**CHRONOLOGY**

**1916/17**

Albert Boni conceives Modern Library while working in advertising agency owned by Alfred Wallerstein.

**1917**

Boni & Liveright is incorporated with Liveright as President and Boni as Treasurer (March).

B&L rents offices at 105 West 40th Street.

First twelve ML titles are published in May, followed by six more in July.

Boni’s uncle, Thomas Seltzer, buys one-third interest in the firm and joins B&L as Vice-President (July).

B&L publishes five non-ML books (fall).

**1918**

After months of quarreling, Liveright and Boni decide to dissolve their partnership and flip a coin to determine who will buy out whom. Boni wins the toss but is unable to raise the capital to buy out Liveright and resigns from the firm (July).

Seltzer leaves (November).

Julian Messner, B&L sales manager, invests funds in firm and is given title of Vice-President (1918?).

Leon Fleischman becomes Vice-President and equal partner with Liveright (1918/19?).

**1920**

Manuel Komroff joins B&L as head of production and editor of ML.

Fleischman offers to buy out Liveright, leaves firm.

**1921**

T. R. Smith joins B&L as Editor-in-Chief.

Arthur Pell joins B&L as head bookkeeper, subsequently becomes Treasurer.

**1923**

Bennett A. Cerf invests $100,000 in B&L, joins firm as Vice-President (November).

**1925**

Liveright agrees to sell ML to Cerf for $200,000 shortly before Cerf sails to Europe (May).

Klopfer raises $100,000 to invest in the ML with Cerf through the sale of his shares in United Diamond Works.

Cerf and Klopfer assume control of ML on August 1st. They acquire the ML name and good will, rights to all titles in the series, ML plates owned by B&L, and the ML stock on hand, which consists mostly of unbound books in sheets. The value of the plates and books is estimated at $75,000.

The new company is incorporated as Modern Library, Inc., with Cerf as President, Klopfer as Vice-President, and Cerf’s father Gustave Cerf as Secretary and Treasurer.

ML, Inc., opens for business in two-room office at 71 West 45th Street. Staff includes Emanuel Harper (finances), Helen Berlin (secretary), and a billing clerk.

**1926**

ML achieves sales of $225,000.

Cerf arranges, during trip to England, to become American distributor of Nonesuch Press.

**1927**

Random House incorporated as a subsidiary of The Modern Library, Inc., with Elmer Adler as a director along with Cerf and Klopfer (January).

ML achieves sales of $270,000.

ML achieves sales of nearly 500,000 books, an increase of more than 100,000 books compared to 1926.

**1928**

ML achieves sales of $307,000.

First RH book published (as opposed to distributed)—Voltaire’s *Candide*, illustrated by Rockwell Kent and designed and printed by Elmer Adler at his Pynson Printers.

Boni & Liveright changes name to Horace Liveright, Inc.

**1929**

Peace treaty with Alfred Knopf (January), secures reprint rights to several Knopf titles.

Cerf writes to J. M. Dent & Co. in December, offering to take over U.S. distribution of Everyman’s Library. The offer is rebuffed; Cerf alienates both Dent and E. P. Dutton, the American firm that has distributed Everyman’s Library in the U.S. since 1905.

RH publishes its first trade book, a five-dollar reprint of the limited edition of *Candide* with Kent’s illustrations (October).

**1930**

ML buys Sun Dial Library from Garden City Publishing Company for just under $25,000.

RH publishes two more trade books: *Moby Dick*, with illustrations by Rockwell Kent originally used in the three-volume limited edition published by Lakeside Press, and Merejkowski’s *Romance of Leonardo da Vinci*, translated by Bernard Guilbert Guerney.

Liveright forced to leave firm, departed for Hollywood (July).

**1931**

Modern Library Giants launched (September).

Carlton House imprint of mass-market reprints, using ML plates, appears in late 1931 in time for the Christmas season.

**1932**

Elmer Adler leaves, RH reorganized with Cerf and Klopfer as sole directors (May/June).

**1933**

Horace Liveright, Inc., changes name to Liveright, Inc.

Bankruptcy of Liveright, Inc. (May).

RH signs Liveright authors Eugene O’Neill and Robinson Jeffers and hires Liveright editor Saxe Commins (July).

Cerf writes letter inviting Theodore Dreiser to become a RH author but never mails letter.

*Ulysses* decision (December).

**1934**

RH publishes Joyce’s *Ulysses* (January).

RH publishes Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*, Gertrude Stein, W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, George S. Kaufman, Saroyan, *Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze.*

**1936**

RH acquires firm of Harrison Smith & Robert Haas and ready-made trade list of titles by Faulkner, Dinesen, Malraux, Graves, Edgar Snow, Louis Fischer, Maurice Hindus.

RH is reorganized with Cerf as President, Haas as Vice-President, Klopfer as Treasurer, and Smith as Secretary; with Cerf, Klopfer, and Haas as directors.

Lewis Miller joins RH (August) to develop reprint line under Carlton House imprint.

**1937**

Harrison Smith leaves RH on January 1st; Cerf, Klopfer, and Haas remain as equal partners.

**1938**

Lewis Miller becomes RH sales manager (January 1st).

Harry Maule joins RH editorial staff from Doubleday.

Important RH list includes authors Isak Dinesen, William Faulkner, Robert Graves, Elliot Paul, Edgar Snow, John Strachey and others.

ML Giant, Basic Writings of *Sigmund Freud* (April), best-selling Giant (p. 207).

**1939**

First ten Pocket Books published, launching the paperback revolution in the U.S. (June).

**1941**

RH sales pass the million-dollar mark for the first time.

**1942**

Klopfer joins U.S. Air Force as Captain (May) and is away from RH for the rest of the war. Cerf at 43 is too old for military service and remains in charge of RH.

Cerf takes over “Trade Winds” column, *Saturday Review of Literature* (February).

Cerf compiles first humor book, *The Pocket Book of War Humor*.

**1943**

Klopfer posted to England as intelligence officer for a heavy bomber squadron in the Eighth Air Force (October).

Robert Haas’s son, a lieutenant junior grade in the Navy, killed in action.

RH sales pass the two-million dollar mark.

Illustrated Modern Library launched with A. S. Barnes & Co. as publisher, RH as exclusive distributor (October).

Protests over dropping Stendhal, *The Charterhouse of Parma* from ML (November).

**1944**

Klopfer promoted to Major (Jan/Feb).

War Production Board prohibits distribution contracts such as RH’s with A. S. Barnes & Co. for publication of Illustrated Modern Library. Barnes becomes publisher of Illustrated ML in fact as well as name (March).

Cerf’s *Try and Stop Me* published by Simon and Schuster.

Robert Linscott joins RH editorial staff from Houghton Mifflin Co.

**1945**

Jess Stein hired RH to work on *American College Dictionary* with Clarence Barnhart.

RH publishes *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas* in Lifetime Library (2 vols.).

End of paper rationing, but paper remains in short supply.

Klopfer returns to RH from military service.

**1946**

Public outcry over exclusion of Ezra Pound from *An Anthology of Famous English and American Poetry*, edited by Stephen Vincent Benet and Conrad Aiken, ending in Cerf’s decision to restore the poems in the second printing (January–March).

RH moves from offices at 20 East 57th Street to Madison Avenue (May).

Viking Press publishes *The Portable Faulkner*, edited by Malcolm Cowley (April); ML publishes *The Sound and the Fury & As I Lay Dying*.

RH sales pass the three-million dollar mark.

**1947**

Albert Erskine and Frank Taylor join RH editorial staff from Reynal & Hitchcock.

**1948**

Harcourt, Brace & Co. terminates reprint contracts for all of its titles in the ML in order to include them in its own reprint series, Harbrace Modern Classics: Dorothy Canfield, *The Deepening Stream*; E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*; Sinclair Lewis, *Arrowsmith*, *Babbitt*, and *Dodsworth*; Katherine Anne Porter, *Flowering Judas*; Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, and Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* (May). However, *Eminent Victorians* remained in the ML until 1970.

Rinehart & Co. launches Rinehart Editions, a paperback series for the college market—leads to ML College Editions.

All titles in Modern Library and Modern Library Giants back in stock for first time since the war (September).

**1950**

RH establishes College and Reference Department headed by Jess Stein.

Modern Library College Editions launched under editorship of Jess Stein (April).

RH launches Landmark Books.

Illustrated Modern Library listed in RH catalogs for last time.

**1952**

Scribner’s gives six months’ notice of termination of reprint contracts for Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* and a year’s notice of termination of *Short Stories* (October).

**1953**

First Anchor Books—beginning of quality paperbacks.

Saxe Commins suffers severe heart attack (August).

**1954**

RH enters into negotiations with Allen Lane to purchase Penguin Books in the United States.

**1955**

RH launches quality paperback series, Modern Library Paperbacks (January).

**1956**

Haas retires from RH.

Negotiations with Allen Lane over purchase of Penguin Books resumes (July–November).

**1957**

Robert Bernstein joins RH from Simon and Schuster as Sales Manager.

**1958**

Saxe Commins dies of cerebral hemorrhage (July 18).

Jason Epstein joins RH from Doubleday (November).

**1959**

RH becomes a public corporation. Places 222,060 shares of stock on sale at $11.25 a share (30 percent of total stock) (October).

Jess Stein becomes Vice President of RH.

**1960**

RH acquires Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. (April)—Vintage Books, Knopf backlist available to ML.

Morris Philipson joins RH as an editor for the ML.

RH acquires Beginner Books, L. W. Singer Co. (1960/61).

**1961**

Modern Library Paperbacks imprint discontinued (Jan 1), folded into Vintage Books.

RH acquires Pantheon Books (May).

**1965**

ML begins converting plates from letterpress to offset; most titles completed by 1967.

**1966**

RH sold to RCA for forty million dollars.

Cerf steps down as President and is replaced by Robert Bernstein; remains Chairman of the Board.

Public relations firm Ruder & Finn proposes new design for ML.

**1967**

S. Neil Fujita’s new ML designs introduced.

Lewis Miller retires.

**1969**

RH moves to new building at 201 East 50th Street (April).

**1970**

Decision to stop adding new titles to Modern Library and to allow most Modern Library titles to go out of print.

Cerf steps down as Chairman of the Board to work on his autobiography; succeeded by Klopfer (31 December).

**1971**

Cerf dies (August).

**1975**

Bernstein succeeds Klopfer as Chairman of the Board.

**1977**

Thirty-two Modern Library titles reissued in newly designed jackets and bindings (May).

**1978**

RCA sells RH to Newhouse Publications.

**1992**

Relaunch of Modern Library (fall).