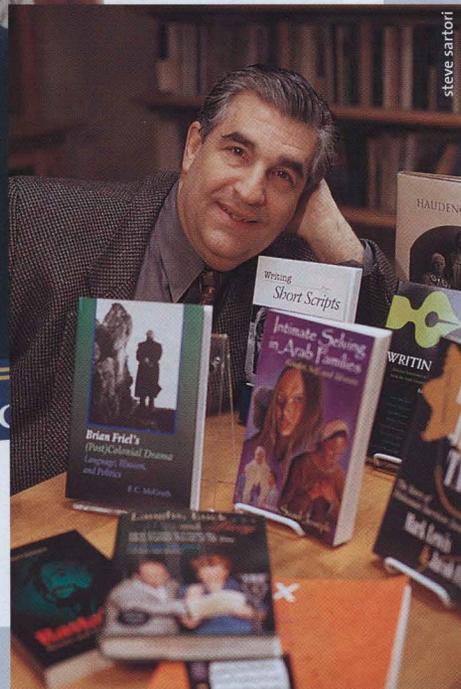
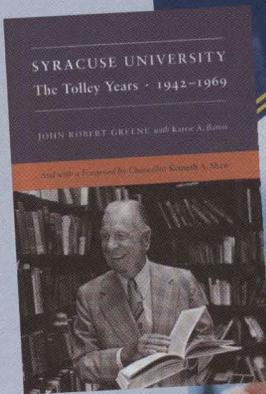
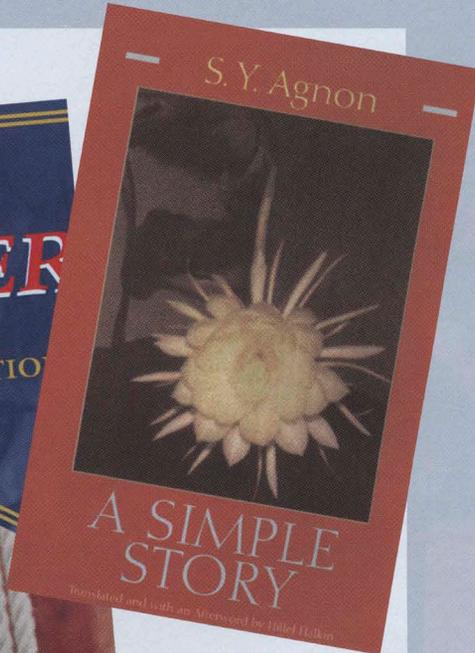
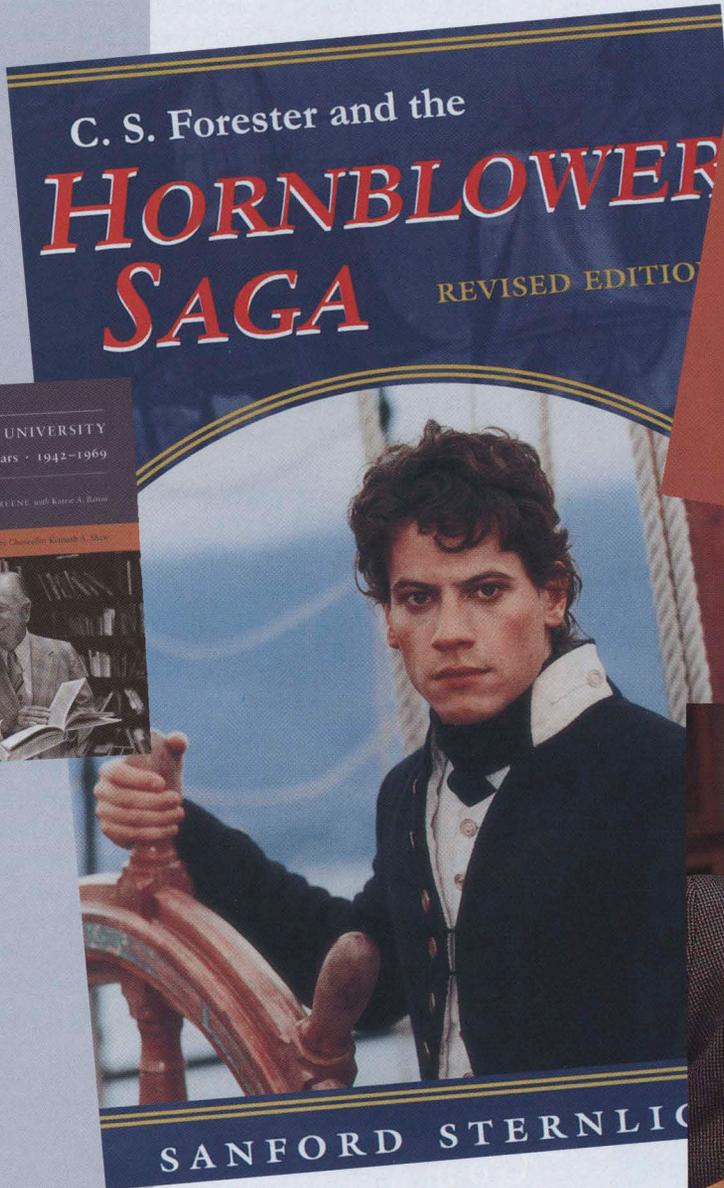


Lasting Impressions



By Paula Meseroll



For more than half a century, Syracuse University Press has built its reputation in the academic publishing world by satisfying the diverse cravings of readers while remaining true to its scholarly mission

Kennys Bookshop and Art Galleries Ltd. in Galway, Ireland, specializes in new and antiquarian Irish-interest books and contemporary Irish art. Des Kenny, who runs the family business, is a detective of sorts, tracking down books—both rare and readily available—for collectors in 45 countries. Quite often, his clients seek titles that carry the imprint of Syracuse University Press, which publishes more books about Ireland than any other press in the United States. “I like to keep Syracuse University Press books in stock,” Kenny says. “They’re high-quality academic books that can reach not just an academic market, but also the popular market.”

One such book is *A Reader’s Guide to Modern Irish Drama*, a recent work by Sanford Sternlicht G’62, a part-time SU English professor and editor of the SU Press Irish Studies Series. “Irish drama always has been popular in Ireland,” Kenny says. “But in terms of literary criticism, there are gaps in quite a lot of areas. Thankfully, Syracuse University Press takes up the slack by publishing books about Irish drama. And these books are very much sought after.”

In many places around the world, the only contact people have with Syracuse University is through SU Press publications. The academic press has built an international reputation by publishing several specialized series, including Adirondack Museum Books, the Jewish Studies Series, the Irish Studies Series, the Mohamad El-Hindi Series on Arab Culture and Islamic Civilization, Native American Studies, and New York State Studies. One of the press’s most recent major undertakings is the *Encyclopedia of New York State*, which is scheduled for release in fall 2002.

Syracuse University Press also markets and distributes books for the American University of Beirut, Colgate University Press, The National Library of Ireland, St. Lawrence University, the Shiloah Institute of Tel-Aviv University, and Union College Press.

“Authors from all over the world submit manuscripts to SU Press,” says Robert Mandel, director of the press since 1993 and editor of the Jewish Studies Series. “We have several criteria for choosing the books we publish, but our first and major goal is that a book should promise high renown or lasting importance. It has to augment or give a new perspective to a field of study.”

The press publishes about 60 titles a year, what Sternlicht calls a “prodigious” number of books for a staff of about 26. “Robert Mandel is recognized as one of the premier directors of a university press in the country,” says Sternlicht, who also is a member of the SU Press editorial board. “He has done some remarkable things with such a small operation. SU Press is an extremely hardworking unit of the University.”

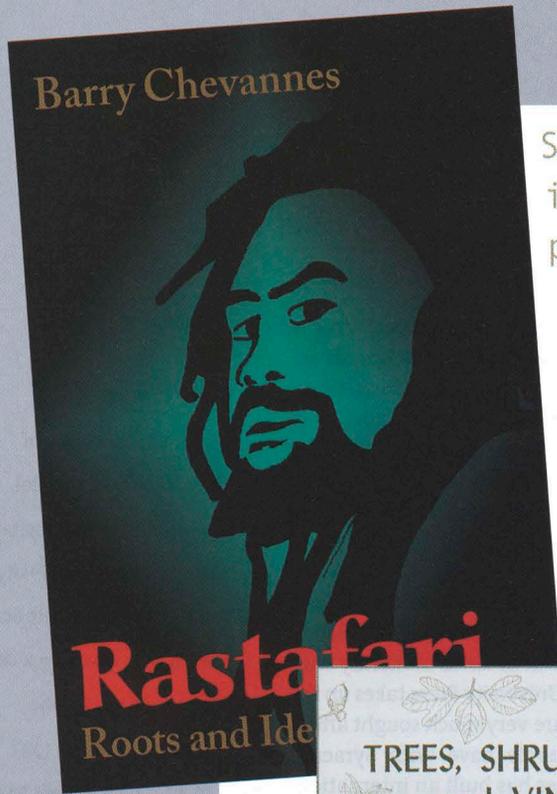
SU Press was founded under Chancellor William Pearson Tolley, an avid bibliophile who believed that having a press would enhance SU’s academic prestige, says John Robert Greene, author of the fourth and fifth volumes in the SU Press series on the history of SU: *Syracuse University: The Tolley Years 1942-1969*, and *Syracuse University: The Eggers Years 1971-1991*. “Chancellor Tolley had a number of goals for the University after World War II,” Greene says. “The first was to regain the enrollment that had been lost, not just by the

Under the guidance of director Robert Mandel, pictured on the opposite page, Syracuse University Press publishes about 60 titles a year covering a range of fields. Mandel, who became director in 1993, wants SU Press books to offer new perspectives to a field of study or exhibit the potential to make a lasting impact in the book world.



“They’re

high-quality academic books that can reach not just an academic market, but also the popular market.”



Students learn the ins and outs of the publishing business

For Brendan Harrington '01, working at Syracuse University Press is a book lover's dream come true. When he first applied for the job, he was captivated by the offices, then located in Lyman Hall. "I felt I was walking into a shrine to the English language," says Harrington, who has been an assistant in the editorial department of SU Press for the past two years. "There were manuscripts everywhere, piles of pages, page proofs. The library was floor-to-ceiling books. For someone who loves being around books, it was a pretty exciting place."

Harrington, a dual English/education major in the College of Arts and Sciences and School of Education, says his first impression of the SU Press editorial staff was that of medieval monks diligently poring over manuscripts. "The copy editors were hunched over at their desks, intent on their work," he says. "They have such dedication—they're proud of their work, caught up in it. Their intensity always has impressed me."

As an editorial assistant, Harrington performs such administrative tasks as getting books cataloged by the Library of Congress; transferring page proofs between editors and authors; and supervising the reprint program for the editorial department.

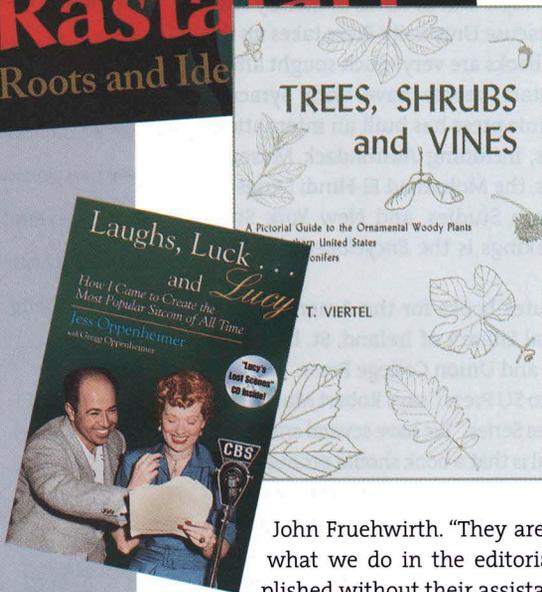
"Our work-study students are helpful in so many ways," says SU Press managing editor

John Fruehwirth. "They are an absolutely integral part of the staff. Much of what we do in the editorial department, for example, couldn't be accomplished without their assistance."

Harrington says the experience has allowed him to learn the publishing business from beginning to end. "It takes about a year to publish a book and there are so many intricate stages," he says. "The editors work hard to make sure everything is just right, and they really do care. Every book gets that SU stamp of quality."

Christa Zubieta '00, an international relations and religion major in the College of Arts and Sciences, has worked at SU Press for three years. An administrative assistant, Zubieta performs a number of duties, including talking with authors and answering their questions. "It's a fascinating place," Zubieta says. "I didn't know anything about publishing when I started here, but now I know how everything works. After being here, I decided I'd like to be an author someday."

—PAULA MESEROLL



war, but also by the Depression. What placed Tolley in the category of just a handful of visionaries was his plan to turn the school—which at the time was basically a liberal arts institution—into a major corporate scientific research institution.”

To achieve these goals, Tolley increased the University’s focus on the hard sciences and, as a key part of his plan, launched Syracuse University Press on August 2, 1943. “In Tolley’s mind, having a university press was an indication that the University itself was now to be seen as a major research player,” Greene says.

The first book published by SU Press was a textbook written for IBM at the request of Thomas Watson, the corporation’s president. *Precision Measurement in the Metal Working Industry*, published in 1943, remains in print and near the top of the press’s all-time bestseller list.

The road for SU Press hasn’t always been a smooth one. In 1974, Chancellor Melvin A. Eggers considered closing the press because of declining sales and an operating budget mired firmly in the red. However, it was a cost-cutting measure that then-Vice Chancellor John James Prucha staunchly opposed. “I was unhappy with the decision because I think any first-rate research university needs to have a university press,” Prucha says. “One of the stated purposes of the University is not only the dissemination of knowledge, but also the development of new knowledge through research and sharing the results. I argued that the University’s press was necessary to fulfill that part of our mission.”

Prucha felt so strongly about saving SU Press that he crafted a plan to change the Chancellor’s mind. “I spoke to a number of our senior and most productive faculty members, the ones I thought were the cream of the crop,” he says. “I sought out their views about the importance of SU Press to the University. The response was immediate and overwhelmingly in support of maintaining the press at any cost.”

After Eggers received an avalanche of persuasive letters protesting the move, he reversed his decision to close SU Press, and, ultimately, the University established a subsidy for the publishing house to continue operating.

Fiscal challenges are a fact of life for almost all university presses because their share of total sales is small. The American Association of University Presses lists 125 members, which account for less than 2 percent of overall book sales in the United States. But dollar signs don’t accurately represent the cultural and literary impact of such presses. Mandel points out that university presses gather their share of national awards competing against commercial publishers. Since 1990, for instance, several university press books have won Pulitzer Prizes. “The role of the university press is to publish books that commercial houses won’t because they need to sell 25,000 to 100,000 or more copies to make publication worthwhile,” Mandel says. “There are many books that deserve publication, but don’t make financial sense for a commercial publisher.”

In fiscal 1999, SU Press sold 111,867 books—44,223 newly published titles and 67,644 previously published works. Among the top sellers were *Catching Dreams: My Life in the Negro Baseball Leagues* by Frazier “Slow” Robinson with Paul Bauer, *Cue the Bunny on the Rainbow: Tales from TV’s Most Prolific Sitcom Director* by Alan Rafkin ’50, and *Hostile Skies: A Combat History of the American Air Service in World War I* by James J. Hudson.

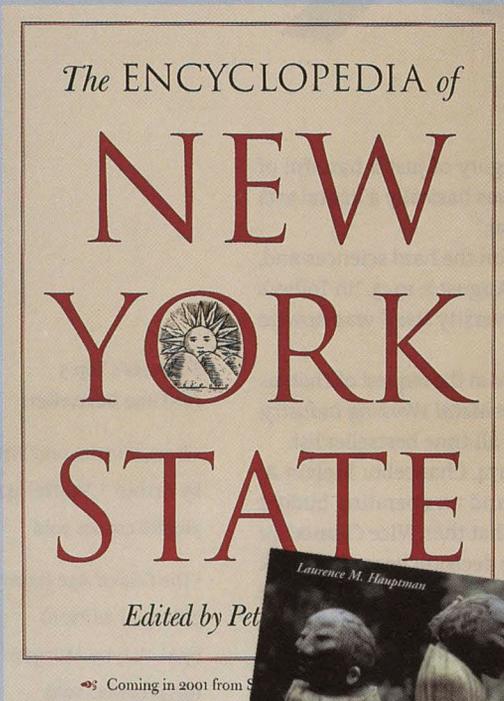
In recent years, industry-wide changes in publishing have made it increasingly difficult for nonprofit publishers to stay in business. “Ten years ago more than 50 percent of

SU Press’s Top 5 All-Time Bestsellers

- *Trees, Shrubs, and Vines*
by Arthur T. Viertel ’42, G’54:
36,986 copies sold
- *The Gilded Age* (revised and
enlarged edition)
by H. Wayne Morgan:
19,531 copies sold
- *Canal Boatman: My Life on
Upstate Waterways*
by Richard Garrity:
19,272 copies sold
- *The Arab-Israeli Dilemma*
by Fred J. Khouri:
19,130 copies sold
- *Duties Beyond Borders*
by Stanley Hoffmann:
18,363 copies sold



“One of the
stated purposes of the University is not only the dissemination of
knowledge, but also the development of new knowledge through
research and sharing the results.”



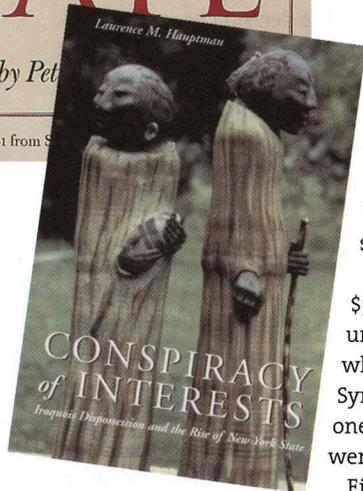
An encyclopedic look at the Empire State

Despite its long and colorful history, there has never been an encyclopedia about the Empire State. That will change in 2002, when SU Press publishes the *Encyclopedia of New York State*. "It will be a valuable resource for teachers, students, and researchers," says Peter Eisenstadt, the encyclopedia's editor.

The one-volume printed edition is expected to run 1,500 pages with about 3,800 entries. There will be a CD-ROM version of the publication, a web site that will update and expand the encyclopedia, and a teacher's manual with primary source documents and other materials.

"This is a big project for us and we are very excited about it," says Robert Mandel, director of SU Press. "It will have a major impact on New York State. We believe the encyclopedia will create a renaissance on writings about New York."

To keep the cost of the volume affordable—at about \$50 to \$60 per copy—the press needed funding to underwrite the publication. Support came in 1998, when New York State Senator John DeFrancisco of Syracuse secured state funding for the encyclopedia for one year with the promise of two more years. "Then we were in business," Eisenstadt says.



Eisenstadt works with a staff of five, mostly doctoral candidates from the State University of New York at Albany, in an office located in the Cultural Education Center in Albany's Empire State Plaza. "We are working closely with the New York State Department of Education," he says. "Part of our agreement for office space here was that one free copy of the book would be distributed to every public library system in New York State. We are very interested in the book's educational potential and would like to see it as part of an invigoration of the teaching of New York State history within the Regents curriculum in New York."

Eisenstadt expects about 600 leading experts from a variety of fields to contribute to the publication. "We are working with an editorial board of nearly 50 experts on broader fields and regions in New York State history, such as African American art, Central New York, and Long Island," he says. "They are advising us on what to include and whom to contact."

One of the project's biggest challenges is paring down the wealth of information. "Selectivity is a real problem," Eisenstadt says. "Getting this down to about 3,800 entries is a tremendous task. There are, for instance, more than 3,600 inhabited places in New York State and we'll only be able to include a small fraction of the cities, towns, and villages. In all areas, we have to make a lot of tough choices about what to include and exclude."

Eisenstadt enjoys working with SU Press on the project. "To me, SU Press is a natural for this encyclopedia," he says. "There is no academic press more identified with serious scholarship of the history of New York State over the past half century." —PAULA MESEROLL

the income or sales from our books would come from libraries and independent bookstores," Mandel says. "Today that's under 20 percent. Libraries have cut back on the number of books they buy and have put more emphasis on periodicals. We once could expect to sell 1,000 copies of a book to libraries. Now that number is down to about 300."

As a result, university presses nationwide now publish more soft-cover books, which are less expensive to produce. Many presses strive to place their books in large chain bookstores or have them listed by online booksellers. It's a route fraught with some unexpected—and expensive—pitfalls. "To get books into those markets, we have to give higher discounts," Mandel says. "To publish books that appeal to those audiences, we have to pay higher royalties, bigger advances, and mount more expensive promotional campaigns. Even though some university presses have moved into trade books to compensate for the loss of their traditional market, we've learned there are a lot of downsides to that tactic."

Instead, SU Press formulated a publishing program designed to break even. "We know some books will lose money, because they are scholarly books meant for academics," Mandel says. "But the topics of those books are essential for the exchange of ideas, and that fulfills the major role of a university press."

Balancing such books in the ledger are those that do make money, such as *Laughs, Luck...and Lucy: How I Came to Create the Most Popular Sitcom of All Time*, the memoir of Jess Oppenheimer, who created the *I Love Lucy* show. As part of SU Press's series on television and popular culture, which is edited by Professor Robert J. Thompson of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, the book is used in college courses, but also appeals to readers interested in one of the most beloved TV comedies of all time.

Another successful SU Press strategy is to reprint commercial books that have gone out of print or were never published in paperback. Such reprints include two books by Israeli Nobel Laureate in literature S.Y. Agnon, *Shira* and *A Simple Story*. The press also has reprinted four works of fiction by author Cynthia Ozick and playwright Arthur Miller's only novel, *Focus*. "These books have been well-reviewed in the media," Mandel says. "They are in areas that we publish and are already tried and tested."

Fund raising also has become an increasingly important part of the survival equation for SU Press. Individuals, corporations, and foundations donate money to underwrite publications, helping keep costs down. Each year, for instance, SU Press receives funds from the John Ben Snow Foundation to support books written about New York State. Businessman Ahmad El-Hindi of Manlius, New York, established a fund in honor of his father, Mohamad El-Hindi, to help finance books about Arab culture and Islamic civilization. "One thing we intend to do is look for someone to underwrite books on sports history, geography, or Jewish studies," Mandel says. "We think that can be accomplished because people can relate to the importance of books in those categories."

Computerization also has helped the press save money by cutting the time needed to get books from manuscript stage to finished product. Mandel sees all these tactics as ways to stick to the bottom line yet stay true to SU Press's main priority. "Achieving excellence in scholarly publishing has been the press's goal since its inception," Mandel says. "Syracuse University Press is changing with the times, but it will maintain its original mission—producing the very best in scholarly research and reflection."

SU Press's 1999 Bestsellers

• *Laughs, Luck...and Lucy: How I Came to Create the Most Popular Sitcom of All Time*
by Jess Oppenheimer with
Greg Oppenheimer:
4,695 copies sold

• *Hostile Skies: A Combat History of the American Air Service in World War I*
by James J. Hudson:
3,352 copies sold

• *Catching Dreams: My Life in the Negro Baseball Leagues*
by Frazier "Slow" Robinson
with Paul Bauer:
2,153 copies sold

• *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology*
by Barry Chevannes:
1,864 copies sold

• *Scattered Like Seeds: A Novel*
by Shaw Dallal:
1,606 copies sold



“We know

some books will lose money, because they are scholarly books meant for academics. But the topics of those books are essential for the exchange of ideas, and that fulfills the major role of a university press.”