



Editorial

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From time to time in this column I have expressed concern about the concentration of power in the hands of a few mega publishers, and questioned whether this is in the best interest of the serials community.

The latest hot news is the acquisition by Taylor and Francis of Routledge and Carfax Publishing for a modest sum of £90 million! In cases like this the press releases will extol the virtues of the acquisition, mentioning economies of size, increased efficiency, new opportunities and the right synergy. What is often glossed over is the future of people's jobs – the pawns in the game. No doubt the Director of Human Resources (often a euphemism for Director of Downsizing) will also be facing new challenges!

Sometimes forebodings prove to be groundless. A classic example of this is the abolition of the Net Book Agreement. For years many well-established and highly respected booksellers defended the Agreement, believing that its abolition would sound the death knell of the stock holding academic bookshop. It has gone, and left hardly a ripple on the water. Academic bookselling seems alive and well. Heffers of Cambridge will no doubt find a buyer and Waterstone's are opening what they believe to be the largest bookshop in the world on a prime site at present occupied by Simpson's of Piccadilly, London. The figures must boggle the minds of old traditional booksellers: 54,000 square feet of retail space, spread over seven storeys, one million volumes and 300,000 titles looked after by 200 staff. As if that is not enough, it will also become a late night 'lifestyle store' – does that include lap top dancers?

There must be a good profit in selling books. It is a pity the same does not apply to journal subscriptions where a strange anomaly exists in the minds of publishers: discount is OK for books, but subscription agents should work for little or nothing.

Rollo Turner, late of Blackwell's Information Services, has taken over as Secretary of the Association of Subscription Agents. One of his major tasks will be to endeavour to halt the erosion of publishers' terms to agents, which of course directly affect the prices paid by librarians. We wish him luck in his new job.

While *Serials* is always delighted to receive revenue from advertisements, I would once again remind those in the information industry that they are able to enjoy free publicity by submitting a contribution of not more than 500 words for our New Products and Services section.

Surveys we have undertaken suggest that although we have over 600 institutional members, our actual readership is around 5,000. It is not unusual for one copy to be circulated to ten people within an organisation. This could be a slow and tortuous journey over many weeks. In fact the next issue may be out before the tenth reader has had a chance to see the previous issue.

The solution to this problem is to order additional copies, which can be obtained for the modest sum of £30 per year. If you are interested, please contact Jill Tolson.

We wish all readers of *Serials* a happy Christmas and New Year.