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Book Publishers Find Profit in Selling Copies Of Federal Documents

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Companies Often Charge More For Editions Than U.S. Does; But Government Doesn't Mind

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NEW YORK—There won't be any of the usual personal appearances by an author to help spur sales of Random House, Inc.'s new book, *The Vietnam Hearings*.

But the absence of bookstore autograph sessions doesn't signify lack of interest in the \$5.95 hardcover and \$1.95 paperback volumes—only lack of an author to sign copies.

The new book is a transcript of testimony and statements given the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by Secretary of State Dean Rusk, former Ambassador George F. Kennan, and Generals Maxwell D. Taylor and James M. Gavin. In two months Random House has sold 12,640 copies of the 18,500 first editions, and a second printing is likely.

With this successful venture, Random House joins the growing ranks of U.S. publishing companies which are dabbling in the highly profitable practice of reprinting and selling U.S. Government publications—often at steep markups from prices charged for originals by the Superintendent of Documents.

The Government doesn't mind commercial reprints of its works as long as they are faithful to the originals and aren't used to imply Government endorsement of a product or other commercial venture. "We owe the public the results of all the public money we spend on research," says a Federal man. "So we're very happy when someone picks up our information and helps disseminate it."

Government documents aren't copyrighted, so a reprinter is spared costs of royalties usually paid to an original publisher and author. Often he also avoids typesetting costs by photographing the original pages and making printing plates from the negatives.

There is an element of risk, however. Since Government documents aren't copyrighted, "we're never sure another publisher won't reprint the same title," says Harold L. Roth, vice president of Pocket Books, Inc., which

started reprinting Government works last year.

The Census Bureau's 1,047-page Statistical Abstract of the U.S. is available as a \$1.95 Pocket Books paperback and as a \$5.50 hardcover from Fairfield Publishers, Inc., Stamford, Conn. The Government's hardcover sells for \$3.75. But Pocket Books so far has two other titles to itself, the Coast Guard Recreational Boating Guide and Consumers All, an Agriculture Department do-it-yourself guide.

Two publishers besides Random House have rushed out reprints of the recent Senate Vietnam transcripts. Public Affairs Press, Washington, included extracts from written reports submitted for the hearings in its \$2.50 paperback, *China, Vietnam and the United States*. Greenleaf Classics, Inc., San Diego, published 200,000 copies of its \$1.75 paperback, *Report on the U.S. Senate Hearings—The Truth about Vietnam*. "We edited out the idle conversation like, 'Good morning, Mr. Chairman,'" says William L. Hamling, president.

"Vietnam is the most important question before the American public today," says Mr. Hamling, and if this volume sells well, "we will reprint other reports of Senate hearings on questions of serious national importance."

Two publishers also converged last winter on *Your Federal Income Tax*, the Internal Revenue Service's annual guide to filling out individual tax forms. The IRS charges 50 cents. Reprints sold briskly at 75 cents and \$1.

The tax guide shapes up as a hardy perennial, though publishers concede some years are better than others. "Sales depend on the overcautious taxpayer, and how much the Government confuses him by changing the tax regulations," says Allan Bruce Adams, who handled distribution of the 100,000 copies *Charlton Publishing Corp.*, Derby, Conn., sold for \$1 each. "The new withholding will confuse enough people to insure another good sale next year," he predicts.

Easily the best-seller among reprints was the *Report of the Warren Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy*. Bantam Books, Inc., sold 1.3 million copies of its \$1 paperback. Popular Library, Inc., sold 500,000 copies of a 95-cent paperback. The Associated Press sold 650,000 copies of a \$1.50 hardcover through AP-member newspapers.

Book-of-the-Month Club gave 275,000 copies of McGraw-Hill's \$3.95 hardcover Warren Report to members who bought a club selection or alternate in November 1964. The "spectacularly successful" offer abnormally lifted club sales and profits that month, says F. Harry Brown, vice president and treasurer.

A Bantam Books companion volume to the Warren Report was disappointing, however. Called *The Witnesses*, it contained highlights of the 26 volumes of testimony the Commission published. "We're lucky we sold half of the 600,000 we printed," says a Bantam spokesman.