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ATG Interviews Bill Cohen

Publisher & Editor-in-Chief, The Haworth Press, Inc. www.HaworthPress.com

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

ATG: *We have just learned that Haworth Press has been acquired by Taylor & Francis. Tell us about Haworth Press. When and where did you start it? Where did the name come from?*

BC: **Haworth Press, Inc.** was launched in 1979 by my former partner, **Patrick McLoughlin** (now deceased) and myself after we left **Human Sciences Press, Inc.** The name was taken from the town of **Haworth** in England, which is the historic home of the literary **Bronte** sisters. It was chosen for the name of our new company because of its implication of quiet eloquence.

The first office was in my bedroom, with one filing cabinet, and an **IBM** electric typewriter. We were both in New York City at the time. I bought out my partner in 1994 after his long and terrible struggle with lymphoma, which is a type of cancer.

ATG: *How many books do you publish a year? And how many journals?*

BC: We publish 194 journals, and about 150 books and monographs per year.

ATG: *Why did you decide to sell and why to Taylor & Francis?*

BC: A final decision was not really “set in stone” until late Summer 2007. Regarding the question “why” to sell the firm: That is a complicated question that might take hours of discussion into the late night. Suffice it to say that this is the best decision for **Haworth’s** continuing publications — its journals, which are its legacy, and for myself at this stage in my life.

Regarding the question of “who” to sell it to: this boiled down to the key people I met from **Taylor & Francis**. These were **Roger Horton**, their Executive Director, and **Kevin Bradley**, President. They were the deciding factors in this decision. Credit must also be given to **Christoph Chesher** in their London office, who was our first contact. I can tell you that I received many emails from librarians and specialists, academic editors outside of librarianship, who were truly delighted that **Taylor & Francis** was the new home. This was a compelling, unambiguous majority reaction and a blue-chip credit to the acquiring firm.

ATG: *We understand that you will be employed by Taylor & Francis as a “specialist editor and publisher?” Can you tell us what that means? And will you, an independent publisher for so long, be able to work within a huge conglomerate like Taylor & Francis? Will you move to England?*

BC: As it stands now, I will do my best to make this acquisition a success for **Taylor & Francis**, and then get acquainted with the firm. The new environment would permit me to specialize in certain pursuits, where before I



was responsible for the entire enterprise. This is something that I look forward to.

ATG: *You have a small fiction list (Harrington Park?) that is not being acquired by Taylor & Francis. Are you trying to sell that imprint separately?*

BC: Yes, it is being sold separately. **Taylor & Francis** does not publish fiction.

ATG: *The name of your journal The Acquisitions Librarian is changing to Journal of Electronic Resources Librarianship. What other title changes are in the works?*

BC: More and more resources are being licensed, as opposed to being acquired. As such, the literature of “acquisitions librarianship” will be shifting gear. Rather than struggling with a journal title fighting this trend, it was decided to change the name of the journal. It will focus instead on the information needs of electronic resources librarians. They are increasing in number every week. We do share the sensitivity of librarians that serials titles should not be changed without a compelling need. This was a compelling need.

ATG: *Will T&F honor Haworth’s existing contracts with authors?*

BC: Yes.

ATG: *What would you say are the biggest challenges facing authors, editors, and publishers in today’s market?*

BC: Without doubt, digitization and dependence on Web-based information resources.

ATG: *Tell us about yourself. I understand that you tutored yourself in librarianship when you first started your publishing career? Can you tell us about this?*

BC: I graduated from **Columbia College** in New York City in 1971, with a degree in psychology. I went out into the job market

as an office clerk and typist, working for an “office temp” company. For about a year, I worked in numerous companies and offices, ranging from international banking institutions to social service agencies to health care institutions.

Thinking that there might be some firm related to psychology, I found “**Human Science Press**” in the yellow pages, and sent in my resume. Since I typed about 180 words a minute on those old **IBM** typewriters, they hired me. **Human Sciences Press** published about six or seven journals in mental health. I began helping out in every department, and advanced to the position of Marketing Manager.

I saw the central role of libraries in the serials market, but no one in the firm visited a library. I made it my business to travel every weekend to the various libraries of **Columbia University**, which I had originally attended as an undergraduate.

This time, I had a 2nd education. I visited and hunted through their separate libraries for the Schools of Business, Law, Medicine, and the vast, incomparable **Butler Library**. I tried to learn as much detail as I could about the workings of the library — more than I ever did as an undergraduate. **Columbia University** at that time had a doctoral program in Library & Information Science, and their own “Library of Library & Information Science.” Therefore, I was able to research the literature on serials librarianship, collection development, acquisitions management, faculty involvement in serial and book selection, and after that, different types of librarianship: academic, medical, law, corporate, public, school & education libraries. Fortunately, **Columbia University** purchased every major English-language librarianship journal, so there was plenty to study.

ATG: *Who or what has exerted the most influence on your career as a publisher?*

BC: The intellectual excitement, vigor, and kindness of **Haworth’s** leading journal Editors and imprint editors, both in librarianship and in other subject fields, as well as the many library professionals who have been kind enough to share their knowledge and expertise.

ATG: *What advice would you give someone wishing to build a publishing house?*

BC: Nurture your patience and humility, along with a team spirit.

ATG: *Finally, tell us what you like to read. Any hobbies? Anything else you want to tell us?*

BC: Outside of librarianship and scholarly, academic publishing, I thoroughly enjoy learning about new computer applications, Anglophile studies, science fiction, and generally working with my faithful beagle nearby. 🐕