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Interview/ Bill Leazer

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People

A Conversation With — Bill Leazer

*With the announcement of the acquisition of **Majors Scientific Subscriptions** by **EBSCO**, our thoughts turned to one of our favorite people — **Bill Leazer**, Vice President at **Majors**. We wondered how he was doing. We wondered how the acquisition was affecting him. At the back of our minds was a little voice. It said that if **Bill** had survived **Liz and Richard**, he would certainly be all right in this situation. You see, **Bill Leazer** worked for **Richard Burton** during the filming of *Cleopatra* and the beginning of **Burton and Elizabeth Taylor's** torrid love affair.*

*And **Bill** is doing just fine. We had the following conversation the other day. . .*

ATG: What are your emotions about the acquisition?

BL: They are naturally mixed. My long actual working association with **Majors** was coming to an end. Employee associations would no longer be the same. Many of the plans for the future development had to be dropped. Not knowing what the future would hold for me, personally, as well as for my employees, was tempered with the fact that our interests were taken into consideration by all parties concerned. It was the end of one era and the beginning of a new era.

ATG: What kind of feedback did you hear from customers?

BL: Some customers were very upset. They had come with **Majors** because of the personal service and didn't want to lose the specialized service from our highly trained account specialists. But I have to say that in the past few months, my trips to customers have been an ego trip in the final analysis. I have heard wonderful things from many customers and publishers.

Both **Majors** and **EBSCO** worked together in an exemplary manner to

advise every single customer about the takeover by fax, news release, Internet, and phone calls. Immediately, personal visits were set up with as many accounts as possible. **EBSCO** then quickly followed to reassure customers and to let them know of their helpful features. Regional meetings, as well as conferences in the Birmingham corporate headquarters were held to be sure everyone had an opportunity to look at them closely and to ask any and all questions.

ATG: **EBSCO** has been a **Majors** competitor for many years. How did it

feel to have a competitor take over your company?

BL: It was naturally difficult. Fortunately, I had personally always gotten along well with **EBSCO's** key players. Now that the smoke has cleared, it is a pleasure to be able to work together with these outstanding people.

ATG: What are you, personally, going to do now, **Bill**?

BL: I thought about retirement long and hard. But **EBSCO** has taken a positive interest in my future so I plan on working with them out of Dallas at least for another year. I am committed to **Majors** already through the end of 1993, in any event. In going with **EBSCO**, I feel that I will be able to

continue helping our many wonderful customers while at the same time helping **EBSCO**. There are always new ideas and new developments which can benefit all of us and through **EBSCO**, I hope to be able to realize these.

ATG: What about the other **Majors** employees? What will happen to them?

BL: Especially satisfying to me has been the effort by **EBSCO** to offer positions to each and every one of our employees. **Jim Stephens** and **F. Dixon Brooke** have each spent time in our offices sitting with each person to observe, to inquire, and to find answers to the way we operate. They have also sent key personnel over to go through all of our procedures so they can understand what our customers will expect from them in the future.

Majors has frozen several openings as well as created new positions as options for those employees who preferred to remain with the company, recognizing their expertise in the publishing industry and their past record of excellent service.

I am satisfied that both **EBSCO** and **Majors** have left no stone unturned.

ATG: **Majors** is staying in the book business, is that right?

BL: Yes. Books have always been the prime emphasis and largest part of **Majors'** business. Now they will be able to concentrate on new research and development for service to libraries, bookstores, and the medical/technical community. Continuations have been retained and will be included in this development. There will be unified reports between **EBSCO** and **Majors** for customers who use both companies.

And **Bill** himself said it best — "Majors and **EBSCO**, like **Pamina** and **Tamino** in Mozart's *Magic Flute* have walked through the fire and the ice. Now, we have a bright new future ahead of us." ❧