Company Profile

Dawson

William Dawson and John Bumpus set up businesses in London some 200 years ago, John as publisher and bookseller in Clerkenwell and William as news agent and bookseller in Cannon Street. Both grew rapidly and opened additional business premises, first in London, then in the provinces and later overseas. Dawson developed subscription, back issue, antiquarian and publishing services and exported books and journals to all parts of the world. Dawson France was established in the 1920's and survived the turbulence of 1939-1945 to become one of the major subscription players in the French-speaking market.

Dawson UK's London premises suffered bomb damage during the Blitz and the company moved to Folkestone in the 1960's in order to bring together the subscriptions and back issues activities under one roof. Acquisitions during the 1970's and 1980's (Stevens & Brown, Seabrook and Alan Armstrong) extended book business, while activity in the USA received a boost with the acquisition of the McGregor Subscription Service and Quality Books, the leading USA small press distributor. Overseas business was further strengthened with the introduction of the Consolidated Air Freight Service in the early 80's and the appointment of agents at strategic points around the world.

Meanwhile, the Bumpus story showed similar development, one of steady growth and change. Bought in 1986 by Robert Maxwell, the business was subsequently combined with Haldane's library supply business. Maxwell's involvement in publishing and distribution enabled him to create Bumpus, Haldane & Maxwell, set up in 1970. BH & M remained a private company within the Maxwell organization until 1986 but subsequently became part of Pergamon PLC. The business was acquired by Dawson in March 1991.

Since then, Dawson have consolidated the business, with the subscription and back issue activities located in Folkestone and book supply in Wellingborough, in new premises replacing the old factory building in Olney. The company's Library Services Group is divided into three Divisions: Subscriptions, Books and Technology, the latter emerging in the mid-80's as a supplier of PC-based library management systems, later to be consolidated under the OASIS banner. The combined customer base now runs into many thousands of libraries and information centres in the UK and overseas. The main volume of business is in the subscription sector but book supply has grown steadily in importance. A significant part of turnover comes from export sales, much of it in the wider Europe and the United States.

Dawson have continued to invest heavily in in-house automation. New systems based on the IBM AS/400 are replacing those on the existing 38 and Unisys platforms. These new company-wide systems have greater flexibility, capacity and sophistication and will offer staff and customers alike improved performance allied with wider customer choice.

The diversity of Dawson is illustrated by reference to other companies within the Group, namely:

- Dawson Advertising Ltd., an international advertising agency; Reward Regional Surveys Ltd., producing economic and remuneration surveys frequently reported in all branches of the media, and Training Information Network Ltd., publishers of expert and highly acclaimed products such as IT Training Journal, Management Training Journal, Directory of Training, etc.

Dawson, with its motto "International Network for the Information World" aims to provide the best solutions for those involved in information management. Dawson view the future with confidence based on a long history of service to customers, accumulated expertise and high investment in new technology. The Group continues to address the many changes taking place in the world of information, not least the impact of electronic storage and delivery, and looks forward in proactive style to a third century of dedicated service.

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Vendors have adopted various strategies to deal with these problems. Some generate reports from their own computerized database of titles they have in inventory or have handled. At Midwest, we have determined that the best way to maximize fulfillment is to routinely question publisher reports of unavailability. We visually review publisher OP and OSI reports and frequently obtain misreported titles by reordering them. This is an expensive and labor intensive process which must be viewed as a value-added service.

Libraries can help, too. It is essential to provide your supplier with complete and correct order information. It is also a good idea to give your vendor some degree of latitude in substituting later editions when applicable. Understand that this problem is not altogether avoidable, but it can be relieved through careful order preparation and vendor selection.

For a look at publishers' reporting of OP, see the Duke University Press OP Survey, this issue, page 56 — KS

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