ATG Interviews Bill Cohen

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ATG Interviews Bill Cohen
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief, The Haworth Press, Inc.  www.HaworthPress.com
The Taylor & Francis Acquisition of Haworth Press: One Year Later

by Katina Strauch (Editor, Against the Grain) <kstrauch@comcast.net>

ATG: Bill, it’s been a whole year (hard to believe!) since the merger of Haworth Press into the Taylor & Francis Group. How has the transition been from your point of view? From T&F’s point of view?

BC: The anniversary of the merger forges ahead with most positive feelings. Some of Haworth’s 200 academic journal editors were of course initially nervous. However, these sentiments quickly changed. The Taylor & Francis Group is an “acquisitive” company and was well-versed with all details involved with an acquisition like this. Their executive staff swiftly took charge, with sensitivity and supportive insight.

In addition, a number of key Haworth editors were hired by Taylor & Francis and moved to Philadelphia, where their primary North American journal office is located. Senior Haworth personnel included Kathy Rutz, Dr. Ushai Singh, Dr. Shrikirshna (Krish) Singh, Sean Bepple, and more.

Taylor & Francis greatly increased their office space at their handsome main headquarters at 325 Chestnut Street to accommodate the increased workload.

I hope librarians at all levels and in all departments will understand the enormous amount of effort and coordination involved from the technical side. Any interruptions in Internet service were tackled with utmost possible speed. This is no easy feat, as the Haworth computer system bore little relation to the Taylor & Francis computer system. Our 200 journals were also twice the number of the previous large journal acquisitions by Taylor & Francis, that of Larry Earlbbaum Publishers. At one point, the Haworth computer was “tweaked” so that it operated at something like 40 times its previous speed. I tried this myself. It worked.

ATG: You seem to be actively involved in the operation of Haworth despite what it will be. Where are you located?

BC: Taylor & Francis indicated we should “carry on as if nothing is happening” during the first several weeks of the merger planning. Thereafter, however, it was Kevin Bradley, the powerhouse President of the Taylor & Francis North American operations, who undertook all managerial roles, and delegated the responsibilities. During the first six months my role was to caretake just the 32 library and information science journals, while the others were split up amongst various specialty editors. A number of medical and pharmaceutical titles went to Informa Health, a separate division of T&F in New York City, while others were segmented appropriately in different departments in Philadelphia. Jill Millard is Publisher, Routledge US Journals Program, Social & Behavioral Sciences, Arts & Humanities & Education, while directly under her is Concetta Seminara, Associate Editor, Business, Economics & Sociocultural Studies. Both executives deserve the highest praise one can formulate for their broad understanding of scholarly and academic journal publishing, and the editorial management skills required.

Several months later, Stacy Stanislaw came on board to take over responsibility as Managing Editor, Information Science. She was fantastic in all respects. I met too briefly Ed Cilurso, Production Manager, who overworems one with his profound knowledge of every nuance involved in production science, from manuscript to print/Web publication. Dr. David Green, Publishing Director from the UK, also presented himself, and presided over several meetings with most rare efficiency and facilitative wit. I met up also with Bev Acreman, who has taken up an important new leadership role within the UKSG, involving both their Marketing and Education Committees.

I am leaving out too many of the huge number of other leaders of the great Taylor & Francis team in the United States and the United Kingdom. I have not even seen such a multitude of people power invested with such talent, creativity, and vigor.

Relating to my own role: it is mainly to facilitate where possible, adapt as required, advise where necessary … and also just sit back quietly and learn. I am still working from my home office in lower Manhattan. When any Haworth journal editor or book author hits a “snag,” they might usually contact me for advice and help, and I do my best to help veer them in the right direction. Within the area of librarianship, one major development that might come about — if not now, then possibly in a later year — could be the official adoption of our flagship journal, The Serials Librarian, by NASIG.

Negotiations on this potentially historic event may be taking place as this interview is being provided, so it would not be appropriate for me to expand upon this, with the exception that I do hope that this comes about. SL was the first peer-reviewed journal devoted to the study of serials librarianship, and indeed the first journal if you don’t count the older newsletter-type publication, Serials Slants.

Taylor & Francis is also now the largest publisher of peer-reviewed journals in library and information science, in terms of numbers, eclipsing Elsevier. It is appropriate that formal ties with leading library organizations be identified, discussed, and hopefully considered. T&F now has a library journal relating to almost every library function — ranging from administration (Journal of Library Administration) to cataloging (Cataloging & Classification Quarterly) to electronic resources licensing, to standardized reporting and assessment requirements for institutional repositories, to budgeting and management of large bundles or aggregated product offerings. From the get-go there was an understanding continued on page 62
that electronic resources management was not simply serials librarianship re-named. It is, in so many ways, the new librarianship in practice.

**ATG:** What other new journal publications are in the works? Books?

**BC:** I am not really privy to new journal launches at this point in time. Book publishing is carried out by entirely separate divisions.

**ATG:** What predictions do you have for the future of Haworth? Will you continue to be a separate imprint of Taylor & Francis?

**BC:** Haworth’s journals should grow and prosper. I anticipate they may advantageously be folded into a broader, Routledge/Taylor & Francis imprimatur. By far and away, one of the most immediate advantages is that the publication lag time (defined here as meaning the time from receipt of final copy in the publisher’s office, to final print/Web publication) has already been cut from six months to three months. That time reduction will be a magnet for highly cited authors. In addition, Taylor & Francis promotes on both sides of the Atlantic, and maintains a 15-member sales force for “Big Deals” and other types of journal packages. Other factors includes T&F’s participation in low-cost journal programs for libraries in most of Africa; technological improvements to make the Haworth journals Counter compliant; and once again the vast advantages of informaworld, the Taylor & Francis platform, which is so extraordinarily robust.

**ATG:** Do you regret your decision to sell Haworth Press to Taylor & Francis?

**BC:** No, not at all. At this time in my life, I could not go it alone. More importantly, I see the journal business as changing radically on many fronts. There is a unique paradox facing us. On the one hand, the Internet allows anyone to distribute information globally with the greatest of ease. In addition, costs of typography are decreasing rapidly. This makes it possible to launch new journal in a period of punishing budgetary stress. The struggle will continue for libraries to maintain whatever relevance they have for their constituencies; technological innovations will be adopted to enhance that relevance; collections will continue their migration to electronic; institutional repositories will become major players in scholarly communication, putting pressure on publishers.

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**From the Reference Desk**

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*Sage’s Encyclopedia of Stem Cell Research* (2008, 978-1412959087, $225) deals with a controversial topic that evokes heartfelt responses from both those in favor and those opposed. The editors of this set, Clive N. Svendsen and Allison D. Ebert acknowledge this in their introduction and point to the development of induced pluripotent stem cells in place of the destruction of embryonic stem cells as possibly deflating the ethical controversy surrounding stem cell research. Nonetheless, they admit that concerns and confusion still exist. Fortunately for them, this only enhances the value of their serious treatment of this difficult issue in terms a layman can understand and appreciate.

These two volumes attempt to provide an overview of stem cell research that both explains the science behind the research as well as addresses its history, ethical complexity and legal and political ramifications. The value of this work lies in its success in offering a synthesis of these interweaving threads. The editors wisely provide a Reader’s Guide grouping related articles in broad categories allowing users to get a sense of the scope of coverage as well as specific areas of concern. In addition, there are “see also” references after each entry. A number of articles discuss relevant biology as well as clinical trials of stem cells on individual diseases. Others report on the institutions, organizations, and people making significant contributions while others address the historic, political, ethical and religious perspectives. In addition, there are articles that highlight research activity in a number of countries throughout the world and within individual states in the U.S. Each entry provides a brief bibliography of relevant sources from both the popular and academic literature as well as the Web. There is also a glossary of terms, a resource list including books, Websites, journals, and reports as well as the names and affiliations of hundreds of scientists currently involved in stem cell research. Appendices add more insight by including a CRS report for Congress on federal funding continued on page 64