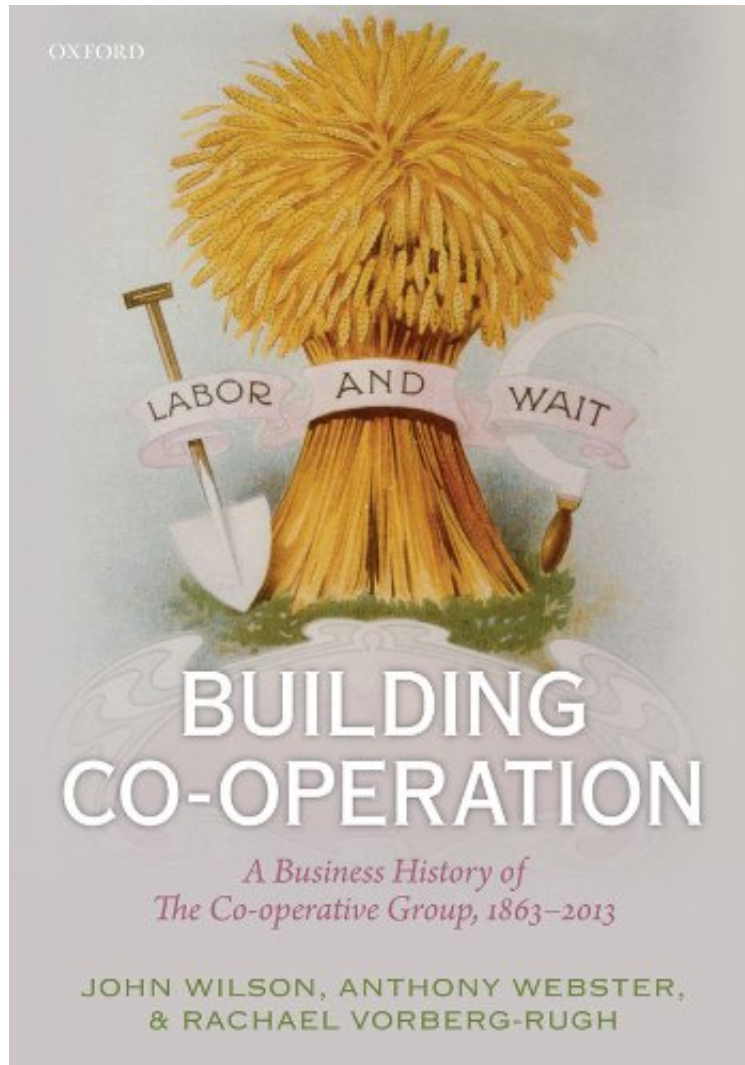


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Building Co-operation: A Business History of The Co-operative Group, 1863-2013

John F. Wilson, Anthony Webster, Rachael Vorberg-Rugh
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Building Co-operation traces the development of The Co-operative Group and its predecessor, the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS), over the course of 150 years. Born from the efforts of the Rochdale Pioneers and others who established successful consumer co-operatives across Britain in the mid-nineteenth century, by the 1860s the

proponents of the CWS were ready to pioneer a new effort: a federation, democratically run and collectively owned, that would enable co-operatives to become their own suppliers. From humble origins, the CWS grew into one of Britain's largest businesses within a generation, pioneering modern retailing and distribution on a national scale, expanding into factory production and financial services, and establishing an international supply network that stretched across Europe, and beyond. Throughout the late nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, co-operative societies provided essential services to millions of members across Britain, ranging from food and clothing to banking, insurance, travel agency, pharmacy and even funeral services. However, in the second half of the twentieth century co-operatives experienced a protracted period of decline, facing a series of internal structural challenges, fierce competition amongst food retailers, and a rapidly-changing marketplace. By the turn of the twenty-first century, when many commentators were ready to consign co-operatives to the past, The Co-operative Group emerged with a revitalised business model that has helped to re-invigorate the British co-operative sector and bring new attention to the important role of co-operative and mutual enterprises worldwide. Based on extensive archival research, including many records available to historians for the first time, *Building Co-operation* is the story of a distinctive business model as it evolved over time. While since the inauguration of the CWS in 1863 the commercial landscape has changed nearly beyond recognition, the values at the heart of The Co-operative Group have remained relevant to succeeding generations, focusing on member benefits and a commitment to ethical trading.

"As the first comprehensive study of the CWS (Co-operative Wholesale Society) published since 1938, this handsomely-produced volume is an important contribution to the recent revival of academic interest in co-operation... a book that leaves you wanting more has done a good job." --EH.Net About the Author
John F. Wilson, Director, Newcastle University Business School, Anthony Webster, Head of History, Liverpool John Moores University, Rachael Vorberg-Rugh, Researcher, The Co-operative College
John Wilson is Director of Newcastle University Business School, where he is also professor of strategy. He has published extensively in the field of international business history, knowledge transfer, and the history of management education, including a dozen monographs and over fifty articles and chapters. As executive editor of *Business History* and a former President of the Association of Business Historians, he has played a major role in developing the discipline. Anthony Webster is a graduate of the University of Birmingham UK, where he won the Ashley Prize for best PhD thesis in the Faculty of Commerce and Social Science in 1985. In his career he has been a tax inspector and has lectured at three universities in the North West of England. He is currently Head of History at Liverpool John Moores University. He has published extensively on business in the British empire and co-operatives, producing four major books and numerous articles in leading international journals (including *Enterprise and Society*, the article for which won the Newcomen Prize for best article in the journal in 2005). Rachael Vorberg-Rugh is a doctoral candidate in Modern History at the University of Oxford, where she is completing a thesis on the British co-operative movement between 1880 and 1920. She has published articles and book chapters on co-operative history and business. In addition to her academic work, she has engaged in numerous public history projects in the US and UK. She is currently a researcher with The Co-operative College, and previously served as project officer for the National Co-operative Archive and Rochdale Pioneers Museum.