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ATG Talks with Dan Halloran About the Changes at Blackwells

Katina Strauch
Against the Grain, strauchk@cofc.edu

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ATG talks with Dan Halloran
About the Changes at Blackwells

Dan Halloran, President, Blackwells Book Services, Inc.

by Katina Strauch (College of Charleston) <strauchk@earthlink.net>

ATG: There has been a reorganization at Blackwells. When did it happen and what was the nature of the reorganization?

DH: Blackwells’ situation in the UK is unique. We have bookshops, an Internet bookshop, and a library supply business. And, in the past, Blackwells had a journal business and a public library supply business, too. Understandably this has led to a certain amount of confusion for UK librarians. What we have done is to give responsibility for all sales in the UK, regardless of how it is delivered, to our retail stores, Blackwell Retail, Ltd. UK library customers will get better service and have less confusion in their dealings with Blackwells.

The Blackwells Book Services distribution center in Oxford will remain open supplying books to libraries in all parts of the world as well as supporting sales and customer service. It will continue as an integral part of Blackwells Book Services.

Blackwells Book Services headquarters remain in Lake Oswego reporting to me and I will remain on the Board of Blackwells and report directly to Philip Blackwell, Group CEO. Alan Leitch remains Managing Director of Blackwells Retail, Ltd. and, like me, continues to report to Philip Blackwell and serve as a Director of the company.

The “reorganization” will be invisible to all libraries except those in the UK.

ATG: We just got word that Blackwells will raise its shipping charges for books to libraries. Can you tell us about that? Did that have anything to do with the reorganization?

DH: One theme from library booksellers, reflected in articles in ATG and at the Charleston Conference, is the need to price our services in a way that we make a reasonable profit. For over 6 years shipping charges to customers have remained the same or declined. We all know that during that time energy, labor, and other costs of delivering books to customers have steadily risen. Our recent change in shipping charges merely recognizes those realities.

The reorganization was not related to the change in shipping charges.

ATG: We understand that approximately 100 people have been laid off at Blackwells. Which division does this affect and what are the repercussions to Blackwells Book Services and SwetsBlackwells?

DH: Blackwell Retail has 75+ stores in the UK. The retail book market in the UK is facing many of the same problems we have seen in the US, i.e. increased competition from online bookshops, expansion of the large chains, plus weakness in the retail sector overall. In response to these developments, Blackwell Retail has proposed the closure of a some shops. A number of employees will be made redundant because of these proposed closures.

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