February 1992

A Closer Look at Issues

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Against the Grain

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Recommended Citation

DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1135

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A Look at Issues
From Your Editor

It’s hard to believe that it’s another
year. I remember way back when —
when I wondered if I would make it to
the year 2000 because I would be so
OLD then! Oh well. Time marches on.
In the meantime, here are some of the
issues that have been consuming us over
the past few months.

Robert Maxwell — Goodbye to all
WHAT? Well, it seems like it would
be impossible for us to go to press without
saying ANYTHING about Robert Max-
well. After all, he died on November 6,
1991, and he was an era for us in acqui-
sitions and collection development. When I
heard about his death, I ran out and bought
EVERY newspaper I could find (in Charle-
ston) that talked about Maxwell. The New
York Times, The Wall Street Journal, USA

It was right at the beginning of the
Charleston Conference (November 7-9)
and we had a minute of silence, posted the
newspaper clippings, etc., etc. The death
seemed mysterious. For a novelist like
myself, rife with plot lines. We were all
curious. What had happened? Life
truly seemed like fiction.

Then, as I was vainly trying to follow
all the articles written about Maxwell,
we all heard about Maxwell’s finances.
The fact that his empire was crumbling.
Ian and Kevin Maxwell both having to
step down maybe even with jail in store.
Pension funds. Newspapers. Tape rec-
cordings. The Mossad.

Robert Maxwell remains a legend as
enigmatic in death as he was in life.
However, I can’t help but wonder if Mr.
Maxwell deliberately left as his legacy
Pergamon Press, his flagship company,
untouched. We’ll probably never know,
but one thing’s for sure Robert Maxwell
is a man most of us will remember for a
very, very long time.

May he rest in peace.

Next issue, Popcorn. Harrassowitz
packed their books coming from Ger-
many in popcorn, causing much com-
ment from everyone. It wasn’t edible
popcorn or anything like that; it was
something synthetic, but the bits would
dissolve if put under water. In fact,
one of my assistants came into my office
brandishing the popcorn happily.

He said it was wonderful that they cared
about the environment. But many did
not agree and Harrassowitz has discon-
tinued packing materials in popcorn.
Some of the reasons that people were
upset were that the popcorn was messy;
and some said it was oily. This was a big
topic of discussion on Christian
Boissonnas’s ACQNET.

Onto — Oxford University Press.
Glen Secor (Legally speaking, this is
issue, page 6) tells us about some issues
relating to the First Amendment and
the Son of Sam Law. On another front,
not long ago Oxford University Press
recalled a book because of “copyright
problems.” Librarians do not know
what to do about returning the book.
As any trade publisher will tell you,
there’s nothing like controversy to sell
copies and many libraries are not re-
turning their copies because their pa-
trons want to see the book. A lot of
ether was expended on ACQNET over
this issue, too.

And we certainly can’t leave out the
famous interchange(s) between
Michael Boswood and Donald
Koepp, University Librarian at
Princeton University. In November,
1991, Koepp wrote Boswood regarding
pricing of Pergamon journals for
1992. Pergamon had increased 1992
prices to “eliminate differential pric-
ing, which in the past was favourable
to customers in the USA,” according
to Boswood. This move toward a “world-
wide” price amounted to significant in-
creases in the prices of some Pergamon
journals. Koepp is suggesting that librar-
ies consider canceling titles based on
who the publisher is and, also, that li-
braries not pay journal subscriptions
til they are sure of the price that they
will pay for a journal in a specific year.
Marcia Tuttle’s electronic Newsletter
on Serials Pricing has been full of this
issue. It looks like some things may
change because of this.

Baker & Taylor. It was announced
at the Charleston Conference (follow-
ing an article in the New York Times)
that Baker & Taylor would be sold.
And B&T has been sold even as we
speak. Time will tell what will happen
next.

Publishing in the Soviet Union. This
is still obviously up in the air. I even got
a letter from Edwin Sherlock who is in
and out of Russia all of the time. He said
that there’s no point in writing down
anything because the climate is chang-
ing so fast. Of course, there are valiant
people out there trying to keep a handle
on what’s happening, not the least of
which are Harrassowitz, Faxon and
Collet’s and others. To be continued.

And last but definitely not least, contribu-
tions are being taken up for Lyman Newlin
by Academic Book Center; 5600 N.E.
Hassalo St.; Portland, OR 97213, (503)547-
7704. We figure we’ll have a housewarming
in New York once Lyman’s house is rebuilt.
You know who’d be the life of the party.
Lyman is INCREDIBLE!

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Against the Grain / February 1992