

# THE STORY OF STM

*Lex Lefebvre*

## How it began

**STM, the International Group of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers** was first conceived during the 1968 congress of the IPA (International Publishers Association) held in Amsterdam. The idea originated from Mr. Robert Maxwell of Pergamon Press who was part of a group of science publishers who felt that their interests were not sufficiently represented by IPA. After attempting to form an interest group within the IPA which did not succeed, they opted for an autonomous organisation, affiliated to the IPA. STM was formed by Mr. Daan Frank of North Holland Publishing Company, Mr. Piet Bergmans of Elsevier Science and Mr. Bradford Wiley of Wiley & Sons. Soon to join the group were Mr. Heinz Goëtze of Springer Verlag, Mr. Ed Booher from McGraw Hill, and Mr. Bob Code-Holland from Pitman.

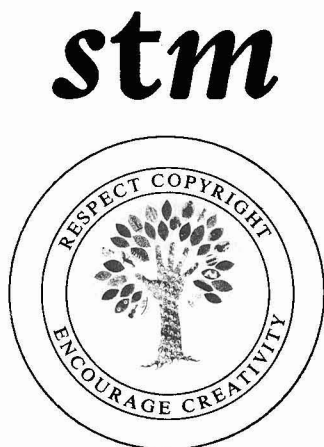
The group expanded very fast and by 1969 they already needed a full time secretary to manage the organisation. Mr. Paul Nijhoff Asser was appointed secretary and from the very beginning he infused STM with his expertise, style and organisational talents. He helped to create a special status for STM within the publishing world; because of his knowledge of international copyright STM became an influential contributor in copyright issues. Paul Nijhoff Asser was "Mr. STM" for over 20 years until his retirement in 1993 when the helm was taken by Mr. Lex Lefebvre.

## Who are its members?

The members of STM are publishers who specialise in the advanced sciences, technology and medicine. They publish annually tens of thousands of academic, scholarly and professional books, journals and databases at university, postgraduate, advanced education and research levels. In 1993 the membership consisted of almost 300 leading publishing houses and their affiliates, large and small, public and private, commercial and not-for-profit, in 26 countries around the world. The main concentration is in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands.

## Aims and objectives

The original aim of STM, which still holds true today, was to support STM publishers and to assist fellow professionals and their authors in the dissemination of scientific knowledge and information; to assure that the quality of STM publishing remains high.



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"Education permanente" (on-going education) is the philosophy behind STM's training mandate. We aspire to excellence, professional competence and ultimately to improving the overall quality of international STM publishing.

Besides organizing seminars and training course, STM's purpose is to enhance observance of copyright in general and to contribute to a solution to the vexing problems of photocopying and electrocopying in particular (and bring in some welcome revenue for its members). To this purpose STM lobbies actively, together with other publishers organisations, at national and international governmental levels.

The STM Group also publishes selected information on all subjects of likely interest to its members. To date, over 90 issues of the STM Newsletter have appeared, as well as countless reports of seminars and other meetings.

### STM Assemblies

STM has become known as the place to go "to learn, in order to earn". Publishers have the opportunity to meet each other (perhaps make a deal or two) and to gain knowledge of the business. In particular, STM creates a richly informative climate wherein young professionals have the chance to learn from their more experienced colleagues. There are, at present enormous changes going on in the publishing world. The exchange of information by electronic means is adding new dimensions to the STM field and is bringing in new players. This is one of the recurring themes and new learning areas stressed in our seminars and courses.

For example, on April 20th 1994 there will be a one day seminar entitled "The New Players", organised by the STM Serials Committee, chaired by Mr. Maurice Long, of the British Medical Journal. In this seminar we will address the new networks, and the new trading partners, who will not only be providing services in hosting databases, networking software, cable and telecom connections, etc., but will be the source of new challenges to publishers on many fronts.

These new developments make it important that publishers and librarians join forces in order to develop the information services that the end user needs. For all partners in the 'new

information cycle', feedback from and interaction with end users is essential to enable the providers to offer the information which the users need in the format or service as they need it, when they need it.

As libraries provide the last link in the distribution chain to the end user and the publisher provides the source information (quality, speed etc.), together they should be able to develop efficient customised, end user oriented information services.

Following "The New Players", there will be a three day summit conference of STM heads of houses called "STM 2000 - Facing the Future" in which the aims of the group will be re-evaluated and new ideas regarding present and future developments in the publishing industry will be officially incorporated into STM policy.

### Links with Other International Bodies

The STM Group represents the specialised publishing profession world-wide. We work in close collaboration with the IPA and a number of other related bodies in the information community.

STM is always vigilant in seeking mutually beneficial relationships in the endeavour to improve conditions for STM publishing worldwide. It has an informative and consultative status and close ties with many international groups. These include:

- WIPO, World Intellectual Property Organisation
- Unesco and its General Information Program
- IFLA, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
- IFRRO, International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations
- IPCC, International Publishers Copyright Council
- ELP, European Librarians and Publishers and various regional and international science editors' associations.

(IFRRO, IPCC and ELP, all influential publishing organisations in their own rights, were created at the instigation of STM).

## Structure

As to the organisational structure of STM, apart from a small secretariat run by a staff of five from new quarters in Amersfoort, The Netherlands, much of the group's work is undertaken by member company executives who voluntarily serve on STM committees. The committee structure is headed by a Group Executive of 14 members, currently chaired by Mr. Frans van Eysinga, president of Wolters Kluwer, USA. Members are chosen with the idea of fair and equal representation for all, taking into account geography and company size.

There are six STM committees whose aim is the creation of a professional platform and training environment specifically designed for people in the stm publishing world. The talents and strengths of the individuals who form these various committees make for a strong and energetic basic structure.

## Committees

The STM Committees and their general purposes are, in brief:

The Copyright Committee, chairwoman Ms. Lynette Owen of the Longman Group U.K.

Its aims are to pursue, within the stated limits of the STM Group, the highest possible level of international protection of copyright works and the publishers performance in supplying such, and to enhance and improve awareness and knowledge of copyright, particularly on an international level, and to prevent and fight piracy and other unauthorised uses of publishers' products world-wide.

The Editorial/Marketing Committee (chairman Mr. Malik Lechelt, Georg Thieme Verlag, Germany) shares and reviews experiences and developments within the international publishing scene for books and journals, keeps abreast of management and marketing techniques and informs and educates young publishers in cost-effective production.

The Innovations Committee (chairman, Mr. Herman Frank, Elsevier Science, Switzerland)

aims primarily to serve as a source of information for the STM members about the influence on their publishing activities of new media and new technology. The emphasis is on the strategic and practical evaluation of developments in this field, rather than on "nuts and bolts" technology.

The Library Relations Committee, chairman Mr. Herman Pabbruwe, Wolters Kluwer Academic Publishers, The Netherlands

Its purpose is to improve and further relations between STM publishers and STM librarians worldwide, to raise the level of mutual understanding between them and to promote education within various fields (serials, marketing, copyright, etc.)

The Serials Committee (chairman Mr. Maurice Long, BMJ Publishing Group, UK) should reflect the international ownership, authorship and distribution of journals and other serials, as well as the significance of the product in the marketplace, as it concerns both individuals and institutions. It will serve as an international forum for serials publishers to debate issues of interest and importance.

The Iberoamerican Chapter, chairman Mr. Claudio Rothmuller, Editora Campus, Brazil, should be the voice and the arm of the Spanish and Portuguese language publishers in STM fields. It will cooperate with relevant national and regional organisations in the Iberoamerican area, and exchange suggestions that may be useful or necessary for mutually beneficial cooperation among STM publishers outside and within the area.

## In conclusion

Publishing today is in dynamic transition - from the centuries-long ink-on-paper tradition, to the high tech, high speed electronic innovation. The challenges are not small and not always identifiable. The STM group has its work to do and as representative and spokesman for the most prestigious STM publishers in the world we will continue to make our most vigorous contribution to the excellence of our industry.