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Bet You Missed It

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Against the Grain

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Bet You Missed It
Edited by Katina Strauch (College of Charleston)

[Hey, y'all, if you see something you think might interest us, but don't have time to annotate it, please send me the cite and/or the article and I'll try to find someone to annotate it, okay? Thanks!]


“Jovanovich didn’t have the heart to cut back,” is the next line in this brief business section piece. It’s about 70-year-old William Jovanovich, the “Iconoclast” and “son of a poor immigrant coal miner,” who was for 34 years at the helm of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Nonetheless, Jovanovich had already in December turned over chief executive duties to his son Peter, 41, and recently he also passed chairmanship of the HBJ board to member John Herrington.

Apparently, in what must have been some real behind the scenes jockeying, when the price of HBJ stock began to decline, Robert Maxwell made a hostile takeover bid which forced Jovanovich to prevail “by recapitalizing HBJ with nearly $3 billion in debt, a large chunk of it in junk bonds.” Oh, well, so now the price of the stock has collapsed even more (“$3 a share from $19 in 1989”). And son Peter is talking about what he needs to do to get the company back in shape. So, it is said that he plans to change the composition of the board from academicians “not accustomed to dealing with billion-dollar junk-bond problems.” Though Jovanovich the elder himself knew that times were changing, he did remark in a 1960 interview with Time magazine: “The day it gets to be a choice between a manuscript and the balance sheet, I’ll get out of publishing.”

Katina Strauch
(College of Charleston)


So you think the book is dead? Apparently not, at least not according to this article written in the midst of the ABA (American Booksellers Association) annual convention held in early June in Las Vegas, Nevada. Here are some heartening quotes for those of us who don’t care necessarily what people read just so long as it’s books. From Edward A. Morrow, Jr., President of ABA and owner of the Northshire Bookstore in Manchester Center, Vermont: “But now, it’s so important to have depth to be competitive that we’re looking to cut back in stationery and maybe games, so we’ll have more room for books.” From Robert Haft, President of Crown Books Corp.: “We just listened to our customers. They said they loved our prices but there were more books they wanted to read.” And from novelist Mark Childress: “The focus is on books.”

So it appears that books might be getting back space in bookstores which was once used for videos or computer software or even toys. And there is an increase in bookstore sales. However, Bernard Rath, executive director of the Booksellers Association, sees room for improvement. In a telephone survey conducted for ABA, “only half of the 93 million Americans that enter a bookstore monthly actually buy a book... Mr. Rath believes that publishers and booksellers have to band together to aggressively promote reading.” So what have librarians been doing for years??

Lyman Newlin
(Book Trade Counselor)


Very interesting. James Murphy, owner of Albion Bookstore Inc., has closed three bookstores in Amherst and Williamstown because of bank foreclosure on the properties. “The closings mean, for the time being, the end of a multimillion-dollar international

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retail and mail-order book business." Still in business is the Montague Mill, a separate corporation. "Murphy said that his troubles began when Albion Bookshop Inc. was burdened with nearly $1.7 million in bank loans and money owed to various book sellers. In addition, large book suppliers imposed stricter credit arrangements, shortening the time that Albion had to pay its bills." In July, 1989, the Williamstown bookstore replaced the Williams College Bookstore as the William's College exclusive textbook supplier. But apparently Murphy was trying to sell the academic textbook business. He is quoted as saying, "I'm not an MBA. A lot of the problems were the result of my ignorance in not knowing how to run a $5 million business." Times are bad all over.

Katina Strauch
(College of Charleston)


"Small, independent bookstores are flourishing as readers' preferences grow more specialized and computers streamline retailing tasks." Just 20 years ago, this article says, the survival of the small independent bookstore was problematic. Not so anymore. Leonard Riggio, president and CEO of Barnes & Noble/B. Dalton, says it's "the golden age of book selling." Apparently, when other businesses started leaving downtown areas for the suburbs, many bookstores were doing the same. This, coupled with technology, specialization, and computers, has helped the small bookstore. I say hoorah!

Lyman Newlin
(Book Trade Counsellor)

Bet You Missed It Minis

Just a brief note of things that you might have missed . . .

The Wall Street Journal, July 19, 1990, front page, right column, has a piece about the Nielsen Ratings. About how they've been the only real t.v. ratings service for forty years, etc. Well, it seems that there has been some grumbling about the Nielsen Ratings and so competitors are stepping in. One of them is 'Britain-based Pergamon AGB PLC.' Apparently, two years ago Pergamon "racked up losses of $67 million in an effort that Nielsen soundly stomped." But the WSJ reports that Pergamon says "it will re-enter the U.S. market soon." Hmmm . . .

Another Wall Street Journal piece, June 7, 1990, page B1. This one is about Workman Publishing. It seems that Mr. Workman, 51, is a man after my own heart. "A tall, gawky man with a lopsided grin and the bemused air of a mad scientist, [Workman] works in a chaotic office where even the floor is piled high with books and papers. Mr. Workman hates meetings and memos, but he approves every project, book jacket and print run and still writes every royalty check." And, though Workman won't tell sales and profits, he seems to be highly successful publishing "clever, quirky books." In 1989, Workman bought "small classy fiction publisher Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, N.C." And this fall will publish its first novel, Good Omens, "a funny book about the end of the world.


Must Revive a stagnant Operation." This builds on the piece which we covered in an earlier issue of ATG. You'll all remember that HBJ took on a huge debt ($3 billion) to fend off takeover by — you guessed it — Robert Maxwell. Well, the dust is settling, but a lot of the debt is still there, even though HBJ sold its Sea World parks for $1.1 billion to help out. It seems that they're concentrating on the "bread-and-butter publishing operations." Experts have mixed opinions as to what's in the future. So, what else is new?

InfoWorld, the weekly for personal computing professionals (July 18, 1990, v.12, issue 29, p.6) has an article "Kapor and Wozniak Establish Electronic Policy Foundation" by Scott Mace. This article came courtesy of Chuck-doesn't-miss-anything Hamaker. Mitch Kapor is the founder of Lotus Development Corp. and Steve Wozniak is the founder of Apple Computer. These two men and a third "unnamed investor" have decided to try to raise the public's awareness of electronic communications use and the civil liberty issues surrounding it" by forming the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFT)." The EFT, among other things, has "awarded a $275,000 grant to the Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, which during the next two years will host a series of policy roundtables in Washington." Apparently, the EFT also is seeking disclosure regarding certain actions taken by the federal government in seizing various computers, discs, and computer games, etc. This sounds like movie material to me.

Also courtesy of Chuck H., comes this article from NFAIS Newsletter (v.32, no.7, July, 1990, p.89. "Dialog files suit Against the American Chemical Society." In June Dialog filed suit in a

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constituents are intellectual property rights, licensing, and electronic information resources. Two major goals of EDUCOM include: 1) to create an instruction and research electronic network to link scholars around the world, and 2) to infuse computing into higher education curriculum in the U.S. To meet these goals, EDUCOM has developed its Software Initiative (recently renamed Educational Uses of Information Technology), which is aimed specifically at expanding uses of information technology in teaching and learning process. The Educational Uses of Software sponsors three major resources: 1) EDUCOM/NCRPTAL Distinquished Software Collection (EDSC), 2) Academic Software Catalog (ASC), and 3) EDUCOM Selected Software List (ESSL), a subset of ASC.

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Washington federal court and asked that the ACS “be ordered to provide full access at reasonable rates to its database of chemical information.” Simplistically speaking, it seems to be a matter of when the data belongs to and how much should be paid for the access. And since some of the database was developed with federal monies, it gets more and more complicated. This is a useful description (if legalese ever allows that) of the two sides. More to come.

In the Wall Street Journal June 29, 1990, p.B1, there’s an article about the Walt Disney Co. and how they’re starting a children’s publishing company instead of giving the books they produce to other publishers. And the competition is nervous. Lauren Wohl is to be the director of marketing. Wohl was a librarian in a previous life.

EDUCOM’s accomplishments include developing (with ADAPSO, the computer software and services industry association) a code on ethical use of software, publishing materials on software management, collection and use, and creating an awards program for outstanding instructional software. In March 1990, EDUCOM joined with ARL and CAUSE (the Association for the Management of Information Technology in Higher Education) to form the new Coalition for Networked Information to explore the potential uses of the proposed NREN (National Research and Education Network). The group will attempt to identify public policy issues and to assign priorities among information resources slated for NREN.

EDUCOM’s publications include:

Using Software: A Guide to

Wall Street Journal, June 27, 1990, p.B4, or B5. “U.K. Publisher Posts Profit of $298.3 Million for Year.” This one’s brief and about Maxwell Communication Corp. This pretax profit was reported as “below analysts’ expectations.”

From the Newsletter on Serials Pricing, No. 25, August 8, 1990: 1991 Prices for European Journals by Chuck Hamaker

Although they held off as long as they could, the major European publishers have this week set exchange rates for their 1991 subscriptions. Because the dollar had been so weak much of this season, the traditional July 1 setting was delayed. Elsevier set their rates last Wednesday, the day before Iraq invaded Kuwait, when the dollar reached its second lowest level since World War II. For 1991, Elsevier’s rate is 1.78 guilders to the U.S. dollar, about 23 percent below last year’s level. Overall, according to Elsevier, this will mean an average increase in their list of about 35% in U.S. dollars.

Springer-Verlag waited until this week to set rates, and it looks as if they will be at 1.56 DM to the U.S. dollar. Combined with their planned increases, this means an overall dollar increase for Springer’s European titles of 23 to 24%. Individual titles may be above or below these general rates of course, but overall these increases are the worst we have seen in any single year this decade.

For those of you interested, Elsevier Sequoia titles will be available through New York and most subscription agencies with an exchange rate of 1.35 Swiss francs or 28% more than last year (plus “inflation”); British titles from Elsevier will use a pound

Ethical and Legal Use of Software for Members of the Academic Community (brochure, 1987),


Campus Networking Strategies edited by Caroline Arms (1988),


Serial publications include:

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sterling rate of 1.85 (it was about 1.70 last year); and the French
franc is at 5.34. On June 29, 1990, James Kels sent out his annual
letter to libraries describing the whys and wherefores of the Dutch
guilder increases. If you did not get a copy, contact John Tagler at
Elsevier NY (phone: 212-789-5800). That letter does not set the
exchange rate, but it explains reasons for their “inflation.”

Estimates on Pergamon are still pretty iffy, and as I have seen no
price lists, I can only repeat pure unmitigated rumors, i.e., expect
close to 20%. But time will tell if that is true or not.

[Ed note: Just as we go to press, Chuck informs me that the LSU
figures for Pergamon show a 27% increase!]

Also from the Newsletter on Serials Pricing, No. 25, August
8, 1990:

“Access to Serials: ALA ALCTS Serials Section
Program” by Cindy Hepfer
(Health Sciences Library, SUNY
Buffalo, Abbott Hall, Buffalo, NY
14214).

The house was packed for the
ALCTS Serials Section program
at ALA. The topic, “Access to
Serials,” interested a wide cross-
section of ALA attendees. Serials
section chair, Suzanne Striedieck,
presided.

David Cohen, Director of the
College of Charleston Library,
opened the program by posing the
question, “are we ready for access?”
Cohen said that libraries are trying
to provide “access to excess,” and
that librarians have much to learn
about the ownership/access needs
of scholars and students. He noted
that while the primacy of subject
searching has been established, the
access model is rooted in known
item searching, and online catalogs
cannot be searched serendipitously.
Cohen pointed out that
comprehensive access in the form of
loading commercial index/
abstract services into online
catalogs is expensive, and librarians
are trading one set of costs for
another. The Wilson indexes, for
instance, cost ten times more in
their online form than they do in
paper.

Becky Lenzini, President of
CARL Systems, Inc., discussed
document delivery issues. She
said that the important thing is not
whether a library owns something
but whether it can get its users
what they need. CARL in effect
creates a union list of articles.
Patrons can go directly to the library
holding the copy of the article they
need, request a copy of any article
by traditional interlibrary loan
means, or make an online request
for a FAX of any article, charging
the cost to their mastercard or visa.
CARL is working actively with the
Copyright Clearance Center
as, for these purposes, faxing is
considered to be the same thing as
photocopying.

Clifford Lynch, Director of the
University of California Division
of Library Automation, compared
retrospective conversion of
monographic titles with
retrospective conversion of the
contents of journals held by
libraries. He noted that if libraries
were to do retrospective
conversions of their journal
contents, the transitional period
would be much longer and harder
than it proved to be for monograph
conversion. The alternative is to
load ready-made databases into
online catalogs. The University of
California has loaded both
Medline and Current Contents
onto its Melvyl system. With
three years of Medline loaded, the
system sees some 50,000 searches
per week on that database. Current
Contents has been up only one
month but already is being
searched at the rate of 25,000
queries a week. Lynch wondered
whether once these databases are
deemed as being valuable their
producers will increase the prices!

As someone with significant
experience in loading commercial
databases into an online catalog,
Lynch offered a review of some
resulting problems. First,
commercial databases are
bibliographies with non-campus
specific coverage, loaded into
catalogs which cover what any
given library/library system owns.
This combination often leaves
users quite confused. Second,
libraries pay for the same citation
numerous times in different
databases. He noted that it would
be nice to combine the citation
data from various databases in
order to provide the earliest
possible access and multiple
subject headings, but licensing
agreements prohibit this. Third,
librarians need to think about the
relationship between catalogs,
databases, and collections. Until
document delivery options catch
up with instant access, the
importance of owning any given
title in the local collection will
remain. Lynch does not see CD-
ROMs as offering a concrete
alternative since there are
problems with the networking
technology, and scholars cannot
access them from their offices or
homes. Online access, on the
other hand, can be used to provide
current awareness services and
can even be linked to scholars’
workstations, an important
forward step.

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