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Careers
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WOMEN
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RETAILING

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

W. Willard Wirtz, *Secretary*

WOMEN'S BUREAU, Mrs. Esther Peterson, *Director*

Careers for Women in Retailing

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

W. Willard Wirtz, Secretary

WOMEN'S BUREAU, Mrs. Esther Peterson, Director

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Foreword

Retailing, one of the country's largest and most vital industries, offers women ever-increasing opportunities for achievement. The variety of occupations to be found is almost limitless and nearly all are open to qualified women.

In 1958, an average of over 8 million persons, men and women, were on the payrolls of retail trade establishments. Retailing is the second largest industry group in this country and has shown a much greater growth in the past three decades than manufacturing. The changing importance of retailing is part of a long-term trend that has affected the "service" industries, as opposed to the "goods producing" industries in the economy. This is due largely to increased productivity and mechanization which have made possible the production of more goods per worker.

As this booklet is intended primarily for girls and women interested in entering the retailing industry, it covers some of the more pertinent occupations of the many hundreds to be found in this highly diversified field. We have concentrated our discussion on higher level positions in department and specialty stores for two reasons: (1) many occupations in their vast assortment have parallels in other parts of retailing, and (2) women are actively encouraged to seek advancement in this field where other women have gained acceptance and recognition in executive positions.

With continued employment expansion many women are likely to be attracted to the retailing industry where other women have already established themselves in career positions and where many notable women have paved the way to executive leadership for their successors.

ESTHER PETERSON
Director, Women's Bureau

Acknowledgments

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The photographs were made possible by the courtesy of the following:

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Lord & Taylor, New York, N.Y. (fig. 4).

Heather House, Georgetown, Washington, D.C. (fig. 7).

The Hecht Co., Washington, D.C. (fig. 8).

Hutzler's, Baltimore, Md. (fig. 9).

Contents

	Page
1. Women and the retailing industry.....	1
Women as customers.....	1
Outlook for the industry.....	4
Higher level positions for women.....	7
Earnings and working conditions.....	10
2. Careers for women in department and specialty stores.....	13
Merchandising.....	13
Personnel.....	22
Sales promotion.....	29
Financial control.....	33
Store operations.....	35
Top management.....	37
3. Women as owners of small stores.....	38
Essentials for success.....	39
Responsibilities of ownership.....	40
4. If you want a career in retailing.....	42
Personal qualities needed.....	42
Educational requirements.....	42
Entering retailing.....	45
Appendix:	
A—Number of establishments and paid employees in retail trade and its divisions, November 1954.....	49
B—Selected readings.....	50
C—American Collegiate Retailing Association Member Schools.....	52



FIGURE 1.—Women's fashions have changed since the Nineteenth Century and elevators are no longer hand powered, but women remain in the majority as customers. (Opening day at a large specialty store in 1873. Note seats on elevator.)

1

Women and the Retailing Industry

WOMEN AS CUSTOMERS

Department and specialty stores have catered to women customers assiduously ever since the middle and late 19th century. Many of them invariably think of their customers as women. Other retailers and the manufacturers who produce their wares constantly examine women's buying habits in an attempt to guess the reasons behind their selections.

An impressive amount of the country's retail purchasing is done by women. According to an estimate in *Fortune* magazine (August 1956) women account for some 60 percent of all personal consumption expenditures. Much of the purchasing done by women results from their own decisions; some from the decisions of others for whom they are acting as agents. On the other hand, some of the purchases made by men are influenced or directed by women.

Since women do much of the retail purchasing, it follows that the woman's point of view is an important force in successful retailing. Women as employees provide the woman's slant in selecting goods for resale to the woman customer, in making available the services that women expect, and in sales promotion that will appeal to women.

The Importance of Fashion

Leaders in the retailing field believe that as long as fashion is a vital factor in sales appeal, the place of women in the industry is assured. In the 20th century fashion has become, decade by decade, more important in the marketing of consumer goods.

Novelty itself has long been recognized as an important sales feature, but fashion, or the latest style, in line, color, design, and ornamentation has become crucial in the sale of many items. Mass production has taken fashion from the exclusive world of wealth and made it available to economy budgets.

Apparel and Accessories

Many of the opportunities for women in retailing can be attributed to the expansion of sales in women's ready-to-wear apparel and, later, of accessories, children's wear, and other goods usually purchased by women.

The entry of women into business and industry in increased numbers, beginning in World War I, opened up a new market for women's ready-to-wear clothing.

Manufacturers of medium- and low-priced dresses hired stylists to tell them what would be in fashion in the coming season and designers to adapt the styles to mass production. Now, designers create original designs for manufacturers of inexpensive clothes, and women can have the latest fashion in clothes priced to suit their pocketbooks.

Another improvement of the product—the size structure—has affected the clothing market. In recent decades a complex of standardized sizing systems has developed. There are misses' and junior sizes, women's half-sizes, teens, and subteens. Tall and petite girls have their own lines. The industry is attempting to supply its customers with clothes that fit without extensive alterations, and from time to time it brings out new size classes along with additions to existing ones.

Fashion also affected the market for accessories, including hats, shoes, gloves, scarves, hose, handbags, and so forth. Furthermore, a wide range of colors became popular in these items, making color coordination an essential aspect of a woman's wardrobe. Probably, an average of almost \$250 a year—a total of about \$15 billion—is spent by women on clothing, accessories, and jewelry.

Household Goods

Apparel and accessories have not been the only goods to feel the impact of styling. The increased emphasis on fashion in home furnishings is equally apparent.

A rising family income and higher standards of family and home comforts have combined with increased mechanization to bring homes, furniture, and home furnishings of modern design within the reach of many consumers. Obviously, the increased market was reflected in greater employment opportunities. Attention to design, color, and texture in the hundreds of related household conveniences has affected employment opportunities for women in particular.



FIGURE 2.—Home furnishings coordinator arranges fresh flowers in a model room she designed. Hers is a relatively new occupation in the fashion field.

OUTLOOK FOR THE INDUSTRY

Expansion—Population and the Branch Store

The Bureau of the Census has estimated that the population of this country will pass the 200 million mark before 1975—may even exceed 225 million. The number of young adults of the family-forming ages will be greatly increased and, if birth rates continue at present levels, there will be more children.

To the retailer, this means an ever-expanding army of potential customers. It probably indicates further expansion of the population into the suburbs, and retail establishments have historically followed population shifts.

Within recent years a movement to the suburbs has been in full swing and has resulted in the building of several hundred suburban stores in the department- and specialty-store fields alone.

Some retail authorities have warned against possible overbuilding of suburban stores, but others believe that greater care in the selection of sites and overall planning is indicated, rather than a halt in building. Neighborhood shopping centers have proved to be especially good locations for branch department stores, and the trend is toward larger suburban stores in the future. Authorities agree that the outlook is for more retail outlets, independently owned units as well as branches of established stores or chain operations.

Expansion and reorganization create new kinds of positions as well as openings in existing types of jobs. In recent years, new suburban stores have employed many part-time sales workers and established new supervisory posts, such as sales manager and branch coordinator.

Trends in Selling Methods

One of the relatively recent developments that may affect future employment in retailing is simplified selling. In stores of all sizes and kinds, selling has been simplified to some extent.

The stock may be so arranged that a customer can make a tentative selection, but requires the assistance of a salesclerk before reaching a final decision. In many stores, for example, a customer may, without assistance, locate a rack of dresses in her size, examine them, and choose several that interest her. Thereafter, a sales woman assigns her to a fitting room, helps her try on the dresses, and completes the sale.

An extensive display of samples may simplify selling. In a shoe department, for example, displays of sample shoes demonstrate available styles, but the customer must turn to the salesperson for information on range of colors, sizes, heel heights, and materials.

The most familiar form of simplified selling is "self-service," or exposed selling where an entire line of stock is arranged in open displays, enabling the customers to make their own selections with little or no assistance from salespeople.

Retailers have found that staples and inexpensive items are best suited for self-service methods. Many articles, especially style items and such items as home furnishings are not suitable for self-service. Salespersons will, therefore, continue to be needed for merchandise that needs to be explained, demonstrated, matched, or fitted.

Automation in the Industry

A large amount of paperwork is involved in the operation of large retailing establishments. Itemized orders go out from buyers, tickets and stickers are attached to incoming goods each day, mail and telephone orders from customers are processed, sales slips written, cus-



FIGURE 3.—Merchandise control supervisor gets a preview of figures as they come from an electronic computer.

tomers' accounts posted. Bills are sent out each month, and inventories kept. In addition, there are employee payrolls and personnel records.

Mechanical and electronic devices for handling paperwork automatically are in use in many stores, and more extensive and intensive use of them is likely in the future. Because of this, ability to operate office machines is becoming more important as a qualification for clerks. Supervisory and management methods are also changing to adapt to the new machinery.

In the opinion of many authorities automation may not bring a reduction in the number of persons employed in clerical operations. Offsetting the reduced amount of work necessary for maintenance of the present volume of records is the increasing emphasis on up-to-the-minute inventories, studies of past sales, profits by item, cost by item, stock turnover, and so forth. Office workers of the future may, therefore, prepare more reports for policy makers and spend less time processing routine transactions.

Employment Trends and Outlook

Eight million persons were employed by retail trade establishments in 1958, an increase of more than a million in the last 10 years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These annual averages do not include self-employed persons or unpaid family workers. In periods of general business recession, retailing employment tends to decline, but the long-range outlook for the industry indicates increased employment. Some increases may be expected even at the nonsupervisory level where the effects of simplified selling methods and automation are most likely to be felt. As employment of supervisors and executives is less likely to be affected by these factors, the indications are for a continuing need for competent people at all levels—executive, supervisory, and nonsupervisory.

Opportunities for Beginners

Many opportunities occur as a result of turnover and expansion. With over 1 million department and specialty store employees, two-thirds of whom are women, the number of persons resigning in any one year is well into the thousands.

Many of the opportunities created by turnover are, therefore, available to beginners with little or no work experience. Turnover is much lower among women over 35 years of age than among young women.

New positions are also created by expansion and/or reorganization. An example of this is the staffing of a new suburban branch store, for which hundreds of new employees may be hired, although supervisory positions may be filled from within the organization.

Both turnover and expansion provide openings for junior executives as well as beginning sales or clerical personnel.

HIGHER LEVEL POSITIONS FOR WOMEN

As a general rule, the larger the store, the greater are the opportunities for executive and supervisory jobs. In small stores or specialty shops, the owner and one or two employees may do all the work—planning, buying, receiving, pricing, advertising, window trimming, selling, wrapping, and maintaining accounts and inventory. On the other hand, in firms with hundreds of employees, a division of function—that is, job specialization—is necessary. Different functions may be assigned to separate divisions requiring executives and supervisors to direct the work. For example, separate divisions may be needed for such functions as personnel administration, credit, alterations, deliveries, and so forth.

Where the number of supervisory and executive positions is substantial, openings occur often enough to give promising employees opportunities for advancement. Many large retailing firms operate executive-development programs to train employees for higher positions. Even without formal training, a person may qualify for advancement through experience. In many cases, employees can improve their chances for promotion by gaining experience in more than one department.

Types of Establishments

In retail trade, women were close to one-third of the managers and officials in apparel and accessories stores, and well over one-fifth in general merchandise and 5- and 10-cent stores in 1950. Available information indicates that in department stores the proportion of women executives is higher than in most other establishments of the general merchandise group. It is probably safe to assume, therefore, that somewhere between one-fourth and one-third are women. Moreover, store buyers are definitely executives, and their inclusion with other managers and officials would raise still further the percentage

of women among department store executives. Inclusion of supervisors of less than executive rank brings the total to an estimated 40 percent.

Some salaried women managers and officials were employed in all types of retail establishments, and as buyers or department heads and floor managers in both retail and wholesale establishments, as the following decennial census figures for 1950 show:

	<i>Women salary workers</i>		
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent of total</i>	<i>Percent distribution</i>
Store buyers and department heads ¹ -----	33,120	25	---
Store floormen and floor managers ¹ -----	4,890	47	---
Managers, officials, and proprietors in retail trade-----	78,478	15	100
<hr/>			
Eating and drinking places-----	19,403	28	25
Apparel and accessories stores-----	13,519	32	17
General merchandise and 5- and 10-cent stores-----	13,248	22	17
Food and dairy-products stores-----	12,321	12	16
Furniture and home-furnishing stores-----	2,530	9	3
Motor vehicles and accessories retailing-----	1,912	3	2
Hardware, farm implement, and building material retailing -----	1,571	4	2
Gasoline service stations-----	623	2	1
Other retail trade-----	13,351	17	17

¹ Includes wholesale.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1950 Census of Population. PC-1 and PE-1B.

Nearly half of the salaried floormen and floor managers in stores were women, as were one-fourth of the salaried buyers and department heads. Since there are very few women buyers in wholesale trade, the percentage of women among retail buyers would doubtless be much greater.

In eating and drinking places, also, more than one-fourth of the salaried managers and officials were women. In this type of establishment, however, the occupations, preparation needed, and qualifications for advancement are so dissimilar to those of department and specialty stores that no attempt was made to cover them in this report.

In other types of retail establishments, as the summary shows, women constitute much smaller percentages of the managers and proprietors—ranging from 12 percent in food and dairy stores and 9 percent in furniture stores down to 2 percent in gasoline stations. For the individual woman with an aptitude for retailing, therefore, it is possible to advance to an executive position in whatever type of establishment her previous employment gives her experience. In small establishments, a knowledge of the business may be acquired through employment as salesperson, secretary, or bookkeeper.

Number of Executive and Supervisory Positions

Nearly 27,000 women, or about one-third of those listed as salaried managers and officials in retail trade in 1950 (see summary on p. 8) were in two types of establishments—apparel and accessories (specialty) stores and general merchandise and limited price stores (including department stores). With the addition of buyers and floor managers, most of whom can also be assumed to be in large stores such as department and specialty stores, the total would be well over 60,000.

A further examination of employment figures indicates that department and specialty stores offer not only the largest number of openings for women in salaried executive and supervisory positions but also the widest range of opportunities. According to the 1954 Census of Business, department stores (fewer than 2,800 in number), representing only 0.2 percent of all retail establishments, employed more than 10 percent of all retail-trade employees.

Department stores had an average of 266 employees—six times as many as mail-order houses, which had the next largest average (see appendix table). Some individual stores employ thousands of workers. Women's clothing or specialty stores were much more numerous but had an average of only 6 employees per store. Because of the more limited lines of merchandise carried, specialty stores range in size from a tiny shop operated by the owner alone to a huge store with the characteristics of a departmentalized store.

Representatives of the industry report that 10 to 12 percent of all employees in department stores are in executive and supervisory positions. Presumably large specialty stores have a comparable ratio because of their similarity to department stores.

Importance of Department and Specialty Stores

Because of the great importance of department stores as a field of employment for women planning for a career in retailing, several chapters of this report are devoted to a more extended discussion of the various kinds of positions in which women executives have made the most progress, notably in the merchandising and personnel divisions.

There are many outstanding examples of women in major executive jobs in department and specialty stores, but among the top executives women are less well represented than they are among other executives and supervisors. This may be largely due to the fact that many women junior executives and supervisors leave paid employment before they reach the top. Although it is still true that in some stores women

are not considered for policy-making offices, recent trends point to ever increasing opportunities for them in executive positions.

EARNINGS AND WORKING CONDITIONS

Earnings

Retailing offers ambitious women a bright future and high earnings in return for hard work and willingness to take responsibility. While earnings in beginning jobs in retailing are relatively low, the potential is great for persons with the special abilities required. Starting salaries of women college graduates averaged \$3,381 early in 1958 for assistant buyers and store trainees, and \$2,860 for sales-clerks and other retail workers. The average salary of the employed graduates in all industries was \$3,739.¹ Advancement to well-paid positions can be rapid in retail trade, however, especially for college graduates.

Few industries have as many executive jobs open to women. Not only can women achieve high-level posts, but those who do may receive incomes exceeding those of women with successful careers in many other fields. A figure of \$25,000 a year is not unusual.

The practice of giving year-end bonuses, prevalent in many stores, increases the yearly income of company officers, executives, and members of the merchandising division above the regular salaries or commissions paid. Bonuses are paid sometimes in shares of stock and sometimes in cash.

Hours of Work

The length of a person's workweek depends roughly upon the level of responsibility, according to a study by the National Retail Merchants Association. In department stores, a majority of sales and other nonsupervisory personnel have a 5-day, 40-hour workweek, including one evening when stores are open at night. If required to work overtime, they generally receive extra pay. Trainees and junior executives may have a scheduled workweek of 5, 5½, or 6 days with many in the 5-day category. Senior and major executives are more likely to work a 6-day week, probably devoting even more time to their jobs than they are scheduled to do. Their earnings are usually in terms of annual salary and/or commissions, having no direct relationship to the number of hours worked.

¹ First Jobs of College Women: Report on Women Graduates, Class of 1957. Women's Bureau Bull. 268. 1959. Table 17.

A fairly frequent comment made by women retailing executives who were interviewed by the Women's Bureau was that the amount of time that must be devoted to the job is excessive and limits the family and community activities in which they can engage. In this respect, the retailing industry is similar to many other industries in which top executives, "40 hour" and otherwise, characteristically give many extra hours.

Vacations

An annual vacation of at least 2 weeks with pay is provided by most stores. Industry sources indicate that executives commonly receive 3 or 4 weeks. Many large stores have graduated plans providing 2 to 4 weeks of vacation on the basis of rank or seniority. Since most executives have long years of service, they have the longer vacations under either system.

Other Benefits

Most stores provide paid sick leave for their regular employees. Interviews conducted by the Women's Bureau showed that the amount of leave often depends upon rank and length of service; for key executives, sick leave may be very liberal.

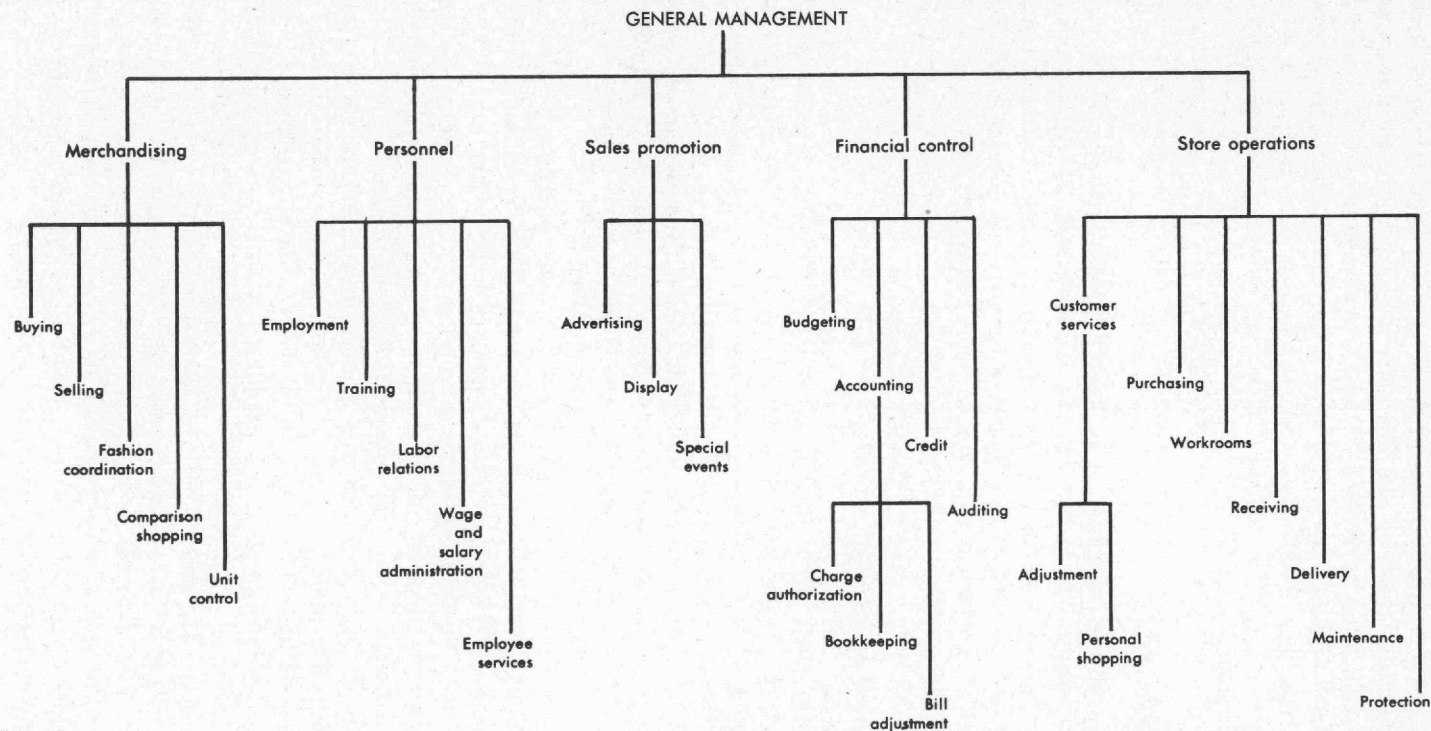
Many companies offer retirement benefits paid for entirely by the company. These pensions supplement social security benefits. For executives in particular such retirement income is likely to be much higher than the top social security payments.

Virtually all stores give discounts on purchases to employees. Amounts vary, but 10 percent is frequently allowed on all purchases, with 20 percent on clothing bought to wear on the job. This privilege may assume considerable importance in reducing the cost not only of wardrobes but of such items as household equipment and furnishings which may be available from the store.

Group life insurance and health insurance are often provided. Usually the store pays for a standard amount with additional coverage available if the employee wishes to pay the difference.

Profit-sharing plans are popular. A store sets aside a portion of its profits as a fund which is held in trust for the employees. Each employee is credited with a prorated amount of the year's sum, according to the employee's earnings. If the firm is a stock company, the credits may be in the form of shares of capital stock. Over a period of years the employee builds up equity toward retirement. An employee who leaves before reaching retirement age may receive a lump-sum payment equal to part of her equity.

CHART I.—A FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATION PATTERN OF A LARGE DEPARTMENT STORE



2

Careers for Women in Department and Specialty Stores

Just over 1 million persons were employed in department and specialty stores when the 1954 Census of Business was taken. It has been estimated that 60 to 65 percent of the employees of these stores are women. Moreover, the proportion of salaried executives and supervisors who are women is estimated to be about 40 percent.

In general, the larger the store, the more intricate its organizational structure. The number of units, their forms and names vary widely from store to store, but underlying any structure are five major functions basic to all stores: merchandising, personnel, sales promotion, financial control, and store operations. Many stores use a five-divisional organization that corresponds to these functions. A skeleton chart of this organization (see chart I) is included merely to show the variety of functions and services involved in department store retailing. The chart also suggests the array of talents utilized by the industry as well as the variety of positions which generally exist in the larger department stores.

MERCHANDISING

Of the higher level jobs in department and specialty stores, probably half or more are in merchandising. For women, in particular, this has been the most promising field for advancement; most of the high-level jobs occupied by women are in this area.

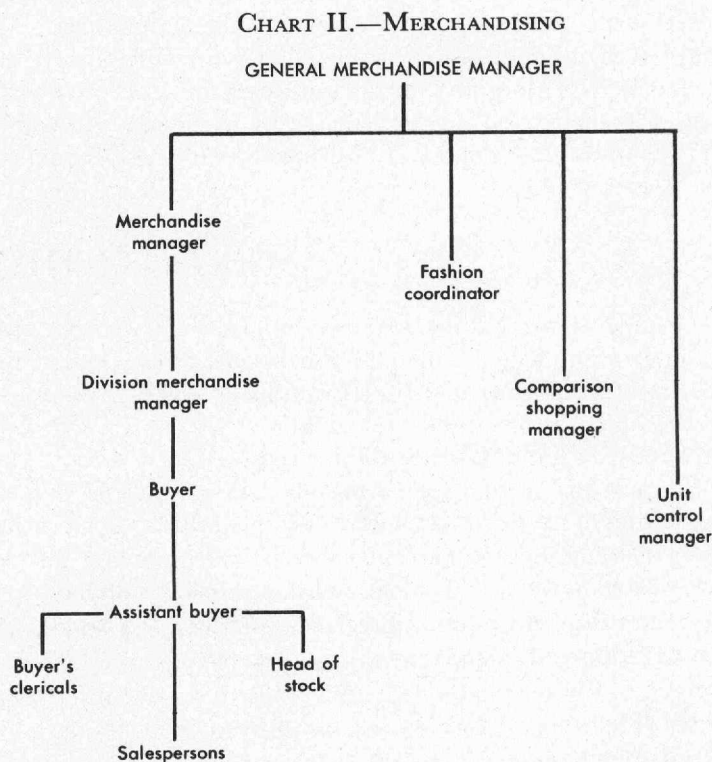
Merchandising activities are the heart of a retail store. They include the purchasing of goods from manufacturers and wholesalers and the selling of goods to customers. Merchandising is a fast moving business; it needs energetic executives who can think fast and operate without wasted motion. To be successful in it one should have enthusiasm for constant change, an appreciation of the merchandise offered, and a real liking and talent for dealing with people.

Inherent in the merchandising function are several different types of work. There are executive responsibilities such as planning the merchandising budget for each department and supervision of the

sales force; there are the necessary recordkeeping and control activities including maintenance of inventories; and there are such vital aspects of merchandising as buying, planning sales-promotion events and fashion coordination. (See chart II.) The rank and file in the merchandising division are the salesworkers, of whom perhaps two-thirds are women, and smaller groups of stockroom and clerical workers.

Merchandise Manager

The executive in charge of several departments is the merchandise manager. A small store may have only one merchandise manager; a larger store may have several divisional merchandise managers who work under the direction of a general manager; while the very large store may have many divisional merchandise managers, several group merchandise managers who coordinate their work, and one vice president in charge of merchandising who is responsible for the entire function.



The general merchandise manager, occupying one of the top posts in any store, is often a company official and may aspire to the presidency of the firm.

Merchandising managers may exercise control over the buying directly by making major decisions, or indirectly through the budget. In the latter case, the merchandise is selected by the various buyers.

The National Retail Merchants Association estimates that 28 percent of all merchandise managers in department stores earn over \$20,000 a year.

Although relatively few women become merchandise managers, the opportunities are there for capable women who continue their careers in retailing. Many women as a matter of choice leave the retailing business for marriage, even after they have become buyers, before they have acquired the years of experience necessary for senior executive positions. Despite this fact some retailers estimate that as many as 1 in every 10 merchandise managers is a woman.

Buyer or Department Head

The position of buyer is both responsible and rewarding. To many women it is the ultimate goal, while to others it is merely a stepping-stone to higher jobs. All other occupations in merchandising pivot around that of the buyer, providing either assistance or supervision. At present, about half of all buyers in department stores are women.

A buyer in a retail store is usually a department head or manager and is frequently called by that title. Her duties are multiple and complex—she may do all of the following: Given a budget for the season, determine what, when, and where to buy, select merchandise, agree with the manufacturer or wholesaler upon price, delivery, and other related details; set the prices of items to be sold; supervise sales staff, stockrooms, and recordkeeping; arrange for return of defective merchandise, and for markdowns of slow-moving items; supervise department display and advertising.

As a department head, the buyer has many of the responsibilities of a store owner plus additional obligations to her superiors in the merchandising division and various persons in other divisions with whom she cooperates.

Buyers usually spend less time seated at a desk than moving about on the selling floor, in stockrooms, and out of the store visiting suppliers. Characteristic of the buyer's job is the trip to "the market," occurring semiannually or oftener. For buyers of women's apparel, this consists of a whirlwind tour of showrooms to view the new

season's offerings. Some buyers are selected to make trips to foreign markets.

A buyer measures her success in dollars and cents of profit to her department. She is constantly competing against other departments and other stores for profits. A competent buyer can command a salary commensurate with her ability and generally has little trouble changing jobs if she wishes to do so.

Earnings of buyers range from under \$4,000 to over \$20,000 depending upon the size and type of department. Earnings tend to be lowest in small stores, highest in large stores in departments selling the more expensive merchandise such as housefurnishings, floor coverings, and major appliances. The National Retail Merchants Association estimates that 13 percent of all buyers earn over \$10,000 annually.

A number of different opportunities for advancement are open to buyers. They may be promoted to the position of merchandise manager. They may also improve their status and increase their earnings by transfer to a larger department—for example, from low-priced blouses to sportswear, where the salary and potential commissions or bonuses would be larger. Or a buyer might stay in the same line of goods, but move to a larger store where she would have greater volume of sales, and consequently a larger income. Many successful buyers have increased their earning power by handling more than one department or buying for more than one store (i.e., the main store and several branches).

A young person on her first buying job may find herself in a small department where she seems to have little scope or opportunity. But if she makes good on her first assignment she may find herself transferred to a more important department.

Separation of selling from buying function

Retail executives report that within recent years attempts have been made to separate the selling function from the buying function in order to reduce the pressure on buyers. One result has been the development of a new position in branch stores—that of *sales manager*. The sales manager assumes responsibility for supervising the sales and recordkeeping functions of a department thereby relieving the buyer of these duties. The buyer still carries major responsibility for the profits of the department and continues her buying activities, which involve traveling. The sales manager works under less pressure than the buyer.

Qualifications

The buyer's job requires some special qualifications in addition to those needed in general for success in retailing (see chapter 4). Buyers need a thorough knowledge of customers' likes and dislikes, of store system, and of sources or venders. They should be able to judge values and sales potential, quickly and accurately. They need a good memory for details in order to deal with a multitude of related facts pertaining to many articles of merchandise. They must also be able to organize the details into a composite mental picture of the entire situation.

Buyers should be free to travel, because they often visit distant markets as part of the job. In some cases they may find willingness to move from one city to another an asset for advancement.

Several years of store experience are usually required for a person to reach buyer status. This may range from 3 to 6 years for the average young woman. For executive trainees, the period required may be cut to 2 years or even less. Women under 25 years of age are rarely found with the rank of buyer.

A college education is helpful, but not essential, in becoming a buyer. Reportedly, a college graduate with merchandising ability has an easier climb up the ladder than a noncollege woman of equal ability.

A flair for fashion is important for buyers in fashion merchandising—that is, in clothing, accessories, home furnishings and related departments. A woman with appropriate aptitudes can usually acquire, through constant exposure to fashion merchandise, a workable knowledge of what the customers are likely to purchase. To keep abreast of constantly changing styles, the buyer needs imagination and the ability to grasp new ideas rapidly and evaluate them in terms of her customers' preferences.

Central Buyers and Resident Buyers

The department or specialty store buyer may at some point in her career shift to central buying for a chain operation or join a resident buying office.

A central buyer specializes in the "market end" of buying for a large chain of stores or a mail-order house. This involves locating sources, making selections of merchandise, ordering, and reordering. Selling and sales supporting activities are left to the local merchants and department managers. Centralized buying offices generally hire or develop buyers whose abilities have been proven and who are experienced in customer contact.

Resident buying offices, also known as buying syndicates and buying associations, are located mainly in New York City. Some are owned and operated by one store or a group of stores, while others are independently owned and offer their services to stores for a fee. In either case the buying office is staffed with resident buyers who aid buyers of client stores and in some ways supplement their activities. Resident buyers spend most of their time in the market. Before the store buyer arrives, the resident buyer has scouted the market and is on hand for consultation. After the store buyer returns home the resident buyer continues to assist her by placing orders and reorders, by preparing informational bulletins, and when given authority by the store buyer by selecting additional merchandise to be shipped to the store.

Assistant Buyer

The assistant buyer's job is the most important stepping stone to the position of buyer. A typical progression might be: salesgirl, head of stock, assistant buyer in small department, assistant buyer in major department, buyer in small department, buyer for large or several small departments.

The assistant buyer is generally responsible for the more routine aspects of the buyer's work, including day-to-day supervision of department personnel, and maintenance of sales and inventory records. The assistant buyer may have the opportunity to accompany the buyer on visits to suppliers, and may search for new sources of merchandise. She may be in charge of the department in the absence of the buyer.

Earnings of assistant buyers vary with the size and profitability of the department. Assistant buyers often work on a straight salary which may range from \$3,000 to \$6,000 or more per year. Sometimes a small commission or bonus is added.

College graduates may be hired as buyer trainees, but a year or so of training which includes sales experience is the usual route. Some college women obtain sales experience through summer jobs or part-time work while still in college and are ready for assistant buyer positions upon graduation. High school graduates are considered for supervisory jobs when they have demonstrated maturity of judgment and a serious interest in retailing careers.

Head of Stock

The head of stock is responsible for maintaining assortments and displays on counters, supervising stockroom workers, and reporting merchandise needed. The head of stock usually earns less than the first assistant buyer but more than the salespersons in her department.

This job represents the first rung on the supervisory ladder in merchandising. It can be filled either by a qualified sales person or by a management trainee.



FIGURE 4.—Head of stock lists items for reorder.

Fashion Coordinator

The job of fashion coordinator or stylist is probably the most glamorous job in retailing. As the title implies, one of its major functions is to make certain that all the fashion departments are kept current with the latest fashion trends.

The fashion coordinator is almost invariably a woman. She advises buyers and merchandise managers on style trends, assists in advertising, and stages fashion shows (chooses clothes, trains models, and arranges publicity). Her very busy job pays well, often over \$10,000 a year.

She may previously have been a buyer or assistant buyer in a fashion department, an advertising assistant, a graduate of a fashion school, or a manufacturer's representative. She may have begun as assistant or secretary to a fashion coordinator. Considerable knowledge of fashion merchandising was necessary for her to have reached this supervisory position.

She needs imagination combined with a capacity for detail and a feeling for color, design, and function. She combines sensitivity to customer reactions with a highly developed critical faculty. Finally, she should be an impeccable example of the well-dressed woman.

The recent emphasis on fashion in the home has introduced the new position of *home furnishings coordinator*. She advises buyers of furniture, rugs, draperies, china, and glassware, may decorate model rooms and assemble home furnishings for window displays.

Comparison Shopping Manager

It is common practice for the larger stores to maintain a department devoted to the investigation of offerings of competitors. The chief of this department, the comparison shopping manager, is almost always a woman. The comparison shopping manager is head of the staff of shoppers. Very often she is a former shopper, but she may also have been an assistant buyer, or buyer.

Shoppers regularly examine the merchandise sold by competitors, taking into account price, quality, and breadth and depth of stock assortment. Items may be purchased for closer examination at the home store. Customer services rendered by competitors are also tested from time to time.

Formerly, a shopper's usefulness was ended when she became known to the competitors, but the practice of comparison shopping is now so commonly accepted that the shopper has a permanent job and becomes increasingly valuable with experience.

The comparison shopping manager needs tact in dealing with people, a good memory, and the ability to write clear and detailed reports. The position is an excellent stepping stone to higher executive posts, since the comparison shopping manager deals with merchandise and people from all parts of the store.

Other Merchandising Positions in Large Stores

Stores large enough for specialized assignments of responsibility may have other executives reporting to the general merchandise manager. Some of these are as follows:

Aisle counter manager

The aisle counter manager has charge of the small, often movable, counters in main aisles in stores where they are managed as a separate department. Much of the merchandise on these counters is taken from other departments for special sales or simply because of its appropriateness (such as a display of umbrellas on a rainy day). This position often goes to a young person with supervisory potential, but in some stores is important enough to require an experienced person.

Unit control department manager

The position of unit control department manager is found in large stores which keep extensive records of merchandise on hand. These records aid buyers and managers in selecting stock for markdowns, in recognizing when to reorder "good sellers," and in judging new merchandise offerings in terms of past sales trends. When centralized, this recordkeeping requires the services of an entire department.

Entrance Jobs as Stepping Stones

Since merchandising consists of buying, selling, and related functions, sales experience is essential for would-be executives in this work.

A high school graduate can expect to start her merchandising career in stock or as a sales clerk. Some stores, however, reserve sales openings for more mature applicants. Secretarial jobs are also possible starting points. In many of the entrance jobs, the new employees have a chance to study customer reactions and preferences, and thus gain an insight into local customers' buying behavior. A thorough understanding of buying behavior is a prime factor in successful merchandising.

College graduates may enter as junior executive trainees, but serve a similar, if shorter, apprenticeship in sales and stock work. By virtue of additional training, schooling, and age, the college educated person may move ahead faster. The ultimate degree of success depends greatly on ability.

PERSONNEL

Women are liberally represented in the personnel work of department and specialty stores. Frequently the personnel director is the top ranking woman executive in the store. Some become vice presidents and serve on the store's executive committee or board.

Since personnel work encompasses hiring, training, employee welfare, and labor relations, it is a field which has attracted many women. Chart III illustrates one example of an organization structure for the personnel function of a large store.

Personnel is increasingly being organized into a separate division although in some stores it is attached to store operations. In number of persons employed, it is relatively small.

Personnel Director

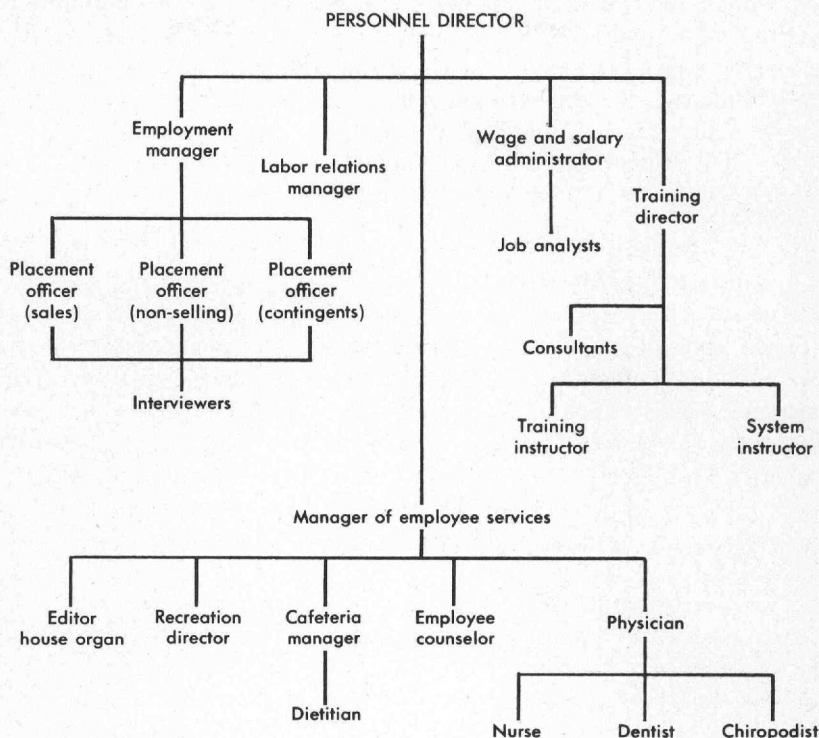
Responsible for the whole personnel operation is the personnel director. If the store is a large one, the director is chiefly an administrator, a policy-maker, and coordinator of all the various activities outlined in chart III.

Personnel directors or managers in smaller stores may be limited primarily to the employing and training functions. In some cases the personnel director is in reality an employment manager with each of the other divisions of the store doing its own training.

Salaries vary with the size of store and degree of responsibility. They may range from \$3,000 to over \$25,000, with the higher salaries usually reserved for company officers. The National Retail Merchants Association estimates that one-third of all personnel directors earn over \$10,000 a year.

Promotion to director is often made from the personnel staff, although the newness of the field has brought persons with general retailing experience into the position. Increasingly, however, personnel officers are likely to be college graduates with specialized personnel training and experience.

CHART III.—PERSONNEL



Employment Manager

Stores employing a few hundred to several thousand people almost always have some vacancies in full-time permanent jobs. In addition, the fluctuating and seasonal nature of retail trade lends itself to the use of many part-time and part-year workers. Most stores of medium size or more have at least one person, the employment manager, who is responsible for obtaining the necessary workers.

Duties include recruiting new workers, interviewing, testing, selecting and placing them on suitable jobs.

Many employment managers are specialists in personnel work, having studied personnel management or related subjects such as industrial psychology or sociology. Others are retailing employees transferred from other divisions because of their knowledge of job requirements and interest in personnel work.

If the personnel worker is new to the industry, she may gain the necessary experience in various phases of retailing in a training period of 6 months to a year.

A woman interested in this type of work should have some understanding of human behavior, an outgoing personality, and a friendly but business-like manner. She should be able to prepare newspaper advertisements, recruitment pamphlets for distribution to schools and colleges, and informational material for new employees.

Earnings, depending upon the degree of responsibility and size of the division, range from \$3,000 to \$7,500 or more.

Placement Officer

The volume of recruitment and placement may be too great for the employment manager to handle, and if so junior executives called placement officers may be employed. In chart III, three placement officers are indicated, each one specializing in a different group of workers. One hires and counsels permanent sales employees; another, nonselling personnel such as office, stockroom, and delivery employees. The third engages "contingents"—the part-time or part-year workers.

Since placement officers are junior employment managers and in the line of promotion to employment manager, the requirements for these jobs are similar.

Interviewers

The entrance job for professionally trained persons in the employment section of the personnel division is that of interviewer. This person questions applicants, administers tests, checks references, and refers qualified recruits to the placement officer or employment manager for final decision on hiring.

College graduates are preferred for the interviewing position by stores that consider it a stepping-stone to executive rank. Beginners may start at \$40 to \$65 a week.

Training Director

Most large stores have a section devoted exclusively to the many types of training that are carried on continuously. The director is responsible for organizing and supervising the various programs. The position is usually held by a woman. She must be thoroughly

familiar with all phases of the store's operations in order to supervise instruction in the following areas:

- (a) Salesmanship and store systems training for new sales employees.
- (b) Technical training for nonselling employees.
- (c) Brush-up training for employees already at work, for the purpose of improving efficiency and introducing new procedures.



FIGURE 5.—Young interviewer puts applicant at ease during discussion of job possibilities.

- (d) Remedial training for employees who have unsatisfactory ratings.
- (e) Training in supervision for new or future supervisors.
- (f) Junior executives development programs for newly recruited college graduates and other promising employees.
- (g) Merchandise information training.

Because of the nature of the work, many training directors are college graduates with majors in the humanities, personnel, or possibly education. Some directors, however, have risen from the ranks with only general retailing experience.

Whatever her formal education may be, the woman who becomes a training director must be first of all a good teacher. A pleasing manner, leadership qualities, the ability to speak well—all are important assets.

Depending upon the size of the training division and the importance of the director's position, she may earn from \$3,000 to \$7,500 or more a year. In major department stores, earnings may exceed \$10,000.

Training Assistants

In smaller stores the training director may personally do all the teaching, or she may have one assistant handle part of it. Large stores divide the classroom work among a staff of assistants.

Of the assistants, the *training instructors* or supervisors are responsible for general and technical training. They organize the various training groups, prepare schedules, and do a major part of the instruction. Since the job may lead to that of training director, the general qualifications are much the same.

One assistant—the *system instructor*—specializes in teaching employees store procedures. She may also devote part of her time to developing and improving the “system.”

A *fabric consultant* and a *stylist* may instruct on textiles and fashion, respectively. They may be permanently assigned to the training division or borrowed on a part-time basis from the merchandising division.

An *editorial assistant* may be needed to prepare manuals for the training courses.

Manager of Employee Services

Employee welfare, health, and morale are the responsibility of one or several sections within the personnel division. The manager coordinates a variety of diverse functions in the process of carrying

out store policies. Primarily an administrator, the person occupying this position may have risen from the ranks of general retailing, or may be a specialist in personnel management and employee relations.

The areas of responsibility assigned to the manager of employee services vary from store to store. They may include any of those shown on chart III, and possibly others, depending on the variety of employee services provided by the store. Typically, the manager has either direct or supervisory responsibility for editing the house organ, for maintaining library facilities, and for the recreational program. The safety engineer and the medical staff may be responsible to the manager of employee services.

Editor, house organ

The house organ, or employee publication, is a regularly published newspaper or newsletter circulated to store employees. It provides a channel of communication between management and workers by interpreting company policies, giving recognition to employee achievements and activities, and in some cases by offering trade information of educational value. It contains news items and announcements of scheduled meetings, training courses, and recreational events. It may also contain columns of safety hints, personal items, jokes, or "pep talk."

College training, preferably in journalism, is generally necessary for this editorial job, particularly since it is usually held by a member of the advertising staff who devotes only part of her time to it.

To the young woman interested in advertising, it offers an opportunity to become more familiar with retailing as practiced by her store.

Recreation director

The function of the recreation director is to organize dances, entertainments, lunch-hour recreation, camping trips, bowling teams, softball teams, and other forms of recreation in which employees may be interested. Classes may also be organized, if desired, to study cultural subjects or handicrafts.

Young women interested in this position will find experience in club work, camp counseling, or group social work helpful.

Employee counselor

Some larger stores provide a counselor to whom employees can bring their personal, financial, or other problems. A mature, understanding, and resourceful person is needed for the position. She

should have a thorough knowledge of the types and extent of assistance available from the store.

Cafeteria manager and assistants

A separate cafeteria, with an experienced cafeteria manager in charge, is often maintained for employees. Well-balanced, nourishing food is provided to them at cost.

Numerous other supervisory and specialized positions such as dietitian, chef, pantry manager, and cost supervisor may exist in connection with the cafeteria. These occupations are closely allied to the restaurant business.

Stores providing restaurants, cafeterias, and snack bars for customers usually have a restaurant manager in charge of all restaurant services. This official is often responsible to the controller or store superintendent. The employees' cafeteria may be connected with the restaurant for customers.

Most of the positions in these food services are, of course, open to qualified women, but they are generally filled by persons from the restaurant business rather than from other divisions of the store.

Medical occupations

Health units are maintained in most large stores to provide first aid to employees and to offer preventive health services. They employ medical personnel whose job titles are self-explanatory. Medical or nursing degrees or other appropriate certificates are necessary. Some of these may be employed on a part-time basis, but the nurses are usually full-time workers and have the greatest opportunity for contact with the employees.

Labor Relations Manager

A labor-relations manager is responsible for negotiating contracts, dealing with grievances, and improving labor-management relations in general. This position is usually found in stores where employees are organized in unions. It requires considerable background in labor relations work and sometimes legal training.

Wage and Salary Administrator

Charged with the responsibility of maintaining a fair and equitable wage structure of a large store is the wage and salary administrator.

The function of the administrator and the staff of *job analysts* is to set up and maintain a structure of interrelated and carefully defined positions, and to establish an equitable system of remuneration for these jobs.

The members of this division are often specialists in personnel work. College graduates with business administration are preferred, although an employee with a high school education might be promoted from a clerical job and trained for this work.

SALES PROMOTION

Retail sales promotion offers women some of their best career opportunities in the field of advertising. Even in stores where sales promotion is a relatively small division, earnings are among the highest. Its purpose is to increase sales by conveying information to the buying public and by attracting customers. Promotion can range from effective display techniques in a small store to the use of mass media such as newspapers, radio, and television by larger stores. Sales promotion represents the joint efforts of commercial artists, copywriters, and perhaps window trimmers and sign painters.

Sales Promotion Manager

The manager of the division, who is sometimes referred to as publicity director, carries the top responsibility for arousing the buying public's interest in the store's merchandise. This is an executive position attained only after years of experience in advertising and public relations. Under the manager are all those activities of the store which are involved in sales promotion. In directing these activities, the manager must always be on the alert for fresh, new ideas. Any such ideas, however, must be considered in relation to the store's overall policies; for example, many stores seldom depart from certain traditional advertising procedures to which the buying public has become accustomed. Finally, the manager must have tact and mature judgment in directing the various activities and personnel in the division.

Salaries in these positions range from \$7,500 to more than \$25,000 annually. Those at the upper range of the salary scale are usually company officers.

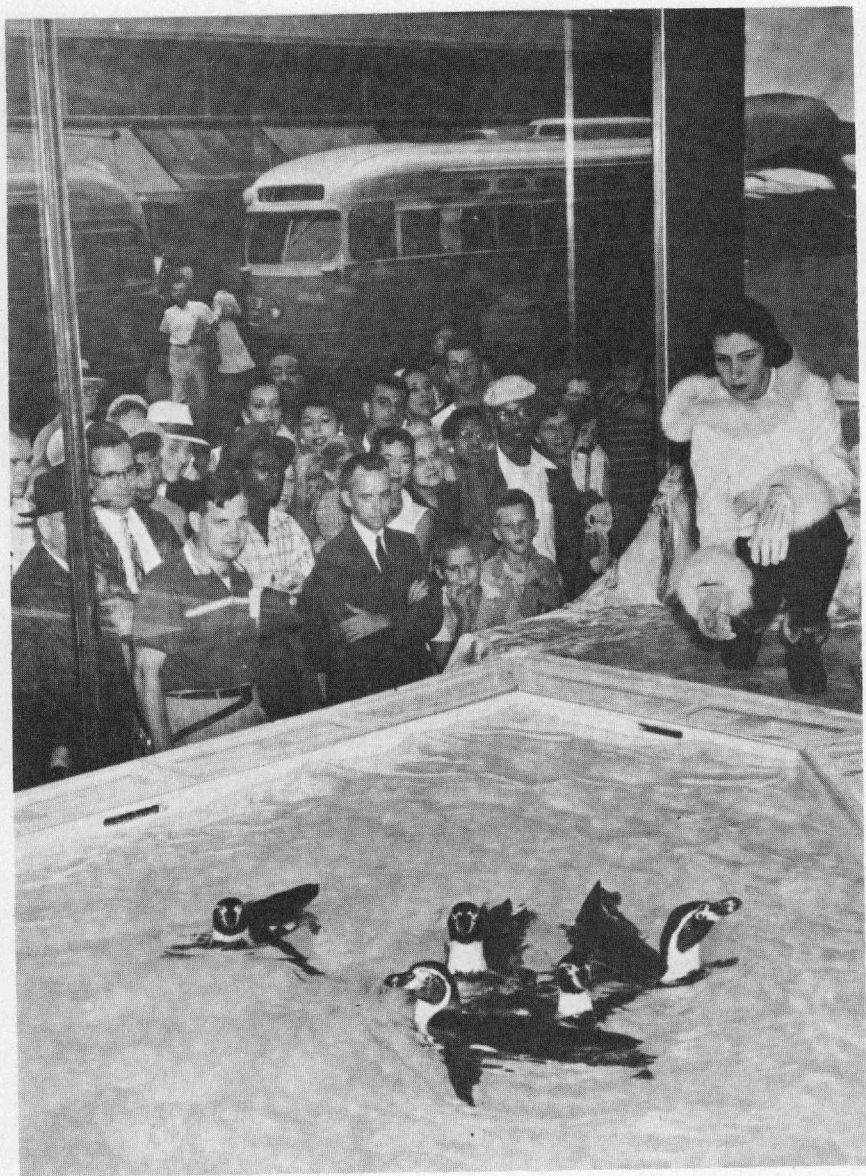


FIGURE 6.—Some sales promotion events are designed to attract attention to the store as a whole rather than to specific items. Here an ingenious window display attracts a sidewalk crowd. (Penguins were not for sale.)

Advertising Manager

With a staff of artists, copywriters, and production people, the advertising manager is responsible for the store's advertisements. They may appear in newspapers, handbills or as inserts with monthly statements. The advertising manager is responsible for the media used, for the content of the ads, and for the expenses incurred.

This is also an executive position, usually requiring years of experience in advertising work. Successful advertising depends upon skill in communicating ideas as well as skill in techniques. As a potential candidate for the position of sales promotion manager, the advertising manager is also familiar with store policy and its bearing upon the store's publicity program. Members of the advertising staff depend on their manager for direction as to approach, and overall impression which the advertisement is to make on the general public.

The advertising manager directs the work of staff members, some of whom are highly trained and specialized employees. The scope of responsibility involved is suggested by the descriptions given below of some of their duties.

Artists

The illustrations that appear in the store's advertisements are prepared in final form by the art staff. The finished product requires the skill of a commercial artist, a skill acquired either in an art school or during an apprenticeship lasting several years.

Advertising art may show the customer exactly what is offered by presenting detailed and accurate drawings of the merchandise. When illustrating apparel and other fashion goods, however, some stores use an impressionistic approach. In this latter type of advertising the commercial artist has a real opportunity to express imagination and to be creative.

The artists may be supervised by an *art director*, who is an administrator as well as an artist.

Copywriters

Writing advertising copy is another of the many specialized assignments within the advertising department. The "copy," is the written portion and explains the product being advertised. It may involve merely the briefest description of an item of merchandise, or extend into narrative regarding a special sale or other event.

Copywriting is a highly compact and condensed form of writing which is always limited by space considerations and which must, therefore, make every word count.

Layout Artists

The work done by the artists and copywriters is coordinated by the layout artists, who combine the illustrations and written material into a finished advertisement, under the supervision of the art director.

The layout artist deals with the problems of position of illustrations and copy, the sizes of headlines and other such factors which determine whether the advertisement is integrated, eye-catching, and meaningful. Making good layouts calls for technical skill and originality.

Special Events Coordinator

When a sales promotion feature is store-wide, such as an exhibition or a contest, it is the responsibility of the special events coordinator. This executive position requires a considerable amount of skill in developing good public relations as well as competence in the sales promotion field. To insure the success of such an all-out sales promotion effort the special events coordinator works with the various sections of the sales promotion division and the other divisions of the store. For example, if arrangements are made for an important author to visit a store and autograph his books, the coordinator arranges for extra salespersons, for adequate stocks of the author's books, for window displays, special advertising, newspaper and television announcements, and for the necessary space.

Display Director

As with other higher level jobs in the sales-promotion side of retailing, a display director should have, in addition to an artistic imagination, the technical knowledge to put it to work. To the passer-by, the window of a store actually represents the store. Floor and counter displays are also important in catching the attention of the customer who has entered the store. The *stylists*, *decorators*, and *sign painters* are sometimes recruited among graduates of fine arts schools. Vocational schools as well as art schools offer the necessary training in such things as color, lighting, design, and window trimming. Regardless of training, a period of apprenticeship is usually required, and both training and knowledge may be obtained on the job.

FINANCIAL CONTROL

In department and specialty stores, financial control involves a large volume of bookkeeping and related work.

This function is the responsibility of a controller, under whom there may be managers of several sections, usually including accounts receivable, accounts payable, and credit.

Women have long been employed in this field as clerks and clerical supervisors. A few have risen to executive rank. Many of the women assigned to routine operations have not had sufficient education for the higher level positions in financial management.

Some women, however, have achieved top positions in this field and there is every reason to assume that other qualified women will find more promotional opportunities in the future.

Controller

This major executive is responsible to management and to the stockholders for the company's financial welfare. If the controller is also the treasurer, he is responsible to the corporation. If the staff is large, the duties are chiefly administrative; if small, they may be of a more technical nature. The position is often filled by promotion.

One function retained in the controller's own office is the preparation and administration of the store's budget. The controller may have a staff of assistants who aid in the detail work.

Requirements for the position include a high degree of administrative ability, a thorough knowledge of accounting and business law, and an analytical mind.

The National Retail Merchants Association estimates that over 70 percent of senior control executives earn more than \$10,000 a year. Earnings are highest for control executives who are also company officers.

Accounts Receivable Manager

Most department and specialty stores permit their customers to charge purchases. As a result, several sections may be required to handle customer charge accounts.

The first, presided over by the accounts receivable manager, is concerned with the bookkeeping work connected with the regular credit accounts.

The accounts receivable manager has overall responsibility for several functions. For example, there are sections headed by a charge authorization manager, a bookkeeping manager, a bill-adjustment manager, and a credit manager.

In large stores the position is primarily an administrative one, but it requires a thorough knowledge of accounting. At the present time, a degree in accounting is not necessary, but increased emphasis on formal education in all lines of business may tend to make this a requirement in future decades.

Charge authorization manager

Purchases exceeding a specified dollar value cannot be charged and taken from the store without authorization. The salesperson obtains the authorization by telephone while the customer waits for her package.

The charge authorization manager may supervise a staff of *authorizers* who swiftly look up the customer's account, assess her credit standing, and either accept or refuse to permit the charge. The manager is responsible for the efficiency of the staff and the maintenance of complete and convenient records. Questionable authorizations are generally handled by the manager.

Since most authorizers are women, the manager is likely to be a woman who gained her experience as an authorizer. A woman who is quick and accurate with figures and files can learn the work on the job.

Bookkeeping manager

As the title implies, this person is responsible for the recordkeeping end of the accounts, including the posting of charges and payments, and the preparation of monthly bills.

The work is often divided into several sections, each one handling a different type of account. The usual 30-day accounts and long-term installment accounts have recently been supplemented by "revolving" credit plans.

The bookkeeping manager must be an experienced bookkeeper, usually familiar with charge account work. Promotions are commonly from within the section.

Bill adjustment manager

A section is often needed to handle complaints from customers concerning their accounts. The manager and staff of *interviewers* primarily need tact and facility in dealing with people.

Credit Manager

Another phase of the charge account work is the opening of new accounts, and the offering of various types of credit accounts, such as regular or junior charge accounts, time payment accounts or revolving credit. Some stores may have the investigation of new accounts done on a contract basis, but other stores customarily have a section devoted to this work.

Judgment, tact, and integrity in dealing with people are necessary in this field, since the work of the manager, the investigators and interviewers involves the delicate process of inquiring into the financial status and credit standing of prospective customers.

Beginning jobs may be as interviewers or correspondents. The latter check credit references by mail.

Other Occupations in Control

Bookkeeping or accounting skills are required in several other supervisory positions in the control division. Among them are the managerial posts in "Accounts Payable" where the store's own bills are verified and paid; "Cashiering," where cash sales are tallied; "Auditing," where constant auditing of divisional and departmental operations are carried on. Auditing offers a wide range of activities to a beginning bookkeeper or clerk.

STORE OPERATIONS

Store operations include the housekeeping functions, various services to the customer, and physical movement of merchandise. The major functions are: "Receiving and Marking," where incoming merchandise is unpacked and ticketed; "Delivery and Warehousing," where goods are stored and delivered to customers; "Inside Delivery," which has charge of wrapping and packing of "take" merchandise; "Purchasing," where supplies are ordered; "Customer Services," including information personnel and floor managers; "Personal Shopping," which aids customers with their purchases; "Adjustment Bureau," which handles returned goods and complaints; "Cafeteria"; various "Workrooms" such as repair shops and alterations, "Building Maintenance"; and "Protection."

While occupations in the store operations division are often described as "unsuited to women executives," qualified women have, nevertheless, held high executive posts in this field.

The following positions are some in which women have excelled.

Manager of Customer Services

Customer services include only a portion of the many services a large store gives its patrons. In this case, the services are the small, on-the-spot kind that take place on the selling floor.

A woman needs tact and organizing ability to reach the manager-ship. Her duties include: assigning sales personnel; authorizing merchandise returns, exchanges and refunds; investigating complaints; and assisting customers with their shopping.

The responsibilities may be divided among several junior executives, each handling one phase of the work.

A *manager of selling service* supervises *floor superintendents*, one to each selling floor; and *section managers*, several to a floor.

An *adjustment bureau manager* supervises a squad of *adjusters* and *tracers* who in turn attend to complaints and merchandise returns.

Many stores also maintain a personal shopping service to do the customer's shopping. The position of *personal shopping manager* demands a thorough knowledge of merchandise and customer preferences.

Purchasing Agent

Another important function is that of purchasing the supplies used in day-to-day operations. Equipment and supplies and the stock-rooms containing them are kept under the watchful eye of a purchasing agent. Printing and mail may also be handled in this section.

Other Positions Open to Women

Some of the workrooms, notably women's alterations, millinery workrooms, garment workrooms, etc., offer supervisory employment to women. Without exception, specialized training in a trade is necessary.

TOP MANAGEMENT

Little has been said of the top management positions in department and specialty stores. Large stores, of course, have a number of top policy-making executives such as president, treasurer, secretary, and several vice presidents. In general, these are salaried positions.

Very few women have reached top jobs in major stores, but enough have done so to prove that such things can happen. At present women hold the presidencies of at least five major stores.¹ Numerous women hold posts as vice president of their firms, and their success will undoubtedly help to remove prejudices against women in top management.

Very few of the women who enter retailing each year will ever become president of a big store, but it is not an impossibility for a highly ambitious woman with exceptional ability.

¹ While this bulletin was in press, Dorothy Shaver, president of Lord & Taylor, New York City, died after 35 years in retailing.

3

Women as Owners of Small Stores

Besides the career opportunities in salaried positions open to women in retail trade, many women operate small stores or restaurants of their own. This section of the report, therefore, is concerned with the number of women proprietors in retail trade and some of the factors contributing to success in such ventures.

Retail trade is the favorite field of women who enter business for themselves. In April 1959 there were 335,000 self-employed women in retail trade, according to census estimates. This was almost twice as many as the total number of women proprietors in all other industries (192,000).

The number of women proprietors in retail trade has increased greatly since 1950, when the decennial census reported fewer than 242,000 women self-employed in retail trade.

The following summary shows the number of self-employed women in various types of retail establishments at the time of the last decennial census with the percentage of all retail proprietors who were women :

	<i>Self-employed women 1950</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent of total</i>
Managers, officials, and proprietors in retail trade.....	241, 661	17
Eating and drinking places.....	75, 831	26
Food and dairy-products stores.....	71, 078	18
Apparel and accessories stores.....	25, 878	31
General merchandise and 5- and 10-cent stores.....	14, 029	22
Furniture and home furnishings stores.....	5, 686	8
Gasoline service stations.....	5, 416	4
Hardware, farm implement, and building material retailing..	4, 182	5
Motor vehicles and accessories retailing.....	1, 531	3
Other retail trade.....	38, 030	17

ESSENTIALS FOR SUCCESS

First of all, a thorough knowledge of the retailing business is a great asset to women contemplating the establishment of their own businesses. The owner of a small shop should be a competent salesperson as well as a good business manager and buyer. An "inside" knowledge of sources—such as manufacturers and wholesalers—is vital.



FIGURE 7.—Small store owner must be a salesperson as well as a manager. This gift shop proprietor helps customer make a suitable gift selection.

At the start, the owners of small stores or shops usually have to handle personally all the important aspects of the business—the selection and buying of merchandise, pricing the goods to be sold, the amount of inventory to be carried, the granting of customer credit and collection of bills, and the hiring and training of employees. When the business grows larger, the owner generally delegates some of these duties to others.

A prospective owner should be prepared financially for a “lean” period at the outset while building a reputation and steady clientele until the business shows a steady profit. This may be a period of 6 months to 2 years or more. The financial demands upon the owner include: rent or mortgage payments on the property; stock; utilities; advertising costs; payroll; taxes—income, social security and (in some States) sales taxes; and insurance—fire, theft, and liability.

In the 11 years ending with 1954, the U.S. Department of Commerce found that 9 million businesses were newly established or purchased, and 7.8 million were “disposed of” by reorganization, transfer, or liquidation. Retail trade establishments had the lowest survival rate of any type of business. However, when the owner was able to get through the first 2 years, the chances were good that his business would survive.

Care in selecting a good location for the business is a basic requirement. It is also essential that a woman proprietor develop an adequate system of cost accounting, in order to know which aspects of the enterprise are most profitable and which should be expanded, modified, or dropped. She should be able to anticipate changes resulting from the growth of the city and from new transportation patterns which may affect her business.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF OWNERSHIP

There are many advantages in being the proprietor of a business. As “her own boss,” a woman proprietor can determine within reason the location of her shop; choose her business associates and employees; decide which responsibilities to delegate and which to handle herself; and set her own working hours.

On the other hand, there are responsibilities linked to ownership. The proprietor must carry the ultimate responsibility for policy and for the success or failure of the enterprise. When problems arise she must solve them wisely or accept the consequences. Women who become proprietors may find that they work longer hours, are less free to take vacations, and “carry their work home with them” more than they did as salaried employees.

As the owner of a business, a woman has certain legal responsibilities for obtaining the proper licenses and for other matters. If she hires employees she is responsible for knowing and complying with the laws that affect their employment. For example, many States have laws specifying the maximum number of daily and weekly hours that women and minors may be employed and the minimum wages they may be paid; some prohibit their employment at night. Employment certificates for minors may be required under child-labor laws that set the minimum age for full-time employment and also for employment outside of school hours. The Federal Fair Labor Standards Act applies to firms engaged in interstate commerce.

It may also be of interest to prospective women proprietors to know that they may become eligible as self-employed persons for benefits under the Federal old age, survivors, and disability insurance act.

Women planning to become owners of businesses will find helpful suggestions and a practical guide in a pamphlet "Starting and Managing a Small Business of Your Own" issued in January 1959 by the Small Business Administration, Washington, D.C.

4

If You Want a Career in Retailing

PERSONAL QUALITIES NEEDED

The personal qualities that make for success in retailing are similar to those that will bring a woman success in other businesses, but in retailing greater importance is attached to these personal qualifications and abilities than to academic training as such.

When the Women's Bureau asked personnel managers of several leading stores to name the most important qualities looked for in selecting women for executive development, the qualities most often mentioned were: Ability to work with people; a demonstrated interest in retailing; poise, maturity and self-confidence; ability to present herself successfully in speech and appearance. These replies underscore the emphasis placed upon personal characteristics.

Retailers are always on the lookout for women who thrive on competition, who are challenged by problems, and who like opportunities for exercising their resourcefulness and imagination. Initiative ranks high on the list of qualifications, for professional and supervisory staff must be able to formulate plans. Perseverance and stability are needed to carry the plans through to completion. Ability to work effectively with people and facility in communicating ideas are also generally necessary in these positions.

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Retailing is still one of the fields in which a college education is not required for advancement. Many competent, high-ranking executives in retailing are not college educated; some never attended high school. Many of these, however, began their careers years ago when fewer people had an opportunity to attend college and high-school attendance was not as common as it is today. A higher proportion of the executives in the future will undoubtedly have more education.

The girl preparing for a career in retailing today should therefore take into account the fact that she will be competing with persons

who have attained a high educational level. She should certainly plan to complete high school. If she is tempted to leave school early because of financial considerations, she should try to work part time and still finish her schooling.

Distributive Education

Many schools participating in the vocational education program financed jointly by Federal and State funds offer courses to train students for employment in retail trade. Students in this program, called distributive education, may study various retailing subjects and obtain actual work experience in local retail firms. High schools and junior colleges offering distributive education give students an opportunity to complete their schooling, learn retailing, and earn money, all at the same time.

Students are selected on the basis of interest and aptitude for retailing occupations. They are placed as trainees in retail occupations to work about 15 hours each week. The manager of the business and the coordinator (teacher) together plan a training program which includes all the skills the pupil must learn in order to prepare her for a career in retailing. A part of the pupil's school work consists of classroom instruction in subjects common to all distributive occupations.

Student workers are paid by the retailing firm for their work each week.

General High School

For students who do not want part-time work, or who do not have access to a distributive education program, a general high school curriculum may be very useful, especially if it includes courses in speech, business arithmetic, history, and art. Chemistry and English composition may also be important in merchandising and publicity.

Since dealing with people is important in many positions in retailing, a student should learn at an early date to balance her studies with social or group activities. Club membership and sports are among the extracurricular activities which provide training in co-operation and leadership.

College

Although a college degree is not necessary for advancement in retailing, advancement is likely to come faster to the college graduate.

Even in stores which give no preference based on education, the college experience provides a solid foundation upon which to build a career. Furthermore, executive training programs in many large stores are designed for recent college graduates.

College graduates who enter executive training programs in retailing come from many different fields of study. Most common are liberal arts, retailing, marketing, home economics, fine arts, journalism, and business administration. Retailing executives are divided on the merits of a general education in liberal arts as opposed to a specialized education in retailing.

As in high school, college courses useful in preparation for many jobs in retailing include English, speech, history, chemistry, and art. Additional college courses pertinent to certain types of work in retailing are accounting, economics, sociology, psychology, and political science. All will help the student understand the world around her—the world in which her future customers live, work, and do their shopping.

Schools and Departments of Retailing

In the appendix of this bulletin is a list of 16 colleges and universities which belong to the American Collegiate Retailing Association. Three of these maintain full-fledged schools of retailing; the others have departments of retailing in schools of business administration. Member colleges offer curricula, approved by the Association, leading to a bachelor's degree in retailing. A few grant a master's degree in retailing; and one, a doctor's degree with specialization in retailing.

A typical course of study in these schools provides well-rounded knowledge of all phases of retailing. Students attend these schools to prepare primarily for merchandising or sales promotion; some prepare for personnel administration or store operation. Those who plan to enter control and finance often receive their training in schools of business. Subjects covered in schools of retailing include, among many others, store organization, buying, merchandising mathematics, merchandise control, textiles, recordkeeping, fashion designing, fashion coordination, advertising, and copywriting. Personal grooming and poise are also stressed.

Work experience is an important part of the retailing course. College students of retailing generally work in a store full time for part of a year in connection with their training.

Many other colleges and universities offer some courses in retailing. Almost every college has at least a course in marketing.

ENTERING RETAILING

Everyone interested in retailing should plan on an assignment to a sales job. One exception to this general rule is that of students who have had sales experience as a part of their training. Another exception is made for persons who enter the Control Division. A full-time job in the summer or a part-time job during the Christmas rush season provides excellent experience for anyone planning a retailing career. Retailers emphasize over and over again that sales experience is absolutely necessary. The only disagreement is on how much sales experience is necessary.



FIGURE 8.—Sales experience is helpful for potential supervisors and executives.

Many retailers prefer to hire high school graduates and to let them work their way up over a period of years. An increasing number of retailers, however, are hiring college graduates for training programs. The person who successfully completes the program, including sales work, is ready for a more responsible position in approximately a year.

For the High School Graduate

The first job in retailing for a recent high school graduate is most likely to be as a salesclerk, stock clerk, typist, cashier, or wrapper. Retail stores surveyed by the Women's Bureau in 1958 offered starting salaries ranging roughly from \$35 to \$55 per week, depending upon the job and location of the store.

The girl who demonstrates eagerness to learn, willingness to work, and maturity of judgment will find herself moving up to more responsible positions. If the store feels that she has executive potential she may in time be included in a junior executive program.

For the College Graduate

College graduates as well as nongraduates have to learn retailing from the ground up. Many start out as trainees or as salesclerks, secretaries, copywriters, or interviewers. In 1958, stores visited by the Women's Bureau reported entrance salaries usually ranging from \$40 to \$65 a week, sometimes as high as \$85. Retailing schools reported many of their graduates starting as assistant buyers and executive trainees at \$50 to \$75 or more a week.

Executive training programs are conducted by many leading department and specialty stores. During a 9- to 12-month program, trainees receive classroom instruction for a certain number of hours each week. The rest of their time is spent working in the departments to which they have been assigned. Trainees may remain in one department, but are more often shifted periodically to gain wider experience. Under the rotation system, the trainee spends a few weeks in several or all of the divisions, working for a period of time on each operation. Programs are geared primarily to people entering merchandising, although trainees from other divisions may be included in the program.

Stores with training programs usually recruit graduates from colleges and universities in the surrounding area. Seniors interested in entering such a program can obtain information from their college placement bureaus.

For the Mature Woman

Since World War II, the largest increase in number of employed women has been in the mature age groups. Women over 35, their children grown or in school, have entered or reentered the business world.

Department and specialty stores have found this group to be an important source of both full-time and part-time salespersons. Many of these women have been able to move into supervisory and executive jobs, though they are rarely hired as trainees.

Leaders in the field report that women over 35 offer the following advantages to the retailer: mature judgment, emotional stability, and the understanding of customers that comes from having been purchasing agent for their own families. They also offer greater assurance of remaining with the store indefinitely.

Older women who have progressed to supervisory and executive jobs are often placed in positions in Personnel, Operations, and Control. While these positions pay less, they often demand less than those in Merchandising and Sales Promotion.

For All Prospective Careerists

A woman considering retailing as a career should study conditions in her local area, for this is probably where she will take her first job.



FIGURE 9.—Leadership conference, consisting of executives of various degrees, conducted by an executive training superintendent.

Policies, practices, and salaries vary widely according to size of store, size of area served, type of clientele, geographical location, conditions prevailing in the local labor market, and the management philosophy of each individual store. One can obtain from school guidance counselors, local public employment offices, newspapers, or friends employed in stores information on job openings, starting salaries, and working conditions in local stores. The stores themselves will furnish information on training programs and on hours of work (including evening and Saturday work), vacations, insurance, and medical and retirement plans.

A wealth of material has been written about the industry. Stores reputedly have personalities of their own, and several of the big ones have been subjects for nonfiction books. Numerous trade publications provide information on current happenings; there are books which give the student an understanding of the economics and mechanics of retailing. Many stories about real and fictional retailers have also been written against the background of retailing. (See appendix B for a list of selected readings.)

Serious-minded women who are interested in building careers in retailing should make this interest known to the stores and inquire about promotion policies and opportunities for advancement as they relate to their particular experience, background, or training.

Career opportunities and advancement in retailing depend largely upon the ability to operate profitably. The woman with that ability will find many opportunities to advance, regardless of her age. Responsible positions, the prestige and high salaries that go with them, are there for those who are qualified and willing to devote wholehearted attention to their work.

Appendix

A—RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS

NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS AND PAID EMPLOYEES IN RETAIL TRADE,
BY KIND OF BUSINESS, NOVEMBER 1954

Kind of establishment	Number of establishments ¹	Paid employees, work-week ended nearest November 15, 1954	
		Number	Average per establishment
Total	1, 721, 650	7, 124, 331	4
Food stores			
Grocery stores	384, 616	1, 025, 849	3
Meat markets, fish (seafood) markets	279, 440	811, 018	3
Fruit stores, vegetable markets	27, 354	51, 128	2
Candy, nut, confectionery stores	13, 136	12, 043	1
Bakery product stores	20, 507	25, 696	1
Delicatessen stores	19, 034	85, 015	4
Food stores, n.e.c.	8, 132	13, 791	2
Eating and drinking places	13, 777	27, 158	2
Eating places (including refreshment stands)	319, 657	1, 352, 828	4
Drinking places	195, 128	1, 055, 806	5
General merchandise group	123, 887	297, 022	2
Department stores	76, 198	1, 258, 990	17
Dry goods, general merchandise stores	2, 761	734, 920	266
General stores	34, 113	159, 988	5
Variety stores	17, 701	30, 418	2
Apparel, accessories stores	20, 917	333, 664	16
Shoe stores	119, 743	607, 340	5
Women's clothing specialty stores	23, 847	86, 660	4
Children's, infants wear stores	45, 213	274, 282	6
Apparel stores, n.e.c.	7, 024	18, 636	3
Furniture, home furnishings, appliance dealers	6, 932	20, 548	3
Furniture, home furnishings stores	91, 797	351, 772	4
Household appliance, radio, and television stores	50, 729	227, 370	4
Automotive group	40, 542	124, 402	3
Passenger car dealers (franchised)	85, 953	710, 802	8
Passenger car dealers (nonfranchised)	41, 407	590, 486	14
Tire, battery, accessory dealers	20, 140	34, 125	2
Motorcycle, aircraft, boat dealers	18, 845	75, 011	4
Household trailer dealers	3, 183	6, 712	2
Automotive dealers, n.e.c.	2, 005	3, 946	2
Gasoline service stations	119	522	4
Lumber building materials, hardware, farm equipment dealers	181, 747	358, 485	2
Farm equipment dealers	100, 519	446, 690	4
Lumber building materials dealers	18, 689	79, 625	4
Paint, glass, wallpaper stores	30, 177	211, 038	7
Plumbing, electrical supply stores	9, 249	24, 218	3
Hardware stores	7, 252	24, 955	3
Drug stores, proprietary stores	34, 858	106, 854	3
Other retail stores	56, 009	300, 435	5
Liquor stores	226, 903	511, 260	2
Fuel, ice dealers	31, 240	56, 445	2
Hay, grain, feed stores	27, 070	96, 538	4
Farm, garden supply stores	16, 530	62, 337	4
Jewelry stores	7, 262	17, 644	2
Bookstores	24, 266	67, 558	3
Stationery stores	2, 642	8, 301	3
Sporting goods stores	5, 473	22, 671	4
Bicycle stores	8, 396	13, 801	2
Florists	1, 617	1, 500	1
Cigar stores, stands	16, 279	31, 878	2
News dealers, newstands	6, 068	8, 092	1
Gift, novelty, souvenir stores	7, 178	11, 895	2
Music stores	12, 149	14, 159	1
Camera, photographic supply stores	5, 810	17, 535	3
Luggage, leather goods stores	2, 896	10, 487	4
Optical goods stores	1, 387	3, 755	3
Office, store machine and equipment dealers	3, 011	7, 865	3
Retail stores (except second-hand), n.e.c.	2, 216	6, 292	3
Second-hand stores	8, 877	26, 677	3
Nonstore retailers	14, 364	25, 830	2
Mail order houses	78, 508	199, 880	3
Direct selling (house-to-house) organizations	2, 019	86, 270	43
Merchandising vending machine operators	70, 774	95, 528	1
	5, 715	18, 082	3

¹ Group totals may include data for establishments without payroll which could not be classified by detailed kind of business.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Census of Business: 1954, Retail Trade, Vol. I.

B—SELECTED READINGS

Books

- Barker, Clare W. and others. *Principles of Retailing*. New York, N.Y., McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1956.
- Beckley, Donald K. and John W. Ernest. *Modern Retailing*. New York, N.Y., Gregg Publishing Co., 1950.
- Brisco, Norris A. *Retailing*. 3d ed. New York, N.Y., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957.
- Carey, Ernestine G. *Jumping Jupiter*. (Fiction) New York, N.Y., Thos. Y. Crowell, 1952.
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- De Leeuw, Adèle L. *Future for Sale*. (Fiction) Chicago, Ill., Macmillan Co., 1946.
- Dolva, Wenzil K. and Donald K. Beckley. *The Retailer; the role of modern retailing in the United States*. New York, N.Y., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950.
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- Duncan, Delbert J. and Charles F. Phillips. *Retailing; principles and methods*. 4th ed. Homewood, Ill., Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1955.
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- Mayfield, Frank M. *The Department Store Story*. New York, N.Y., Fairchild Publications, Inc., 1949.
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- Stuart, Jessie. *The American Fashion Industry*. Boston, Mass., Prince School Publications in Retailing, Simmons College, 1951.
- Wingate, John W. and Arnold Corbin. *Changing Patterns in Retailing*. Homewood, Ill., Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1956.
- Wingate, John W. and J. Dana Weiner. *Retail Merchandising*. 5th ed. Cincinnati, Ohio, Southwestern Publishing Co., Inc., 1957.

Retailing and Fashion Periodicals

- Charm*. Street and Smith Publications, Inc., 575 Madison Ave., New York 17, N.Y. (Monthly.)
- Glamour*. Condé Nast Publications, Inc., 420 Lexington Ave., New York 17, N.Y. (Monthly.)

- Harper's Bazaar.* Hearst Magazines, Inc., 250 W. 55th St., New York 22, N.Y. (Monthly.)
- Journal of Retailing.* New York University School of Retailing, New York University, 100 Washington Square East, New York 3, N.Y. (Quarterly.)
- Mademoiselle.* Street and Smith Publications, Inc., 575 Madison Ave., New York 17, N.Y. (Monthly.)
- Stores.* National Retail Merchants Association, 100 West 31st St., New York, N.Y. (Monthly.)
- The Department Store Economist.* Chilton Co., Inc., 100 East 42d St., New York 17, N.Y. (Monthly.)
- Vogue.* Condé Nast Publications, Inc., 420 Lexington Ave., New York 17, N.Y. (Monthly.)
- Women's Wear Daily.* Fairchild Publications, 7 East 12th St., New York, N.Y. Trade paper of the dress industry. Daily except Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.

Pamphlets

- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Employment Outlook in Department Store Occupations.* Bull. 1215-17. 1957. For sale by U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. 15 cents.
- --, Women's Bureau. *Women in Higher-Level Positions.* Includes section on department stores. For sale by U.S. Government Printing Office. Bull. 236. 1950. 25 cents.
- SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION. *Starting and Managing a Small Business of Your Own.* 1958. For sale by U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. 40 cents.
- B'NAI B'RITH VOCATIONAL SERVICE BUREAU, Washington, D.C. *Occupational Brief Series.* *Careers in Department Stores.* Revised 1957. 25 cents.
- INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH, Chicago, Ill. *Research Monographs.* \$1 each.
- Careers in Fashion Designing* (No. 99), 1951.
- Careers in Retail Selling* (No. 229), 1952.
- Commercial and Industrial Art as a Career* (No. 14), 1950.
- Executive Careers for Women in Department Stores* (No. 222), 1951.
- Women's Apparel-Shop Operation as a Career* (No. 55), 1955.
- PERSONNEL SERVICES, INC., Peapack, N.J. *Occupational Abstracts.* 6-page folders. 50 cents each.
- Department Store Buyer* (No. 144), 1956.
- Junior Executive* (No. 153), 1956.
- Purchasing Agent* (No. 169), 1954.
- ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, Rochester, N.Y. *Vocational Guidance Series.* Free.
- Careers in Retailing.* 1953.
- Careers in Interior Decoration.* 1957.
- VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE MANUALS, Inc., 1011 Tremont Ave., New York, N.Y. \$1 each.
- Opportunities in Advertising.* 1950.
- Opportunities in Fashion.* 1951.
- Opportunities in Interior Decoration.* 1951.

C—LIST OF SCHOOLS

American Collegiate Retailing Association Member Schools

Bradley University, College of Commerce, Peoria, Ill.

University of Buffalo, School of Business Administration, Buffalo 14, N.Y.

The City College, Bernard M. Baruch School of Business and Public Administration, New York 10, N.Y.

Drexel Institute of Technology, College of Business Administration, Philadelphia 4, Pa.

New York University, School of Retailing, New York 3, N.Y.

University of Pittsburgh, Graduate School of Retailing, Pittsburgh 13, Pa.

Prince School of Retailing, Simmons College, Boston 16, Mass.

Richmond Professional Institute, College of William and Mary, Richmond 20, Va.

Washington University School of Business and Public Administration, St. Louis 5, Mo.

Municipal University of Wichita, College of Business and Industry, Wichita, Kans.

Also, the specialized retailing programs in the following universities:

University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio.

Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa.

University of Omaha, Omaha, Nebr.

Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, N.Y.

Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

University of Texas, Austin, Tex.