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F. Dixon Brooke Jr., Vice President, Division General Manager, EBSCO Subscription Service

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Against the Grain

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Interview with F. Dixon Brooke Jr.

Vice President, Division General Manager, EBSCO Subscription Services

by Katina Strauch (College of Charleston)

Since March, I have been trying to interview Dixon Brooke for ATG. I finally did in late September. While I was there, I met up with some other librarians who were attending the SOLINET meeting in Birmingham and were also visiting. EBSCO Industries is located on the edge of the Oak Mountain State Park. You approach through a slate walkway lined with trees, and swans greet you at the front door. It is an idyllic environment. Here is what EBSCO's Division General Manager said about our industry. — KS

ATG: I guess we can get this out of the way first. What comments do you have on EBSCO's work to purchase the remaining Faxon operations and Dawson now buying them?

DB: I hope this doesn't disappoint you, but because of the terms of the non-disclosure agreement, I can't really comment one way or another about it. What's been released to the public by others is out there and that's going to have to stand, whether it's correct or not. I'm sorry.

ATG: This is EBSCO's 50th year. You have been with the company for 23 years. What comments do you have about the industry and how it has changed? What are the things that stand out in your mind?

DB: I would say, first, that technology has changed the way we do business in a dramatic way. The first time I visited EBSCO in 1968 I toured the Title Information Department, which maintains bibliographic control of our title database. The database was about 8,000 to 10,000 titles, and our records were being maintained on rolodex cards. There were no computers or terminals. Each person had four or five rolodexes on their desk, and they were responsible for maintaining the price, the name, address and the basic terms and conditions of sale for a group of publications. When a change came in, our

person updated the card and sent out the information to each regional office so that everyone would have the updated information.

When I joined EBSCO in 1972, we had advanced into computerization. With the acquisition of Franklin Square in 1972, we were able to make the conversion from their system to our system and we became mostly automated. Also at that time, we began to process all orders and invoices through the computer system. The Title Information Department was then responsible for maintaining a computer index of data as opposed to rolodex cards. That was a pretty dramatic change.

The first department that was online to the computer was, of course, the Title Information Department. Over time our internal service centers, which support our regional offices, were connected to the central mainframe computer. We then automated different processes in our regional offices and brought them online with the

attracting quality people, in giving them good jobs and challenging opportunities, and in helping them to grow and prosper. Without good people we wouldn't have been able to accomplish what we have been able to do, nor would we have been able to grow and expand their careers and improve our services each year.

ATG: You alluded to your regional office structure. You have 28 regional offices: nine in this country and more abroad? I know that these offices are usually staffed with many people. You seem to allow these offices a lot of autonomy. Would you comment on your organizational structure?

DB: Our global regional office network is a very important part of our success and is the one thing that really stands us apart from our competition. We aren't completely centralized like our competitors because our regional offices give us the ability to be closer to our customers

"Our global regional office network is a very important part of our success and is the one thing that really stands us apart from our competition."

and to maintain a sense of smallness, giving our customers the personal touch that we

main system so that they could process their customers' orders and claims more efficiently. This regional office network was the foundation of what eventually became our EBSCO-NET Online Subscription Service system that links customers around the world directly to our system today. The Title Information Department now keeps records on 235,000 title listings and makes an average of 175,000 update changes to the database each month.

Secondly, we've had significant growth since the early seventies. For example, we had to construct a new building to house our International Headquarters and it was completed in 1982. At that time we had 350 people working here. Since then we've added two more buildings and have 750 people working at headquarters; EBSCO Industries now has more than 3,000 employees worldwide.

My third observation is about the increasingly high caliber of the people who work here. We have been successful in

wouldn't have if we had just one big central location. This structure also allows us to be closer to publishers in countries outside the United States. Because we have so many offices which are close to major publishers and are online with our main computer system, we can provide better, more current title information and get better responses to claims sent to publishers outside the U.S. For example, each office is responsible for assisting other EBSCO offices by dealing with local publishers when needed in a claiming situation and by entering pertinent publisher information into our main system so all offices and customers can benefit.

Accountability is also a continuing reason for maintaining regional offices. Many companies may have sales people who work in a particular area. In our case, our offices are fully functional and well-staffed to cover a small geographic region. Each of them operates as a full-service subscription agent in that particular region, attending to libraries' needs and handling

all customer support functions, with the exception of the large, repetitive jobs that would be too costly to replicate regionally. These are centralized jobs such as maintaining the title database, working to maintain productive relationships with publishers, and managing all the computing and accounting services. This kind of central support frees up the regional offices to process orders and deal with their customers on a day-to-day basis from the service point of view and for the sales and service representatives to stay close to the customer. It puts the responsibility on the managers to be certain that they are following through on what they commit to customers so that we don't have people making commitments we aren't prepared to stand behind. The accountability is right there in the office that's responsible for customer satisfaction in that region. That doesn't necessarily mean that the regional offices have total autonomy and independence. We do have company policy and guidelines that everyone adheres to and follows. We have a good reporting structure where everything is communicated well within the company. We meet on a regular basis and try to be as consistent as possible in our service to our customers wherever we operate.

ATG: Let's talk more about your global operation. Birmingham, I know, is your International Headquarters.

DB: Birmingham is the location of our International Headquarters and serves as the support center for the EBSCO network of offices worldwide. This global network is unique in the industry. It is a true network in that all offices are linked through a sophisticated telecommunication network and through our mainframe in Birmingham. We have 28 offices worldwide: nine in this country, two in Canada, nine in Europe, five in the Australasian/East Asian area, two in Latin America and one serving customers who are not within a territory covered by a particular regional office. The staffing and interconnectivity of this network gives us the ability to expand and grow without being disruptive to our existing customer base and to provide the best possible customer support for journals published throughout the world.

You asked me earlier about significant changes in the company. One of the significant changes with EBSCO has been our growth internationally. In the early seventies we had a number of libraries

overseas doing business with EBSCO but mostly with the different U.S. offices. For example, libraries in Asia did business with the EBSCO office in Los Angeles or San Francisco, libraries in China did business with our office in Canada, libraries in Europe did business with our office in Tenafly, NJ. But our U.S. offices weren't always well-equipped to deal with a non-US library on an occasional basis. We thought that we could better focus our attention to the needs of our overseas customers, so we decided to create an office for those customers. This office is now called EBSCO International. We made

the decision back in the early seventies and from that point we began to grow by making trips to different parts of the world, visiting with our customers and with other prospects. We benefited further through hiring local individuals in the different countries to represent us — people such as **Wim Luijendijk** in The Netherlands, **John DeVette** in Taiwan and **Val Hemingway** in Australia who knew the customs and lived there. We have continued to expand and have a strong presence in many countries.

You can see how our regional office network has evolved over time as we enjoyed growth in various regions of the world. What has this meant to our customers? We have been able to expand our title database because we are not only serving the needs of libraries, say, in The Netherlands for U.S. publications, but we are also gathering information on publishers and local titles to which our Dutch customers subscribe. We've got staff members at our Dutch office helping us keep our title database over here up-to-date.

Because of their constant communication with local publishers, they can electronically update our files to better serve all of our customers. And the same is true in Australia, France, Germany, the Middle East, New Zealand, East Asia, Spain, Brazil, etc. We are dealing with libraries in such countries not only for North American and European publications but for their own local publications. The data we receive on these titles has allowed us to expand our title database tremendously. This benefits libraries in all parts of the world by allowing them to use us as a single source for materials published anywhere in the world. Perhaps the most important benefit is the ability to resolve problems quickly. We deliver the best of both worlds to our customers, that is, the convenience of local support without sacrificing the ability to deal with publishers in remote places.

ATG: How about the Internet? How is that going to expand your coverage of publications as some become electronic? What role do you see that playing in this type of operation? Do you see the subscription agent playing a role in this electronic environment?

DB: Our long term goal is to provide access to serial information, regardless of the format. Certainly serial information will continue to be published in printed form along with many new forms. There are constant technological changes and it remains to be seen how it's all going to fall out. We believe we are well positioned. We have our traditional business which is being a full-service vendor for information being acquired for library collections and this has meant that we help customers collect anything published serially — whether it's in print, on video, audio cassette, CD-ROM, or microform — it doesn't matter.

To make the transition from now to the future of electronic publishing, what we're increasingly seeing and being told by our customers, is that there are a lot of choices out there. You can buy the printed piece. You can get a database license and distribute information on your own system. You can access a remote database online. You can buy a CD-ROM. Now that you've got all these options, you have to sort out which one is best for you for the short and long term. Each publisher is different. Some are handling electronic distribution themselves. Some are contracting with other sources. Regardless of the decision

you make, you end up having to renew and pay on an annual basis. Therefore, a lot of what's going to happen in the future seems to fit well with the administrative procedures we now have in place. We will be able to continue our role and bring more order to the chaos by making the information available that libraries' need to make decisions before they purchase and also by streamlining the billing and organizing the acquisition information in our special reports to help customers manage collections and access options.

ATG: *One thing that I have noticed is that with networked environments and with integrated library systems, over the past six to nine months, I have heard some librarians talk about "going direct" to publishers rather than using a vendor. I am sort of flabbergasted with this thought and I was wondering if you had observed this and would care to comment on it?*

DB: We haven't heard this much at all. There certainly aren't many libraries we know of that are doing it. I think part of that is governed by the fact that it is interesting to think about the possibility. It has always been a possibility. There are some libraries that order some titles direct today and think that is the best thing for them to do. We don't believe it's the best thing for a library to do. Most libraries believe we provide high value services for a much lower cost than they can achieve with their own procurement, payment and management procedures.

Certainly automation makes it easier to contemplate, but still you have the monumental task of keeping up with all the different publishers, the changes in rates, the changes in publishing terms, the mergers, the splits, the ones that are behind in their publishing schedules and the multitude of processes required to ensure fulfillment. Many corporations and purchasing agents have found that outsourcing this type of activity is by far the most economical option, and we have gained many new customers recently because of this growing realization. There are large economies of scale we achieve that just aren't possible at individual locations. I think the expertise and experience that we have will stand us well in the future. It's entirely possible that some organizations

will attempt to order direct just as some have in the past. However, we are constantly minding our costs and trying to keep our average service charges as low as possible for our customers.

"Without good people we wouldn't have been able to accomplish what we have been able to do ..."

ATG: *Service charges. There has been a lot of talk about service charges and, if there is one major vendor, how service*

charges may go up as the competition narrows. What comment do you have on that and on the assessment of service charges to libraries?

DB: I think the globalization of the serials industry is bringing many new competitors into the picture. However, the presence or absence of competition is not a factor in our pricing formula. We collect service charges from most customers in order to recover our costs of maintenance and processing.

Publisher discounts, timing of customer payments and the ease or difficulty associated with handling particular titles on a customer's list affects our service charges most directly. We aim to provide the highest standard of service over the long run and this requires a fair price.

Major changes to a customer's subscription list can certainly impact our service charge. For example if a customer orders their European STM journals from another vendor and orders the rest of their subscriptions from us, the service charge percentage on what they order from us will likely be higher than the overall percentage we would have charged if they had ordered the entire list from us. This is because European STM journals generally carry the highest agency discount and are the least troublesome for us to handle — they are published fairly regularly, requiring fewer claims, and the publishers are sophisticated enough to transact business with us electronically so it cuts down on our internal costs. They actually bring the cost of handling the customer's list down when they are included. I would advise librarians who are concerned about overall expenditures to consider this carefully before splitting their lists. The perceived benefit of the old custom of dealing with nation of origin vendors in order to achieve the best possible service has seriously diminished with new

communications technology and the globalization of serials service.

ATG: *Let's talk about the subscription agent's service to publishers and about the "commission" or is it "discount" that publishers give you. Are you the agent of the library or the publisher? And what have you done about the reduction of publisher discounts over the past several years?*

DB: We are a service provider for libraries, but we must serve publishers as well in order to earn commissions which help us offset our costs and to get the assistance we must have in providing our customers the best service possible.

Some publishers give us what we call a "discount." Some publishers call it an "agency commission." We have done three things in response to reduced discounts: we have increased our market share, we have reduced internal costs and we have continued to try to earn a discount from publishers. For example, we try to prevent unnecessary claims by keeping our title information up to date, carefully reviewing claims and giving customers current data with which to make better claiming decisions. Eliminating unnecessary claims saves all three parties time and money. Additionally, we try to send orders and claims to publishers electronically to increase accuracy and to save money and time spent dealing with paper.

We have a strong commitment to maintaining the best bibliographic database in the industry. We work hard to get publishers to communicate with us early in the process by doing mailings, telephoning, and faxing, so that our bibliographic and financial records are the most current. We get that information into the system quickly so that as we invoice each year we are able to produce an invoice that has a correct price for the term invoiced. This avoids double work which is so costly for publishers and customers, as well as for us. When we can cut down on the back and forth of price adjustments and get it right on the front end, it saves all of us a lot of work and expense.

ATG: *When did you decide to publish **The Serials Directory**? I was trying to remember when it was first published without checking OCLC. It's a solid reference source.*

DB: We decided to publish **The Serials Directory** in 1985. We realized that our Title Information Department housed

a wealth of information and decided to make it available. We did some research and found that librarians were having to go to a variety of directories to find what they needed. We decided that we could produce the kind of directory that would cut down on this. It is the authoritative source for not only serials published, but also for newspapers. It's also available on CD-ROM.

ATG: That's a very traditional serial reference source that EBSCO started almost ten years ago. Where is all this access going to lead us? And how about your purchase of Dynamic Information and your recent agreement with The British Library? Where's that all going?

DB: We got into electronic publishing almost 10 years ago when we decided to publish **The Serials Directory** on CD-ROM. Our **EBSCO Publishing** division was created to do that and to offer access, via CD-ROM index and abstract databases, to the growing number of journal articles being published each year. Since then EBSCO Publishing has grown at an incredible rate and now produces more than 35 electronic reference products, many of which include keyword searchable, printable full text articles from about 500 important journals. They plan to include full text from 1,000 journals within the next 12 months. This venture served as our entry into the document supply business.

A few years ago we chose to enter into an arrangement with **The British Library** to take their Table of Contents product called **Inside Information** and put it on our mainframe system and make it available to our customers via the Internet or via EBSCONET, our online system for customers. That gave us an online, front end system in addition to our CD-ROM products for those who were looking for the latest articles from the table of contents of some 10,000 journals. We were impressed with the coverage of **Inside Information** because **The British Library** based it on an analysis of all article requests received from their customers worldwide. They chose the 10,000 most demanded titles. So it's not a collection based purely on the convenience of journals to which they just happen to have access.

By bringing **Dynamic Information** into the EBSCO family we further ex-

panded our service capabilities. Dynamic has been in information delivery over 14 years. They have primarily served the corporate research community, but they also have a number of academic library customers. They have a strong supply network and are able to get copies of anything — any kind of information whether it's a speech, an article, book chapter, a thesis or a paper presented at a recent conference. With **Dynamic Information** we can offer comprehensive document delivery services to our customers.

The British Library, EBSCO Publishing and **Dynamic Information** all fit together with our subscription services business so we can serve as one source for information regardless of whether it is available for ownership or access.

ATG: Some document delivery companies have said that it's a high volume business, e.g., if you don't have high volume, you probably aren't going to be able to make a profit. And now we are seeing

"Our long term goal is to provide access to serial information, regardless of the format."

more and more companies getting into the document delivery business. I am curious about your comments and whether or not the supply of articles will ever be a profitable venture for any vendor, especially with so many vendors involved in it?

DB: Clearly, there are a lot of players now. We don't think there will be as many as time goes by. Whether money can be made from document supply will depend on how and when publishers resolve the business issues of copyright and electronic information. Currently there is a lot of manual handling involved in document delivery because these issues have not been resolved. When the manual work is eliminated it could be a more profitable undertaking. Volume, technology and policy play key roles. **Dynamic Information**, though, has been in this business for the last 14 years so it's not correct to say that high volume is the factor most critical to success.

ATG: Yes, but I think that the corporate marketplace is more able and willing to pay for access to that type of information than the academic or the public library. Aren't you venturing into a new market-

place of demand for these materials?

DB: We are optimistic. We've spent the last two years putting together what we are using today, working with **The British Library** and doing the programming for search retrieval, developing interfaces to make it work easily for the user and incorporating this into our **EBSCONET**® system. We have linked **ADONIS** and data files with publishers and with **Dynamic Information**. We have our network up and working. In September we released **CASIAS**®, our new current awareness and individual article service. We see a healthy level of demand from all library types and are gearing up to meet that demand effectively. **Dynamic Information/EBSCO Document Services** will fulfill articles ordered through **CASIAS**® and will also continue to take orders sent directly to them.

ATG: Are you going to make that available over the Internet so that a library can load it as a menu item on the OPAC? And are you going to use either the UnCover or OCLC FirstSearch models?

DB: We are working on this and I know that **John Fitts**, our vice president of Information Systems and Services, and **Sandy Hurd**, our Director of Library Automation, are looking at these possibilities. There are a lot of good options. Right now, we are willing to provide licensed access through the Internet and provide support 24 hours a day for those who want a gateway through their OPAC. We are also making it available on CD-ROM. We are going to slice it a lot of different ways to meet each individual situation. We are currently programming a new search engine and have plans to release a file server access option that is Z39.50 compatible next year.

ATG: Would you talk about the decision-making process within EBSCO? How does it work? I'm thinking particularly about your decision ten years back not to develop a proprietary serials check-in system. And, most recently, your decision to acquire Dynamic Information. You seem to sometimes make acquisitions rather than develop products yourself. Can you describe how EBSCO goes about making this kind of a decision?

DB: Again, our goal is to help customers acquire, access, and control serial

information. Most of our decisions are made with that in mind. With regard to the check-in system, we debated the decision hotly, but in the end decided that was a distinctly different business from serials supply. We felt it was best to stay out of the circulation and OPAC business and stick to what we did best.

As division general manager of **EBSCO Subscription Services**, I spend most of my time, not dreaming about the future, but trying to see that we do the very best job that we can, that we are taking care of customers, getting the orders in on time, answering the correspondence. A big part of my job is to work with the service center managers here to make sure that we provide the very best support to our regional offices so that they are able to continually improve their service quality for customers.

We deal with schools, public libraries, junior and community colleges, hospitals, biomedical research libraries, colleges, universities, government libraries and corporations. We have to consider our service in all those areas to be sure that we're providing the type of service our customers rely upon day-to-day. Our people who work with our customers every day help us at headquarters with that and keep us from sitting here in some "ivory tower" thinking we have all the answers. So we truly rely on their input.

Our regional and administrative managers meet on a regular basis to discuss the present and future direction of our organization. We get our supervisory people from the regional offices together regularly as well. And to keep us focused on what our customers want we conduct what we call **Executive Seminars** with different user groups. Last year we had 15 different seminars including groups as diverse as public, biomedical, academic, and corporate libraries. What we are trying to do is to be sure that what we think we should be doing is what our customers want us to be doing; that the issues we are addressing are important to them. This helps us make better decisions here based on what our employees tell us, backed up by what our customers tell us. It's a highly collaborative process.

That's the decision-making process. We meet as a group, we talk, we weigh the real issues, compare what we think we ought to be doing to what we are really doing, and come up with the best plan we

can for moving forward. Sometimes we build. Sometimes we buy. And sometimes we do both.

ATG: What's your background and training? You seem to have come into this alien library environment and survived quite admirably.

DB: I had a business background in college and a pre-law curriculum at Marion Military Institute. I went on to Auburn University and graduated with a B.A. in Business Administration. Afterwards, I came back to Birmingham and began a management training program at a major bank here — AmSouth. It lasted nine months and was really somewhat akin to a post-graduate course in finance. That was a great experience. I worked for the bank for several years before joining EBSCO. I had training in the service industry by way of my work at the bank.

When I joined EBSCO I was put in a year-long training program, working in all the different areas within EBSCO Sub-

"The perceived benefit of ... dealing with nation of origin vendors ... has seriously diminished with new communications technology and the globalization of serials service."

scription Services. I worked in the title information department and learned cancellations, how to process standing orders and bill later for publishers and how to handle price increase adjustments. I reviewed the data input from the regional offices and completed the last-minute editing processes that assure quality control.

I worked in the accounting department. I matched and stuffed orders and checks in envelopes before they were sent to publishers. I worked in a regional office as an "order coder" to set up bill-to and ship-to addresses and set up account profiles. I actually entered orders and reviewed the invoice when it came back to find out if I had made any mistakes. I worked as a customer service account representative and talked with customers and publishers. Then I went into the field and worked with some of our sales people and was actually on my own for awhile, trying to generate some new sales. I had a great experience toward the end of my training when I tried to develop new markets for EBSCO in places like Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Iran and Scandinavia.

That gave me a real sense of dealing with the large issues. When I came back the manager of the **Southeast Regional Office** was retiring and I was asked to take the position. The thing that helped me so much was working in each department and actually doing the work as if that was going to be my permanent job.

ATG: The interesting thing is that you seem so "laid back," but you obviously aren't. You don't seem like anything would bother you. It's like someone could walk into the room and tell you the building was on fire and you wouldn't panic.

DB: I usually remain calm when there's trouble. I like working with people and enjoy problem solving. I try not to get too excited about things because I find that there are generally two sides to every story. I like to get all the facts on the table before I start deciding what's going on. I don't believe so much in finding fault as I do in working to find out what we can learn from an error. People are going to make mistakes. I know I do. The key is not to keep making the same mistakes. But I don't really see myself as laid back. I'm very competitive and like very much to succeed. I don't mind taking charge and enjoy being in control as much as is feasible.

ATG: What does the future hold for ESS and for the subscription business? Are you expanding any of your work with publishers?

DB: The basic procedures that we use have been time-tested and work extremely well. What we have been diligently pursuing are ways to make ourselves more efficient. Through technology we've been able to improve our ability to handle more volume without having to continuously add people. That's what we've got to do more of in the future because the publisher discounts are not growing as we would like them to. With library budgets under strain we aren't seeing growth in acquisitions budgets. With current competition what it is for accounts, we've got to be able to continue generating internal operating efficiencies. That's a big priority for us right now as it's been for many years.

We've always considered it a priority to work closely with publishers and have

"We have a strong commitment to having the best bibliographic database in the industry."

been successful at that. However, as more publishers become more technology-dependent, we will need to smooth out the interfaces. Today we send orders and claims to many publishers electronically. A number of the larger publishers now give us electronic dispatch information and publication schedules. This helps us avoid extra paperwork such as unnecessary claims. This helps the publisher as well as everybody in the long run. We see this type of service growing.

We're doing a lot of work in EDI and as X12 transaction sets continue to be adopted EDI will become a more efficient way for us all to conduct business.

ATG: *Can you give us an overview of EBSCO Industries' other businesses?*

DB: Mr. Stephens began the company selling subscriptions door to door and our **Vulcan Services** division is still involved in that. He expanded the business during World War II by selling recreational supplies and equipment including magazine reader services to U.S. military bases. We learned about libraries through our dealings with military base libraries and began to expand into serving libraries after World War II. The **EBSCO Subscription Services** division was established to provide focus on this important business. Most of our divisions are a logical spin off of these original business enterprises. For example, we provide magazine racks and covers to libraries and reading rooms through our **Vulcan Industries** and **Vulcan**

vice sold by our **Military Service Company**. We manufacture audio-visual accessories such as carts and computer tables through the **Luxor/H. Wilson** division and operate two hi-tech printing companies, through which we currently print more than 150 small-to-medium size circulation journals for the publishing industry. We also have a division that sells subscriptions to doctors' offices and other professionals' waiting rooms. In total we have 36 divisions and subsidiaries. This gives our organization depth and added stability.

ATG: *What will you tell our readers about yourself? I know you just got back from Peru.*

DB: I am a family-oriented person and thoroughly enjoy my time with my wife and three children. We enjoy traveling together. I feel like I have somewhat of an adventure-some spirit because I like being in a place like Peru, exploring the Amazon, watching my children explore and experiencing something different. I enjoy a lot of different experiences in the outdoors — hiking, camping, fishing and studying nature. I enjoy being involved in worthwhile projects and feeling like I can make a worthwhile contribution, helping where there is a need for help.

Binder and Cover divisions: both of these divisions were established to support the magazine reading ser-

ATG: *What are you reading? We always like to know what people like you are reading?*

DB: One book I read recently that I really enjoyed was called **Running the Amazon** by **Joe Kane**. That was a great book to read right before we went to Peru. It's about a group of people who come together with the idea of being first to run the Amazon from its original source up in the Andes mountains in the southwestern part of Peru, running all the way through Peru and on out through Brazil. It was a 4,300 mile trip and no one had ever done it. So this group came together to make it happen. They started out with ten or twelve people and when the journey was finished there were only two. They had to endure enormous problems, including political extremists (guerrillas), drug dealers, malaria and Indian villagers who were suspicious of them, gave them a hard time and fired on them. It was a frightful kind of experience, unbelievable, but they stuck with it to achieve their goal.

Elton Stephens gave me a book a long

"Whether money can be made from document supply will depend on how and when publishers resolve the business issues of copyright and electronic information."

time ago called **The Richest Man in Babylon** and I found it interesting because it followed the simple guide of saving a little bit and, even if you don't have anything, after a period of time you will have something. If you save \$10 out of your paycheck, you probably won't miss it, but it will grow. It's a very simple sort of thing. I followed that philosophy and always recommend it to others.

ATG: *As we go to press, we have just learned that the purchase by Dawson of Faxon U.S. is complete. Would you care to comment on this new competitive situation?*

DB: We sincerely wish them well and are pleased they were able to reach an agreement. Unfortunately this situation has raised questions about the overall stability and reliability of our industry that have regrettably impacted all of us to some degree and perhaps this resolution will allay some people's fears. We have competed with **Faxon** for years. We now find ourselves the only U.S.-based subscription agency operating globally and stand ready to compete with anyone in the industry, including this new U.K.-owned venture. ♣

EBSCO is an acronym for **Elton B. Stephens Company**. **EBSCO Industries** was begun by Elton B. Stephens in 1944. Mr. Stephens sold magazine subscriptions door-to-door to finance his undergraduate and law school education. When he graduated from law school during the Great Depression, he found it was more practical to continue selling magazines than to practice law. He quickly expanded to sell to reading rooms at armed services recreation facilities and then to libraries. Now, fifty years later, **EBSCO Industries** comprises a large, diversified list of companies including **EBSCO Subscription Services**. It is very much a closely-held family business which employs 750 people in Birmingham, Alabama, alone.

On the floor of the main offices of **EBSCO Industries** is a beautiful hand-embroidered carpet of reproductions of 20 of the magazines that **Elton Stephens** first sold to his customers in the forties: **Opera News**, **Vanity Fair**, **Life**, etc. Some of the walls are papered with old magazine covers which have been addressed to **Elton Stephens**. At 82 years of age, **Elton B. Stephens** serves as chairman and founder of **EBSCO Industries** and remains active in the business, putting in full days at his desk and surprising people by answering his own phone. **J.T. Stephens**, the president and C.E.O. of **EBSCO Industries**, is **Elton Stephens' son**; **Dixon Brooke** is his son-in-law. **EBSCO Subscription Services** employs many of the people we have come to know, love and work with in the library industry. They describe their jobs with words such as "enthusiasm" and "teamwork." It really seems like a great place to work.

A couple of related articles on **EBSCO**: "EBSCO: A Ten-Year Retrospective and View Toward the Future," by **Robert Nelson** and **Melissa Kummerer**, **Library Hi Tech**, issue 43(11:3), 1993. "EBSCO Subscribes to Success," by **Evan St. Lifer** in **Library Journal**, July 1993, pages 39-42.