

# Profile: Ian Bannerman



Ian Bannerman recently moved to the post of Managing Director at Taylor & Francis (T&F), in charge of the academic journal business, after 15 years of working for Blackwell. Ian is excited about the future at T&F particularly in the light of its recent merger with Informa, saying: "The T&F/Informa merger is quite unusual. In this case the businesses are complementary rather than competing, so it is not primarily about reducing costs – rather, looking for opportunities to increase revenue generation."

So what was Ian's route to this influential position in a scholarly publishing company? Well, you might say that it's a somewhat fishy story. His father started work as a junior clerk in a fishmonger's business and worked his way up to running and owning the company but a generation before that, his grandfather was awarded an MBE for his work on the Torry kiln for smoking fish. Although his family come from Aberdeen and Hull, Ian spent his adolescent years in Croydon and university years in Birmingham, during which time he worked in his father's business whenever he could. Whilst studying for his zoology degree at Birmingham he spent one summer vacation in Ardnamurchan, Scotland "counting scallops" and "micro-chipping lobsters" apparently to no avail as once the lobsters were released they simply vanished into the ocean. Even more bizarrely, on a return visit to the

research establishment some ten years later, Ian was stunned to see that same lobster programme was still running!

A few miscellaneous jobs followed his degree course including working as a foot courier in London, striding around in a long leather coat and hat, and brewing tea for the tea tasters at Brooke Bond. To this day he claims he still makes a mean cup of tea. His first 'proper' job was at Blackwell's in 1988. He was appointed on the spot and moved from Croydon to Oxford in the space of four days. Unbeknown to him at the time, his future wife was on his interview panel. Sarah Tibbetts (now Bannerman) was Production Manager and he was taken on as Production Editor. After an excellent first year's grounding in the industry he moved to the Marketing Department. This had the added advantage that Sarah was no longer his manager and it was appropriate to "start courting". As well as courting, Ian set to work building up his new department and he spent quite a bit of time travelling – including an extended stay in Melbourne, Australia launching new journals (and managing to fit in a week-long diving course).

The next upward move was to a newly created post of Journals Sales Manager where he was involved in liaising with customers and subscription agents, systems work, staff training and recruitment and managing copyright issues. His job was to build up the section from scratch and,

significantly, Ian was involved in the historic early discussions with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Bahram Bekhradnia, as Blackwell was one of the three original publishers to participate in the Pilot Licensing Scheme Initiative (PLSI). Developing Blackwell's online journals portfolio was another major challenge. Ian has never subscribed to the theory that online is 'just a commodity', rather that it is a real opportunity to add value. Convinced that Blackwell needed its own e-journals platform, Ian's team worked on the development and launch of Blackwell Synergy at the end of 1998. Following that success Ian added the responsibilities of online delivery, online strategy and management of the journal sales team to his job. The final move within Blackwell took place at the time that the two Blackwell companies – Blackwell Publishers and Blackwell Science – merged and he became Journals Sales Director of the combined company.

So why move after 15 successful years? Ian acknowledges that having been employed by only one company for a long period of time, complacency can set in and the new T&F job was a bigger, more senior, general management role. Moreover, the challenge of the T&F/Informa merger was too much of a temptation. He takes satisfaction from the fact that he left Blackwell in good shape with good teams and good managers in place.

What does he feel are the challenges and opportunities for the future? He sees the next few years as being 'lively' for the publishing industry as a whole, particularly in the light of the House of Commons Select Committee Report and the ongoing open access debate. Whilst acknowledging that the current economic model is under pressure to deliver wider readership and more value he sees his job as helping the company navigate through the range of complex issues. On the open access front he points out that T&F are a RoMEO 'green' publisher and that they will continue to experiment with open access initiatives; however, he points out that feedback from learned societies and academic editors on open access is not particularly positive. He also welcomes the Select Committee's recommendation for funding for the British Library for digital archiving.

The combined T&F/Informa company specializes in communications in the broadest sense,

with products ranging from conferences to newsletters and academic publications. Ian sees great opportunities for inter-working between these media, with a robust technical infrastructure underlying the whole company's products and services. "There is no shortage of ideas in the new company. The challenge is to prioritize them and to see them through to completion." He clearly sees a bright future for T&F/Informa. The synergies between the two businesses mean that there are new opportunities for working more closely with societies and authors on value-added services such as running conferences, publishing conference proceedings in tandem with the journal publishing, as well as author services such as promoting the brand of authors. Quality control is a key issue and he believes more work needs to be done on creating quality markers in the online environment. The closer integration of publishing formats such as e-journals and e-books will become more of a reality in T&F as their books division is just about to move to an adjacent office in Abingdon. Ian believes in a distributed model of publishing (he wants T&F to be the 'best linked' publisher) and is excited about the possibilities offered by CrossRef, CrossRef Search and Google. He himself sits on the CrossRef board and is an active member of STM.

When not working, Ian likes spending time with his family – wife Sarah, daughter Hazel who has just started school, new son Ross born in January 2004, and large hairy dog – and sport. He used to be very sporty (by some standards he still is!). He played rugby – wing forward – at club and county level and loved it, saying that it was a very



effective way of getting rid of “latent aggression”. He still likes running and does so on a regular basis; attempts to take up canoeing were less successful, resulting in his boat sinking. His latest keep-fit endeavour is a rowing machine and he takes part in internet rowing challenges. (His position in the world rankings was not disclosed!) Other interests are very much related to his

zoology degree and he is a member of the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) (and he has a great story about grass snakes in the compost). All in all, he keeps himself busy and fit – which is just as well, having recently taken on a top job in one of the world’s largest publishing companies.

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