

Specialized book club may have that rare book

By LYNN OSGOOD
Collegian Staff Writer

For those interested in William Fry Jr.'s latest book, "Make 'em Laugh," or a few of Glenn Miller's old big band albums or even an evangelical book, the best place to turn may not be the library or the local bookstore. Actually, the best place to go just may be one of the many specialized book clubs operating in America today.

Specialized book clubs cover a wide range of subjects, from laughter to religion, and may be as new as the 1968 Nostalgia Book Club or as old as the 1927 Religious Book Club. But whatever their particular characteristics, for the most part, they are doing well.

"We have approximately 30,000 subscribers (to the Nostalgia Book Club), and that's a good size for a small specialized club," Neil McCaffrey, president of the Nostalgia Book Club, said.

Donald Vitticks, editor of the Religious Book Club, said the organization's sales have doubled since last year.

"If there's a trend that I can see," he said, "it would be that people aren't thinking about the price of a book as much as they used to. We sell as many of the \$15.95 books as the \$7.95."

Although Vitticks couldn't explain this trend, he did say he enjoyed what it was doing for his sales.

Since the specialized clubs cater to the interests of a particular group of readers, they generally do not advertise nationally.

Vitticks said his club reaches possible subscribers through direct mail promotions.

"We have a list of possible subscribers that is composed from profiles of various church organizations. From those profiles we select the people we feel would have an interest in our club," he said.

Since they deal with a specific type book, Vitticks said, a widespread advertising campaign would be unnecessary.

"We are providing a way for small religious houses to reach a market not reached by bookstores or trade," he said.

The Religious Club itself, according to Vitticks, is divided into three separate clubs: the religious, for liberal Protestant and Catholic clergy, the evangelical, for lay people and the good reading club, which carries inspirational books.

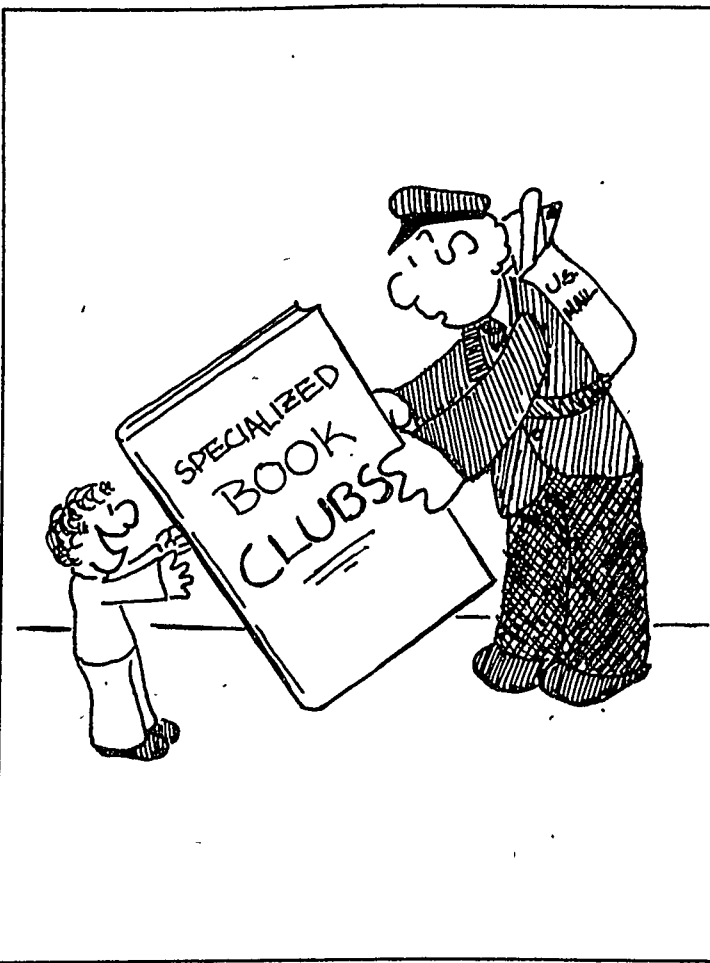
The club sets no minimum amount of books its subscribers must buy.

"We don't want to pressure our readers," Vitticks said, "but after a certain length of time, their subscription can be cancelled."

Before they cancel a subscription, however, Vitticks said they take into account how many books the subscriber has taken and returned.

"Officially, we accept returns only within 10 days, but unofficially, within anytime. What we want to avoid though, is acting as a lending library. Some people buy a book, read it, and then return it five months later. If this happens too often, then we may have to cancel their membership," Vitticks said.

Another book club, the Laff Book Club, operates through a larger network, the Humor Exchange network. George Q. Lewis, director of the Network, said he felt that now



more than ever the country needs laughter.

"People are so self-centered nowadays that they don't think of anything else but themselves," he said.

Lewis said the purpose of his book club is to "spotlight books which would be of interest to people in the comedy and humor industry."

He said the club began when it came to his attention that several people had "immense libraries of comedy and humor books." He added that publishers are often skeptical of publishing humor books since the market seems to be for books with a deeper meaning.

According to Lewis, people can come to the Humor Exchange Network with the intention of either buying books or marketing books they have written.

The membership fee for the Network is \$25. "But after the individual pays that initial cost, he is entitled to all the privileges of the Network," Lewis said.

Some of the activities and privileges of the club include sponsoring a humor lobby in Washington, D.C., participating in National Laugh Week and publishing a newsletter. The purpose of the newsletter, according to Lewis, is "to educate and inform the people."

While Lewis felt the country needed a sense of humor, Nostalgia Book Club President Neil McCaffrey said he started his club back in 1968 because "America was right for a club like this."

The club largely carries show business material dating from 1920 to 1960, but its selection is not solely limited to nostalgic books.

"We handle many nostalgic records, in-

cluding a good selection of big band albums, as well as movie and show biz books," McCaffrey said.

The Nostalgia Club operates much in the same way as any other book club, according to McCaffrey.

"We attract our customers with a premium, a book upon joining at a low price. From this, they agree to buy at least four books over a two-year period. The books are, of course, offered at a discount," he said.

McCaffrey felt that one unusual feature of his club was the announcement, a combination brochure and newsletter, which is published every three-and-a-half weeks.

The announcement is directed towards the tastes of the club members. Since the response is so great, McCaffrey said the organization has to publish a supplement every three or four months.

"The additional publication gives the club members a chance to submit a column or just to write an opinion. It's kind of like a town meeting for the members," McCaffrey said.

In addition to providing more news for the club members, the supplement also contains a trade list.

"It (the trade list) gives someone who has, say, 20 Glenn Miller albums a chance to advertise and maybe trade them," McCaffrey said.

To keep these clubs, as well as the other specialized clubs, from becoming a well-kept secret, the Literary Market Place for 1976-1977 has a complete listing of their addresses. This book is located in the reference section of Pattee.

India to punish former officials

NEW DELHI, India (UPI) — India's new government vowed yesterday to punish former officials, perhaps including Indra Gandhi, who are found guilty of "repression and terror" during her 21-month emergency rule.

Singh did not mention names in his announcement to parliament but lawmakers understood from his comments that Mrs. Gandhi might be among those investigated.

"We have recently passed through one of the darkest periods of our

history," Singh said. "We will be failing in our duty if we do not take positive steps to insure that the events of the recent past are not repeated in future and to expose the abuse of power by a handful of people who had unleashed untold repression and

terror on the nation." He said this could be achieved only by punishing "all those who are guilty of excess, malpractices and misdeeds during the emergency, from the highest political authority down to the lowest functionary."

Congress stalled on works bill

WASHINGTON (UPI) — House-Senate negotiators failed yesterday to untangle the issues of jobs and water pollution, leaving President Carter's \$4 billion public works employment bill stuck in Congress until after Easter.

Both sides then headed home for the congressional recess, leaving their staffs to

continue work on the problem. The negotiators will try again when Congress returns April 18.

The public works jobs bill is a central part of the \$31 billion, two-year economic recovery package Carter sent Congress Jan. 31. Not a single piece of that package has received final congressional approval.

The two houses have approved differing versions of the jobs measure. Negotiators said they were fairly close to agreement on the subject of jobs.

But the Senate version includes \$9 billion to continue construction of sewage plants to clean up the nation's waterways. Sen. Edmund

Muskie, D-Maine, who sponsored that portion, said it is necessary to keep his and 33 other states from running out of sewage plant construction funds this summer.

The House has passed its own \$18 billion, three-year water pollution bill and placed it before the conference.

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(Answers to page 4 puzzle)

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... now accepting applications for members of the Board of Directors, COLLEGIAN, INC., publisher of THE DAILY COLLEGIAN.

The 11-member board is now seeking applications to fill upcoming vacancies. Positions that will be vacated at the end of Spring Term are one faculty member (three-year term); one undergraduate student (two-year term); one graduate student (one-year term); and one journalism professional (two-year term).

Student members must be enrolled as full-time students at the University. The faculty member must also be full-time. The journalism professional must have experience in a journalism-related field.

New board members will be selected according to the by-laws of Collegian, Inc. and nominations and applications will be presented to the board at its meeting April 18.

Applications should be directed to Martha Kolln, board president, 126 Carnegie, University Park. For additional information about board membership, contact Martha Kolln at 865-1988 or Linda Quigley, executive secretary, at 865-1828, *Daily Collegian*, 126 Carnegie. Deadline for applications is 4 p.m., Wednesday, April 13.

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