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Publisher Interview/ Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey

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Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey

Interview by **Julia Gelfand** (1992/93 Fulbright Librarian in U.K.)

On March 5, 1993, I had the opportunity to conduct a brief interview with Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey at the Institute of Directors in London. This meeting followed an earlier conversation which took place in Brussels last November. The last quarter of a century has directed many changes in the publishing world. Many of those changes have been brought about first by micropublishing and more recently by publishing of electronic information on CD-ROM and magnetic tape. Chadwyck-Healey has been at the forefront of many of these developments.

Who is Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey? A highly energized enthusiastic, visible, incredibly sensible, intellectually curious, logical, and futuristic leader in the publishing industry, who shares enormous interest in all of his projects. "I rarely take on something for which I don't have a passion," he says.

ATG: Tell us about yourself. Where were you born? What do you do for fun?

Sir Charles: I was born in 1940 in a small village north of London called Much Hadham (where Henry Moore, the sculptor, worked all his life). I have moved around a lot since then and I now live only thirty miles further north, fifteen miles to the south of Cambridge in a small village called Bassingbourn.

I started my career working on glossy magazines, both in editorial and as a photographer. However, I come from a family of publishers but never worked for the family firm which was finally sold shortly after I started my company. This firm published technical journals and my great, great grandfather, Charles Healey, started the world's first engineering magazine *The Engineer*.

Since I travel a lot for my work, I like to spend as much time as possible at home but I also have a house in a small village in northern Tuscany in Italy where my wife and I go as often

as we can. I have two daughters and a son; the eldest two (son and daughter) are both in their last year at university. My main interests are photography, sailing, some gardening, and a little tennis for exercise. I also buy a lot of books.

ATG: You said that your great, great grandfather was in publishing. What about your own publishing career?

Sir Charles: I began my career in reprint publishing in 1967 with Cornmarket Press which issued facsimiles for academic libraries and users. In 1970 I joined Johnson Reprint

Corporation where I stayed two years and saw the interest in microfilm publishing grow significantly. I had a background in photography so I brought technical and technological skills to this work and could see a great future in the North American markets for reprint products. I decided to set up Chadwyck-Healey because I wanted to run my own company; there was no future for me at Johnson Reprint Corporation and I was also interested in microfilm as a publishing medium in which Johnson had no interest. So in 1973, I began Chadwyck-Healey with two major goals — 1) micro-filming archives of publishers and 2) responding to large scale reprint demand created by academic and research libraries primarily in the U.S.

ATG: Where did you locate the funding to form the company?

Sir Charles: Funding came from private sources and since we started with a very small operation, just myself and two employees, it required very little money initially. Most of the funding for our growth has been generated from sales.

ATG: How many foreign governments are you working with?

Sir Charles: We have worked directly with the following governments: UK, US, French, and Russian. We also work closely with the EEC and the UN and are currently coordinating with the Vatican Library. We, of course, sell to national libraries throughout the world.

ATG: What is the organization of Chadwyck-Healey? How many employees do you have? Tell us about the company.

Sir Charles: The Chadwyck-Healey group of companies consists of nine companies in all, including a microfilm bureau and ERIIS, a company in the US which sells environmental information and historic land use information to the environmental risk assessment markets which relate to real estate, banking and law. Altogether, the group has over two hundred employees. The largest company is Chadwyck-Healey Ltd. in Cambridge with sixty-five employees and there is also an office in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Other offices are in Paris, Madrid, Alexandria, Virginia, and New Haven, Connecticut.

ATG: Can you give us some background on the development of Chadwyck-Healey since it was formed in 1973?

Sir Charles: In 1974 a U.S. company was established primarily for marketing purposes and major products soon were being released. Among the early ones were the *Index of American Design* in 1977. It was the largest color microfiche project released with 15,000 images from the Works Progress

Administration of the 1930s depicting all objects of decorative, folk and popular arts made in America from the time of settlement to about 1900. The company issued both microfilm and microfiche products together from the beginning. During the 1970s, Chadwyck-Healey was establishing itself in the art market with *Art Exhibition Catalogs* and continued with the *New York Public Library Artists File Collections*, again a mega file of over 1.5 million items representing 81,117 artists in a collection of 11,381 microfiche. We also introduced other programmes such as *Statistical Series* and *UK Government Publications*.

The next decade saw other firsts for the company. There was the opening of our own microfilming factory at the base site in Cambridge, and the release of the 19th century *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*, a collection of over 46,000 microfiche making it the largest project of its scope outside the United States. The finding tool that accompanies this set is composed of six volumes in nearly 5,000 pages. During the 1980s, the company placed an emphasis on archival tools and the *National Inventory of Documentary Sources* (NIDS) for the U.S. and shortly thereafter the UK and Canada were released, which linked what was in an archive or specific manuscript collection in a major finding aid, making historical and literary research more accessible to the scholar.

ATG: While most of us were plugging in microfilm or fiche readers and concerned about copying options and before most of us were exploring alternative formats, you were busy investigating videodisk as a technology appropriate for the humanities. By 1983, you were immersed in the potential for CD-ROM.

Sir Charles: After I saw the reaction to the release of the Australian Census on CD-ROM in 1986, I was convinced that this technology was going to have a strong presence in libraries and for individual workstations. We began distributing the *SuperMap Census Series*. It was clear that CD-ROM offered a new direction with images, color, data, maps integrated with easy access. In 1987, Chadwyck-Healey introduced its first

CD-ROM which was a joint venture with the British Government, the *Catalogue of the United Kingdom Official Publications on CD-ROM* (UKOP). That was just over five years ago. This new medium was suitable for research collections and required a company like Chadwyck-Healey to concentrate on developing a new marketing structure within the changing publishing industry.

ATG: Where do you get your ideas for projects? What are some of them?

Sir Charles: Ideas for projects come from discussions with colleagues, librarians and academics, reading library and other academic journals, seeing what our competitors are doing and also (and perhaps the most important) spending time in libraries looking at what is on the shelves, using bibliographies and reference works.

ATG: One of your stated goals when you formed Chadwyck-Healey was "microfilming archives of publishers." Would you elaborate on this? What percentage of publishers keep archives of their entire historical publication list? Has this goal changed since you formed the company?

Sir Charles: Microfilming the archives of British publishers — these include those archives that are accessible to us, i.e., those that are old enough to be out of copyright or/and when there are no privacy problems. Generally this means eighteenth or nineteenth century publishers and there are only relatively few with extensive archives. We have done most of them. Scribener's is one of the major exceptions.

ATG: In ALA Denver you had a program on the filming of many of the Russian historical archives which was very exciting. Would you tell us about this project and also about how the changes in Russia might change this project?

Sir Charles: The Committee for Archives of the Government of the Russian Federation (Roskomarkhiv) and the Hoover Institution have begun a joint project to microfilm the archives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Roskomarkhiv will produce the

microfilm (estimated at 25 million sheets of archival documentation on 25,000 reels of microfilm) with financial resources provided by the Hoover Institution. The project is expected to cost \$3 million and take five years to complete. Roskomarkhiv's agreement with the Hoover Institution is intended to enhance access to the Communist Party archives as well as to preserve them for future research. Copies of all 25,000 reels of microfilm will be deposited with Roskomarkhiv for use by scholars in Russia, and at the Hoover Institution for use by scholars in the United States.

A publications program will also be developed to make the microfilms available for sale to interested libraries. Chadwyck-Healey Ltd. will market and distribute the film. The publications program will feature approximately 5,000 reels of microfilm, representing the record series of widest interest to scholars. Copies of published microfilms will be deposited at the Library of Congress and the Novosibirsk Regional State Archives.

The agreement also establishes an archival and scholarly exchange program. A one-for-one exchange of microfilm between Hoover and Roskomarkhiv is planned. A portion of earnings from microfilm sales will be used to help fund the exchange program. Details are forthcoming. Future project activities will be reported in a newsletter to be published and freely distributed by Chadwyck-Healey Ltd. Those interested in receiving copies of the newsletter should write to Chadwyck-Healey Ltd., Cambridge Place, Cambridge CB2 1NR United Kingdom.

Obviously, if there is a change of government in Russia or a complete collapse of social organisation our projects would be directly affected but so far they continue reasonably well.

ATG: We understand you are "developing more products for the European Community." Could you be more specific? With changes in Europe, what changes or types of changes/projects do you envision?

Sir Charles: Directions today take Chadwyck-Healey into developing more products for the European Community. Our forthcoming

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Publishing's World

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world and solidified Pocket Books as the leader in paperback publishing.

Chicago newspaper giant Marshall Field III bought Simon & Schuster and Pocket Books in 1944. Mr. Field's infusion of funds allowed Pocket Books to expand tremendously under the watchful eyes of Robert de Graff. The publisher subsequently had more leeway in establishing new products and increasing the number of titles printed in accordance with the wishes of the mass audience. In 1946, for example, de Graff learned by coincidence that the best selling government publication was a manual on raising children, so he enlisted Dr. Benjamin Spock to prepare a manuscript of this nature. Showing his editorial sense and fervor for sales, de Graff quickly adapted the book into the paperback format. The Pocket edition of *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care* has sold over twenty-five million copies making it the best selling book by a single author in American publishing history.

To help lend further credence to the importance of paperback publishing to the book industry as a whole, Pocket Books released *Franklin Delano Roosevelt: A Memorial* just six days after his death in 1945. This event constituted the creation of the first instant paperback and proved that book publishers had the ability to respond to sudden news events rapidly and comprehensively.

Pocket Books under Robert de Graff never failed to respond to the needs and wants of its large body of readers. The twenty-five cent price and 4 1/4" by 6 1/2" size characterizing "pocket books" were both arrived at initially as a result of reader surveys. Throughout the early years, Pocket Books selected titles according to favorable test run results and reader responses. For example, mystery titles made up a large percentage of Pocket Books' lists. It is apparent that reader interest has always been high in this category because between 1941 and 1975, nineteen Perry Mason titles have gained best seller status with each book selling two million copies. As of 1979, thirty-six Agatha Christie novels had graced the Pocket Books lists making her the

best-selling woman author in the world. Pocket Books has always attempted to appeal to the widest range of interests and tastes of the mass audience. Popular Western, humor, and self-help titles have filled out the backbone of Pocket lists throughout the years along with important reference materials like *The New Merriam-Webster Pocket Dictionary* and *Roget's Pocket Thesaurus*. Robert de Graff's ability to identify and seize the opportunities presented by these vast markets was another key to the success of his company.

Pocket Books is still considered one of the most remarkable financial successes in publishing history. The venture was started with \$30,000 of capital. In 1944, Marshall Field paid \$3 million for Pocket Books and Simon & Schuster, and in 1957, following de Graff's retirement, Leon Shimkin bought only Pocket Books back for \$5 million. In 1961, it went public at \$72 million. But far beyond any monetary gain, Robert de Graff's Pocket Books achieved the development of a

distribution program for mass-marketed, paperbound, pocket-size books and succeeded in dominating their industry for decades. Robert de Graff's innovative nature, determination, vision and business and editorial senses provided the basis for his leadership role at his company from 1939 to 1957, the formative years of the mass-market paperback industry.

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Sir Charles

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important EEC publication is called EUROCAT and is the first official complete catalogue of the EEC documents and publications in electronic form.

We are also creating full text products such as *The English Poetry Full-Text Database on CD-ROM* which includes the works of 1,350 poets from the Anglo-Saxon period to the end of the nineteenth century.

ATG: Would you comment on CD-ROM and computer technologies and the roles that these other technologies might play in the future development of Chadwyck-Healey?

Sir Charles: We were primarily microform publishers until three years ago. Now we are almost entirely publishers of electronic information on CD-ROM and magnetic tape and are, in fact, the largest CD-ROM publisher

of our type in Europe. Now we are publishers of electronic information, not just microfilm publishers.

ATG: Your products are exciting but expensive, especially in today's library climate when libraries are cutting back on many expenditures. How do you manage to maintain economic viability? Is your market largely academic research libraries? Has this changed since you began the company? Do you have any plans to develop products which might be affordable by smaller, poorer libraries?

Sir Charles: We do have CD-ROM products for smaller "poorer" libraries — for example, in the UK almost one thousand schools buy CD-ROMs of British newspapers such as *The Guardian* and the last UK Census. We will continue to publish large, and thereby expensive, high quality research projects. We believe that there is a continuing demand for these amongst the world's research libraries.☞