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Fred Philipp, President & CEO, Blackwell Delaware, Inc.

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Interview with Fred A. Philipp

President and CEO — Blackwell Delaware, Inc.

by Katina Strauch (Editor, *Against the Grain*)

Most of us have heard about the reorganization going on at Blackwells, BNAM, and Readmore. So ATG picked up the telephone and talked to Fred Philipp, who has been appointed President and CEO of Blackwell Delaware, Inc., President of Readmore, Inc., and Readmore Academic Services, and has also just joined the main board of Blackwell Limited in England. Oh yeah, and he's still President and CEO of Blackwell North America.

ATG: *What's going on at Blackwell? Isn't this change of personnel unusual for them? Blackwell has always been a conservative company and there have been few personnel changes over the years. But now, within several months, Terry Collins and Dan Tonkery — both well-known in the industry — have stepped down.*

PP: This has been in process for quite some time. It sends a major signal to the North American market that Blackwell plans to make a substantial number of investments in the North American market. On the practical side, Blackwell Delaware, Inc. is in North America what Blackwell Limited is in England. They are holding companies, corporate cover. This is the first time Blackwell has appointed an American to their Board. It is a recognition of the importance of the North American market and a tribute to all the work that the American companies have done.

There's an overall plan that will drive our business, facilities, systems and sales and marketing expansion. Our focus is on scholarly publications, wherever they go. We are doing some new and exciting things. We're on a roll over here. But Blackwell Ltd. is still a quiet, privately-held family company.

ATG: *Blackwell is a family business. Is this more a family struggle than anything else?*

PP: Blackwell is a family business but it is also a commercial operation. This is an important time to reinforce Blackwell's commitment to the market. The Blackwell family has been in the business for more than 100 years and recognizes that it needs professional managers to run the business on a day-to-day basis.

Blackwell's has three categories of key businesses — Blackwell Ltd.; Blackwell Retail; and Blackwell Delaware, Inc. The managing directors of each are Doug Fox, Richard Barker, and myself. The retail business is fascinating in England. The famous Blackwells shop on High Street is like Borders in the U.S. It's the second largest retail chain in England that has made substantial investments in online systems. This is an example of how technology can help us all to share our development activities.

ATG: *So how about Dan and Terry? I know that Terry is not leaving until June but Dan has already left. What are they doing? Customers develop alliances with companies because of the people they know and respect there. This is kind of a shock.*

PP: I agree with you. Terry was one of the best bosses I ever had. He was Group Exec for Blackwells for eight years. Dan and I go way

back. Both of these people are my friends, but in the commercial world things like this happen. Blackwell is a conservative company, but, as with all of us in the information industry, technology is forcing us to change. Nobody likes change, but we all have to deal with it.

ATG: *What's a nice guy like you going to do in the serials business? Haven't you always been on the book side?*

PP: I have had some experience with journals. I helped Ingram into the retail market with magazines. We probably have some of the top serials librarians at Readmore and BHB — like Sandy Gurshman, Marcia Romanansky, Tina Feick, Heather Steele and Kit Kennedy. This change allows us to share more of the common platforms and technology between BNAM and BHB. The Blackwell NTO will be revamped through a series of major upgrades. We are moving to a

common platform because of international demand. I'm not a "techie." My job as a manager of the groups is to coordinate and synthesize the best out of Blackwell Ltd, BNAM and Readmore. Oxford will take the lead in systems development on the journals side, BNAM on the books side. It makes sense. It offers options for both book and journal customers.

ATG: *How are you going to do it all? You are already split up between Nashville, Lake Oswego, and Blackwood, NJ. You are staying on as President of Blackwell North America. Now you have assumed President of Readmore.*

PP: With a lot of help. Obviously, we have had to make some organizational changes. At Blackwell North America, Dave Papkoff has been promoted to the position of Executive Vice President and COO of BNAM and will report to me. David will continue to be responsible for all technology. Jack Walsdorf, Don Satisfsky, Merv Yeatman, and Marcia Romanansky will all report to him. Gary Nees has been promoted to Vice President Finance and Administration and CFO and will report to me. At Readmore, Jim Benjamin continues as Vice President, Finance & Administration and CFO. Judy Schott has been promoted to VP, Marketing and Sales, and Tom Gallina, continues as VP of operations and customer service. The headquarters for Blackwell Delaware and all North American companies will be in Lake Oswego, Oregon.

I'll probably spend two weeks in New York and two weeks in Portland. I'll travel to publishing companies and visit libraries and attend library conferences. I'll have to make monthly trips to Board meetings in Oxford.

ATG: *Like I said, how will you do it all? How do you keep so calm through the whole thing?*

PP: I have been with BNAM for six and a half years. This is a great business to be in. I deal with some of the best people in the world. I'll be in Taiwan in April visiting some of those libraries. This combination of BNAM and Readmore is exciting. We will be able to

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think teachers are motivators and it's much more fun to learn when you've got a great teacher or motivator than to learn on your own. After law school I clerked for a judge for three years part-time on weekends, for **Judge David Tolbert**, who was the main Surface Mining Law judge in Knoxville, Tennessee. I clerked for him from 1988 until 1990 and it was some of the most exciting times of my life, but I was working 55 hours a week and writing his opinions on weekends. So I decided I was too old to be a lawyer. The only area of the law that I keep up with is copyright.

ATG: *I would think that your law background would be a great asset.*

ALC: I think it doesn't hurt to be able to say that you have a doctors of jurisprudence. I think that law is a wonderful training of the mind. It certainly is a good credential to have. We are going from a period when we purchased items, books and periodicals, to a period when we are increasingly licensing information, and it certainly doesn't hurt to have an understanding of copyright law. I believe that copyright does the wonderful thing of preserving and giving back to the creators and protecting the creators of material. If we didn't have copyright law we wouldn't have the production, the publishing, that we have in this country. And librarians often lose site of that. Librarians are really interested in providing access to information. And there's a conflict

between providing free access, open access to information and rewarding the owners of copyrights. That's the basis of the conflict between the library world and the publishing world today, in my opinion.

ATG: *Parting question: what do you like to read?*

ALC: Well, at the moment I am rereading **Richard Marius' Coming of Rain** which is an absolutely wonderful novel. He sets his novels in East Tennessee. I love novels; they are a huge escape. I'm reading **Pat Conroy's Beach Music**. I loved his **Lords of Discipline**. We are so overwhelmed with library literature, keeping up with it, that it is ... where would we be if we did not turn to music, novels, poetry, and things of that kind to inspire us? There's a human side to all of us in the library world, one that we perhaps have not explored enough and so I'm delighted to be interviewed.

That's all folks. But wasn't it fun. Plus Angie has a slide talk that's about 45 minutes long about life on an antebellum plantation. She says she would be happy to present it to interested groups. I think I will ask her to speak to one of my women's groups! — KS

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share ten overseas offices that **Blackwell Ltd.** has established. We will undergo a major international expansion to bring **Readmore** and **BNam** into a more aggressive posture internationally. We are offering libraries an easy way to order books and journals. We let the customer make the choice as to preferred country of origin.

ATG: *So what kind of other changes will we see in the next few months? What's happening with personnel?*

PP: All the signs are to an expansion of our organization. We are negotiating to expand the office space in New York. I just closed a deal in Blackwood to purchase 7 acres of land to expand the distribution center. It's a growing business and we aren't standing still. In North America we have over 600 employees. I think all signs are toward growth.

ATG: *And what specific changes will we see?*

PP: **BHB** and **Readmore** will be very aggressive on getting into the world of electronic journals. **BORIS** (working title) is a significant investment in dealing with electronic journals, and is one component of a larger electronic media department being established in Oxford. This new department encompasses our existing online (CON-

NECT) and library interface (EDI) capabilities and our new **CD Complete** service. This new department will provide integrated one-stop shopping for customers' electronic information needs including technical and licensing advice and assistance, and a single point of access to all electronic journals. The **BORIS** team includes **Chris Beckett**, **Tina Feick**, **Heather Steele**, **Phil Cotes** (who you all know) and also some newer names including **Suzanne Wilson Higgins**, **Martin Marlow**, **Andrew Hutchings**, and **Rollo Turner**. Our plan is to pilot this in one place and then roll it across the whole **Blackwell** group. We are very excited about our agreement with **Primary Source Media** and **BookScope**. They shipped 2,600 CD-ROMs in January of 1996. We are in the process of developing the capability to provide the option of original cataloging to our currently existing CIP upgrade program. NTO is being designed to provide **BNam** and **BHB** book customers with access to all databases and management systems via the World Wide Web. Its plan is to be rolled out in modules to customers throughout 1996 and 1997. At **MLA** and **SLA** this coming May **Blackwells** and **Readmore** will begin sharing conference exhibit space. These are not so much changes as new directions that we are heading in.

Well, one thing's for sure. Fred is not standing still either! I figure we'll need a satellite to catch him!

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day, I practice yoga, and I read whenever I can. My favorite books are biographies. I have always been curious (some say nosy) about what makes people tick.

ATG: *Do you want to tell us about any future plans for **Majors** as we close this up?*

ST: I would summarize life at **Majors** right now in one word —

transition. We have many irons in the fire, and we are always thinking of ways to take advantage of technology. We are working with **OCLC** right now to complete a **PromptCat** interface. We have been in conversations with **OCLC** about enhancing CIP records and **OCLC** is interested. We are also talking with librarians and bookstore managers all the time about where the information profession is headed. As I mentioned earlier, we are releasing our new CD product, **majors.docsm**, early this spring. And our biggest project right now is a comprehensive rewrite of our whole system into a fourth generation language called **Natural** that will allow us tremendous flexibility in serving librarians and bookstores. It's a fun time with lots going on!