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Preface

Upon first leaving a business career to teach at the college level, I dedicated myself to the task of preparing students for the “real world.” I soon discovered (and I should have remembered from my own days as a student) that the so-called chasm that purportedly separates “life as a college student” from “life in the real world” is a myth. College students are part of the real world. They suffer real-world social pressures, real-world financial pressures, real-world pressures from parents and spouses, and real-world pressures relating to the classroom. As consumers, students know well the real-world pressures that come from searching for products and services that will satisfy their everyday wants and needs. And most college students have already experienced real-world pressures on the job in some facet of business, either as part-time or full-time employees or as business owners.

My orientation as a teacher, therefore, is no longer centered around the idea of readying students for the “real world after graduation.” Rather, I see my responsibility now as one of assisting students in honing the skills and insights necessary for their normal growth and development in the real world of which they are already an essential part. Some may see this as merely a matter of semantics. Yet it is impossible for a teacher or a textbook to prepare students totally for a career in retailing. At best one can only hope that students will, in studying this book, come away with an improved knowledge of what it takes to be a good retailer and, in the process, will gain “the larger vision.”

Contemporary Retailing, second edition, is written for college students enrolled in their first retailing course. It began as a germ of an idea after experiencing what many of my colleagues have experienced—the frustration of searching for a suitable retailing textbook that not only was highly readable and interesting for students but also had a great deal of content. Additionally, this book is a departure from the norm in that it is imbued throughout with two important themes that, it is hoped, will not go unnoticed by students as they read it. The first theme embodies the dynamic nature of retailing. The retail industry is a far cry from what it was five, ten, or twenty years ago. This is because it is in a constant state of flux. With each passing year new concepts and new institutions of retailing emerge as dramatic changes occur in the competitive, economic, societal, technological, and legal environments. It is imperative that retailers, and those who would be, be aware of and keep pace with these changes.

The second theme running through this book relates to the priority that the retailer must place on sensing, serving, and satisfying the wants and needs of consumers. Without this priority, the retailer cannot prosper in the competitive environment, which is characterized today by a glut of products in the marketplace. The retailer's total effort *must* revolve around the customer. Every facet of the business should be focused on satisfying customer needs, yet at a fair profit to the firm.

These two themes have influenced the design of this text. Chapter 1 discusses retailing careers. This topic is placed first in the book in order that students may be aware of and may think through possible career alternatives as they progress through the course. In many retailing textbooks career opportunities are covered in the concluding chapter or in an appendix, almost as an afterthought. Chapter 2 presents an overview of retailing. A description of retail institutions and institutional change appropriately follows in Chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 emphasize the importance of store location and store planning. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 deal primarily with the "people factor" that is so vital in retailing—organizing the employees of the firm, human resource management, and consumer behavior, respectively. Chapters 9 through 13 relate to merchandising decisions, beginning with the merchandise budget and following through to merchandise control. A natural tie-in to these five chapters is the subject of pricing, discussed in Chapter 14. Chapters 15, 16, and 17 are concerned with the retailer's promotional task. The text concludes with chapters that cover retail accounting and control, nonstore and service retailing, and the legal and technological aspects of retailing.

Each chapter begins with a set of *learning objectives* that informs the student what to expect in the pages that follow. An *opening vignette* is then presented, unlocking the door to the topic at hand. This vignette and *additional vignettes* throughout the chapter relate to the world of retailing and give realistic examples that pertain to the chapter discussion. *Notable quotations* are also highlighted at appropriate points. Each chapter discussion concludes with a short *summary*, followed by ten *questions* that are application oriented. A list of *common buzzwords* (terms found within the chapter) follows the questions. These buzzwords are defined in a *glossary* located after Chapter 20. Finally, at the end of each chapter are two *cases* that, when assigned by the instructor, will encourage students to apply concepts learned in the chapter.

College students have been a great inspiration to me. I have learned as much from them as they have learned from me. If this book in some small way contributes to their success in whatever path they choose to take, then it has been well worth the effort.

There are a number of individuals who have directly or indirectly made a valuable contribution in the preparation of this book. I would be remiss if I did not mention their names.

I am indebted to the late A. C. Nielsen, Sr., founder of the market research firm bearing his name, who by his example taught me the value of integrity, perseverance, hard work, and high standards of quality. I am also in debt to his son, Art Nielsen, Jr., who continued to set the example and who "kept the latch string out for me," should I ever have had the desire to take advantage of it.

Barnett A. Greenberg and the late Jack M. Starling inspired me to greater effort during my years as a doctoral student at North Texas State University.

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My thanks also goes out to Terry L. Mendenhall, Dean of the Kelce School of Business and Economics, and Arthur K. Fischer, Chairman of the Department of Management and Marketing, both of Pittsburg State University. They supported my efforts to produce the second edition of this book. Of course, this edition could not have been possible without the valuable assistance of Miriam Morrison, who spent many hours on the manuscript when she could have been doing other things. Her work was greatly appreciated.

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Last, but not least, I would like to thank the members of my family, who have always given me support in all my endeavors. It was good to come home late after a day or evening at the office working on this book and know that they were there to welcome me.

J. L. B.

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