A Century of Science Publishing
E.H. Fredriksson (Ed.)
IOS Press, 2001

# Chapter 7
# Robert Maxwell: Forty-Four Years as Publisher

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It is next to impossible in a short chapter to link and weave into a cohesive whole the life, activities, and relationships of Robert Maxwell, a man with an extraordinary public and private persona, who intertwined public and private companies throughout his lifetime into a giant jigsaw puzzle. The question has often been asked: was he a visionary or an opportunist? I believe he was a little of both.

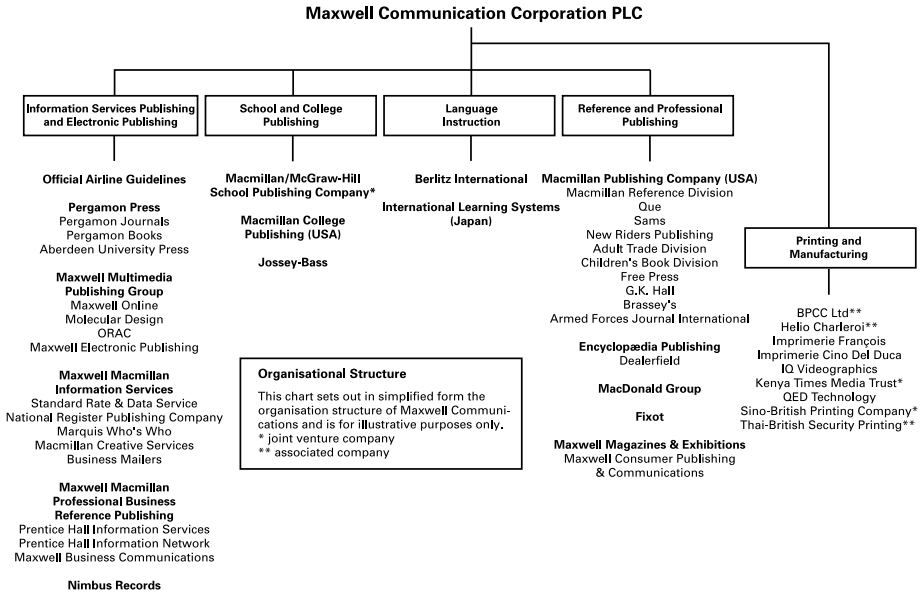


Figure 1. Maxwell Communications Guide to Companies, Products & Service, May 1991.

Maxwell's colorful life has been the subject of many books and articles, a brief bibliography for which is included at the end of this chapter. What I have chosen

to do is to show how his ability to charm, cajole, and impress people into supporting his many and varied ventures led to the building of what some considered the tenth largest media company in the world [1, p. 1]. The one fact that remains as tangible history is that Pergamon Press was the company that helped launch Bob Maxwell's career in publishing that culminated in the chairmanship of a conglomerate that eventually included more than 100 companies (Figure 1).

In May 1991, Elsevier acquired Pergamon Press for $817,000,000. The purchase price included some 418 journals, over 3,000 books in print, affiliations with over 100 professional societies and associations, and publications on behalf of more than 150 organizations and governments. Publication and sales and marketing offices were located in England, the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, Brazil, Germany, USSR, South Africa, Israel, India, Pakistan, China, Hong Kong, Korea, The Netherlands, Egypt, Singapore, Taiwan, Philippines, Ireland, and Scotland. The publications covered all fields of Engineering, Material Sciences, Life & Medical Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Social & Behavioral Sciences.

This impressive list encapsulates the results of Robert Maxwell's forty-four years as the founder and publisher of Pergamon Press. This in itself should justify his place in a Century of Science Publishing. To my knowledge, no other person had greater insight into where scientific communications was headed, and no other person knew better how to exploit this insight.

It is well documented that Robert Maxwell was born in Czechoslovakia as Jan Ludvik Hoch and that he had a limited education. Throughout his lifetime he was known as: Robert Ian Maxwell, Robert Maxwell, Captain Maxwell, Captain Bob, Bob Maxwell, and just Bob. Numerous adventures [2, p. 2], well worth reading, preceded his contributions to the publishing industry, which began at the end of World War II.

When he arrived in England in 1940 as a volunteer with the French foreign legion from France he was only sixteen and he enlisted in the British Army [2, p. 14]. He was courageous and valiant in battle, for which he was commissioned in the field and awarded the military cross. By the end of World War II he was a Captain — a title he used throughout his life.

In post-war Germany, having skills in numerous languages, he was appointed to the Berlin Information Control Unit with an assignment to the Control Commission for Germany. This commission was under the Director of the Press and Publicity Branch of the British Information Service. Within the scope of this authority in this post he helped to reestablish a newspaper, *De-Berliner*, renamed *Der Telegraf* [2, p. 24] in the British sector of occupied Berlin. This involved dealing with editors, publishers, and suppliers and using a great deal of ingenuity in

order to keep the newspaper in print at a time when materials were in short supply. It was then that he met the well-respected publisher Ferdinand Springer, who was struggling to continue his publishing business.

> It was a time when we had no telephone, no petrol, no paper, no spare parts for printing machines or any other vital matters which were so essential to restart production in an establishment such as Springer Verlag. It was Captain Maxwell who always knew how to cope in those days, who solved the most difficult problems and without any doubt the main merit for opening the way (from 1947 to 1949) for rebuilding of the publishing house must go to him. [3, Ferdinand Springer, p. 2].

In 1946 the British Government established a high-level scientific committee to discuss the feasibility of a British publishing house to deal with scientific matters. The committee recommended that the established publishing firm of Butterworths should undertake such a venture. In 1949, Butterworth-Springer started publishing journals and books in the sciences. Paul Rosbaud, a former Springer editor, joined the company in the capacity of scientific editor [3, p. 2].

At that time Maxwell had also recognized the existence of a wealth of information in Germany that had not been published or distributed to the outside world. Although research in Germany had continued throughout World War II and was well ahead of research in England and the rest of the world, little had been disseminated outside of Germany. After leaving the armed services in 1947, Maxwell began to distribute scientific publications for Springer and other leading German publishers through a company he formed called European Periodicals, Publicity and Advertising Company (EPPAC). In 1948, this company was integrated into Lange, Maxwell & Springer. This was Maxwell's first contribution to the distribution of scientific information — first in Britain and then in the rest of the world.

In 1950, the joint venture between Butterworth and Springer was having financial difficulties. In 1951, Maxwell made an offer to purchase the joint venture. The name Pergamon Press was then selected for the acquired joint venture. Paul Rosbaud, the former Springer editor, joined the newly formed company as Scientific Director. There is considerable disagreement as to how, why, and who selected the name Pergamon Press and the logo. But rather than try to sort out what is folklore and what is fact [3, pp. 3 & 575; 4, p. 240; 7], suffice it to say it is a name and logo respected worldwide.

In 1951 Pergamon started with a small list of books: *Progress in Biophysics and Molecular Biology*, edited by J.A.V. Butler and J.J. Randall; *Progress in Nuclear Physics*, edited by O.R. Frisch; *Progress in Metal Physics*, edited by Bruce Chalmers;

*Introduction to Statistics*, edited by M.H. Quenouille; *Metallurgical Thermochemistry*, edited by O. Kubaschewski and E.L. Evans. As of today, all of these publications continue to be published, although there is some variation in the titles based on the changing technologies. The base for the core of the company was also an established journal originally published by Springer, *Spectrochimica Acta*, edited by Dr. Alois Gatterer through volume 3. Rosbaud earlier had started this journal in conjunction with the Vatican Observatory where Dr. Gatterer was Director of the Astrophysical Laboratory. There were two more similar journals: *Journal of Atmospheric and Terrestrial Physics*, editor Sir Edward Appleton, and *Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta*, edited by Correns, Ingerson, Nockolds, Paneth, Wagner and Wickman. It was Wickman who had indicated that the coin found at Herakleia became the colophon for the first issue in 1951 and was carried forward in 1951 as the colophon for Pergamon Press [3, p. 575].

During this time Maxwell was also becoming involved in the acquisition of Simpkin Marshall, an almost defunct British book distribution cooperative. This venture went poorly and was later closed down due primarily to nonsupport by British publishers with regard to consignment accounts and payments [1, p. 139]. The one positive outcome of this venture, if one can be found, was the purchase of The British Book Center, which became Maxwell's first base of operations in the United States. From this base Pergamon Press Inc., Maxwell Scientific International, and other ventures were developed in the United States.

Prior to the 1950's, communications in the sciences were mainly through learned societies and their in-house journals. With the rapid growth of science after World War II, the long delays that would occur in publication cycles of these society publications left room for the development of small, specialized publications in evolving fields where such societies did not exist. Admittedly, there was skepticism and mistrust that commercial enterprises could take up the slack. There was further concern that such commercial ventures would not allow the editorial freedom necessary for the editors to do their job. One of the most frequent comments regarding Maxwell in the early days was his willingness to publish highly segmented journals and to allow the editors freedom to select their boards and select the number and quality of papers required for each issue. Maxwell recognized early in his career as a publisher that he was more an innovator and marketer than a scientific editor. The growth of Pergamon during the 1950's was unique as the company continued to innovate and develop new scientific sectors and develop a new style of rapid communications.

It was also in the 1950's that the US National Science Foundation (NSF) took the initiative to support cover-to-cover translations of selected leading Soviet peri-

odicals. In 1957, Prof. George Herrman [3, p. 127] and Bob Maxwell agreed to work on a cover-to-cover translation of the Soviet journal *Prikladnaia Maihematika Mekhanika* (*Journal of Applied Mathematics and Mechanics*). Funding was secured through a grant to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. This was the first of many journals translated by Pergamon, and other publishers soon followed suit. In 1963, when the NSF withdrew its support, Pergamon continued with its dedication to the journal translation program, many of which are still being published as cover-to-cover translations. Some twenty years later Maxwell entered into a similar arrangement a translation of the *Chinese Astronomy Journal* [3, p. 493]. As an expansion of such a venture, in 1985 Pergamon established the first Western publisher liaison office in China, and was the first Western publisher to enter into a joint venture with China [3, p. 18].

As Maxwell's base of publishing continued to grow, he recognized the importance of giving recognition to the loyal editors and the contributors. In order to fulfill this goal, he established awards, medals, and grants to individuals, societies, and universities. Some, if not all, of these awards are still being given today. I list some representative sampling to illustrate the broad base covered. The Pergamon Geothermal Energy Award for the best paper published in the *Journal of Geothermics*. The Danckwerts-Maxwell prize endowed at the University of Cambridge to encourage research in the Department of Chemical Engineering and to support the Danckwerts Memorial Lectures. These lectures are in recognition of P.V. Danckwerts' work and are given by invited lecturers in accordance with the aims and scope of the journal *Chemical Engineering Science*. Because of his longtime affiliation with the publication of *Acta Metallurgica*, Maxwell donated annually the Acta Metallurgica Gold Medal for individuals who have demonstrated ability and leadership in materials research selected by the Board of Governors. He also was instrumental in the establishment of a number of new societies; in some cases he offered the funding and sometimes allowed the Pergamon publication to be owned by the society, as was the case with *Photochemistry and Photobiology*, and *Journal of Neurochemistry*. The editor of *International Journal of Engineering Sciences*, Professor Eringen, recalls that without the help of Bob Maxwell and the donation of the services of his law firm in 1963, the Society of Engineering Science and the journal may never have evolved [3, p. 260]. In addition, Maxwell was continually asked by his editors to fund Ph.D. candidates in support of their research. It would be interesting to be able to track these Ph.D.s to see where they are and what they are doing now.

The one thing that was of primary importance to Maxwell was the respect he had for the academicians affiliated with Pergamon. Even when he was involved

with other matters of business, if an editor of one of his journals called he would put aside what he was doing and take the call. Many of us remember the type of request that he would receive from his editors concerning research that needed funding or the plight of a family member who may have been in trouble [3, p. 649]. When medical assistance was required for the famous Russian physicist Landau [3, p. 100], Maxwell chartered a plane and supplied the necessary penicillin that was required but unavailable to Landau. Based on these relationships, the company often took on pet projects of editors, most of which were costly indulgences for the company. One example that comes to mind is when the editor-in-chief of *Planetary and Space Science* asked Maxwell if he would publish his wife's book, *Talking About Cakes* [3, p. 38]. Without ever looking at the manuscript, Maxwell accepted it and the book did win a bronze medal at the Hamburg Book Fair. Most of such projects he agreed to do, however, did not show such positive results.

In the early 1960's, higher education was expanding. It was at that time that Maxwell launched the Pergamon International Library (PIL). The PIL accomplished its announced goal of publishing 1000 books and textbooks in the sciences in numerous languages covering technology, social sciences, and the humanities by 1970. Although there were many successful books and series published in the PIL, what immediately comes to mind is the Pergamon International Chess Series program — still considered among the top books on chess. During this period, Maxwell entered into a sales agreement with Macmillan (U.S.) for distribution of all Pergamon books in the United States, which further assured the widest possible distribution of Pergamon book titles. In 1964 the Macmillan agreement ended and Pergamon Press Inc. became the distributor for all books and journals in the Western Hemisphere. Pergamon Press Inc. was originally affiliated with Maxwell Scientific International, an independent Maxwell company, but was acquired by Pergamon Press Ltd. (PPL) in 1964 and became a public company in the United States in 1968, with PPL owning 70% of the shares.

It was in 1966, with the establishment of the journal *Materials Research Bulletin* under the editorship of Dr. Heinz Henisch, that camera-ready offset was first used to launch a journal [3, p. 121]. Although ascetically poor, this form of presentation was so cost-effective that it made it possible to publish material that was important only to a small number of scientists in a specific discipline. The use of this type of publishing soon evolved into the printing of major scientific meetings and proceedings. Camera-ready copy was also the forerunner to what became known decades later as desktop publishing. Pergamon was one of the first to experiment with desktop publishing when in 1987 it launched its first such project out of the editorial office of Robert Rubin [3, p. 366] for its journal *Psychoneuro-*

*endocrinology* using the new technology in its quest for more rapid reviews and publication. Although the use of such rapid publication methods saved time and money, the future use of this production would cause problems for conversions to database publishing, another area where Robert Maxwell had been a pioneer.

In 1963 Pergamon began publication of *Information Storage and Retrieval* [3, p. 99], including *Machine Translation*. This was the beginning of Maxwell's involvement with data storage. Within three years, the title was renamed *Information Processing and Management*. In 1965, as part of developing the use of information technology within Pergamon, its 1965 Annual Report reflected this goal:

> Scientists and engineers are at present unable to digest the volume of new knowledge becoming available and agree that this problem of information explosion needs to be solved urgently. So desperate is the problem that it now becoming far cheaper for certain research workers to go back into the laboratory and repeat the work, if necessary to re-invent things, rather than laboriously and time-wasting to struggle with the floods of professional journals, books, magazine articles, Ph.D. theses, etc.

Following this lead Maxwell sought an affiliation in 1969 with Leasco, a computer-based company located in the United States. This chapter in Pergamon's history was one of the most difficult ones for Maxwell and Pergamon Press because Leasco tried to wrest the company away from Maxwell (for full details see [1, pp. 297–334]). It took close to five years and the support of the editors-in-chief of the major Pergamon journals, who indicated to Leasco that if Maxwell were not involved in the business they would take their journals elsewhere, to resolve the matter. During this hectic time Maxwell maintained his position as Chairman of Pergamon Press Inc., successfully representing the minority stockholders by obtaining court orders to prevent PPL from voting their 70% holdings.

After regaining full control, Maxwell continued the expansion of the journal line by establishing the innovative Computer Series of journals — sixteen journals covering computer use in all fields of the sciences. Prior to that time few articles related to computer use in research were appearing, as there were few guidelines for such submissions. The type of research that was being reported was mostly in relation to information processing.

Pergamon Press was the first publishing organization to align itself with the concept of database management in relation to the publishing of information. Maxwell had a discussion with Brian Blunden [3, p. 44], who defined to Maxwell the concept of database publishing. It is believed that this discussion led to the acquisition of Infoline in 1982. Infoline later became known as Orbit Infoline, after Orbit's acquisition in 1986. The database companies were ultimately merged under

the banner of Maxwell Online. With this goal of merging of technical information, Maxwell agreed to fund the concept by agreeing to fund the International Electronic Publishing Research Centre. "Without the commitment and foresight of men like Robert Maxwell & Gordon Graham, no such development would have been possible" [3, pp. 44,55].

In continued recognition of the joining of publishing with electronic companies, Pergamon acquired and began to mechanize the International Abstracts of Biological Sciences (IABS), continuing now as Current Awareness in Biological Sciences (CABS). IABS at that time was being designed to compete with Biological Abstracts (BIOSIS).

With the experience of integrated use of the new technologies and the industry acquisitions that Maxwell was making, Pergamon launched the first of its many major encyclopedic works in an electronic format. *The International Encyclopedia of Education*, which received the Dartmouth Award by the American Library Association, was announced in 1980 and completed in 1985 with 1,448 articles, five million words from over 1,300 contributors, printed in hard copy as well as compact disc (CD-ROM). Once such a work had been compiled, spin-off projects and updates became a regular staple of the company.

Continuing to seek new and faster ways to publish, in 1989 another experiment was begun with the creation of a new camera-ready journal, Cancer Communication. This publication was designed to receive all papers electronically. They were then sent to two or more reviewers either electronically or via fax. All fifty of the reviewers were given faxes and were paid a fee for two-day turnaround. The goal was to publish papers received through review to publication within six weeks instead of the traditional six months. The experiment as a prototype was successful but was cost prohibitive. But what it did accomplish was to establish a link to the company's database operation of Pergamon Orbit Infoline, which would begin to receive documents on a faster turnaround time. The journal is now in its twelfth volume with its new title *Oncology Research. An International Journal.*

It has often been stated that individual readership of a journal is limited. In order to create additional reasons for journal issues to be reviewed, Maxwell agreed to adding new and timely information within the refereed journal. Journal editors were polled and software review editors were appointed. This was a time when software was being developed in laboratories around the world and had no outlet for bringing the developed software to the attention of others working in similar fields. In-house support staff was established to locate and handle the software submitted, to find reviewers, and to determine in which publication the submitted reviews should appear.

A further enhancement was added to Pergamon journals by using the services of Pergamon Orbit Infoline's worldwide patent database. The editors were asked to select a profile of their readers' interest and for each issue a series of new patents that fit their contributors' profile would be generated. This new patent service not only generated more readership for the journals, it also generated requests for the company's database services.

With the rapid expansion of computers as a source of manuscript preparation, Maxwell agreed to the development of a software program to assist contributors with manuscript preparation. In 1986, Manuscript Manager was announced to deal with American Psychological Association (APA) and Council of Biology Editors (CBE) styles. Both associations endorsed the software program and promoted it to their members. Thousands of copies were sold. Development was discontinued when management was turned over to Macmillan after the remainder of Pergamon that was not sold to Elsevier was merged into their management structure in 1991.

Maxwell moved Pergamon Press to further profitability by first recognizing that with strong manuscript flow it was best to establish a clear term for subscriptions. In 1960 he established the calendar year as a subscription base. The subscription would be based on the volume announced for that year. Doing this also created an opportunity to announce new volumes within the same year; through this method the company was able to invoice its customers twice or three times within in one year. Other publishers soon picked up this creative billing cycle.

Because Pergamon was primarily a UK-based company, invoices were originally generated in British pound. As the pound began to decline as one of the primary currencies, Maxwell changed billing to other currencies. Invoices were issued for the United States and the Western Hemisphere in dollars, for Japan in yen, and for Europe and the rest of the world in Deutsch mark. By this simple move, with production being paid for in pounds and income arriving in stronger currencies, the company's profits increased substantially. What was of particular interest in the rate adjustments by currency was that the United States market was paying rates 20% below the rest of the world. This policy had to be modified later when the German Library Association filed a complaint to the European Commission [8, p. 20].

Maxwell's involvement in the daily operation of the company, especially in the early days, was legendary. He began his day with a review of the daily mail. "The mailroom is the heart of the business", was a favorite Maxwell axiom. When he was at the office in Oxford or New York he would be in the mailroom before staff arrived and would affix notes or call personnel to the mailroom to ask for explanations on a particular complaint. Each department head was expected to

respond as to how an order or request was handled. Each of his officers was required to be in the mailroom daily to review the mail. He would regularly review and revise company form letters. His hands-on approach was often more than disconcerting to his staff, but it forced them to focus and not become complacent about their jobs.

He approved all promotion pieces and coined an acronym on which all promotion should be based. This acronym is still widely used throughout the industry by former Pergamon employees: KAMP-BC [Know (your product). Audience (who will buy the product?) Media (how do you reach your audience?) Promise (every promotion must have a built-in promise) Benefit (it's not enough to promise) Clarity (assume your audience knows nothing)].

No matter where Maxwell was in the world, if you required an answer a call could be made and he would give you a yes or no immediately; there was no delay in making decisions and in making an immediate commitment within or outside of the company.

As one of his many endeavors, Maxwell won a seat in Parliament in 1964 [1, p. 221]. Although he accomplished a great deal during his six-year term, I think the following quote from a report he prepared best exemplifies his visionary approach to science. The report was prepared on Science, Government and Industry, in which he concluded:

> Government and science are now completely joined together in an indispensable partnership. Government is dependent on science as an essential resource for national security and welfare while science cannot flourish without government support.

With this statement he helped to establish that governments everywhere must offer more support and funds to universities and industry to expand research for the national good.

During Maxwell's time in Parliament his daily involvement with Pergamon became less of a factor. He had created the momentum and honed the working ethic, and the company continued to grow. Still any one of his staff could give details of his arriving in the office, gathering up staff in the mail room, rewriting form letters, and immediately involving himself in some ongoing negotiation, for which in most cases he had given prior approval. Sometimes there were also mass and individual firings during these sessions.

This style of jumping in and out of the daily business calls to mind one representative negotiation in which Maxwell and I became involved. When he found out that I was going to have a meeting with the Franklin Institute Board on renewal of their journal contract, he pointed out that many members of the Board were

leading scientists. In order to make his point he rattled off what he had accomplished for some of these scientists: Proceeding (AGARD) Aeronautical Research development, First and Second Conference on Peaceful Use of Atomic Energy; Annals of the International Geophysical Year, etc. He then said, "These boys are too big for you to handle but come along and learn something".

At the meeting he quickly reviewed our own proposed terms, which he immediately dismissed. After a long reminiscing session, Bob proceeded to give away the proverbial store, agreeing to everything that the board put on the table. This was not uncommon when Maxwell dealt with editors of the journals; he was not as generous when dealing with the less profitable book editors. As we left the meeting, I remember him putting his arm around my shoulder and saying, "I hope your were paying attention and learned something in there". I said, "Yes! If I had negotiated a contract like that I would be fired". He slapped me on the back and said, "Right, now you put it right." This was so typical of his style. It was fortunate for him that the long-term members of his staff were able to "put things right". We were, after all, largely responsible for the profitability of the company.

The research community has in many ways shown its appreciation and recognition for Maxwell's efforts. His contributions to international science have been recognized with many awards and degrees from industry and academia. He received Honorary D.Sc. from Moscow University, and from Polytechnic Institute, New York, and was named a Kennedy fellow at Harvard. In 1987 he became a member of the United States Information Agency's International Council, advising the President, the Secretary of State, and the National Security Council on perceptions of the United States abroad. He received the Duke of Edinburgh's 1983 prize for the best nonfiction work in the English language *Seaspeak*. This project was fully funded by Maxwell. In order to assure its success, he waived all copyright for its use worldwide [3, p. 239]. "The contribution made by Robert Maxwell to marine communications, and thereby to safety at sea, has been immense. It is highly probable that this contribution could not have come from any other source." A particular honor was bestowed on Robert Maxwell when they chose to use his profile on the cover of *Current Argument on Early Man*, which was part of the series of books published on behalf of the Swedish Academy of Science's Nobel Symposium Science, Technology and Society in the time of Alfred Nobel.

With the sale of Pergamon Press in 1991, Maxwell had disposed of his crown jewels. It was at a time when many companies were suffering from the long recession. Maxwell had overextended himself by massive, and sometimes ill-advised purchases (such as Macmillan, Inc.), and the most valued piece of his empire was Pergamon Press. I recall that after the sale I was asked to travel along with his

daughter, Ghislaine, to introduce the editors to Elsevier's new team in meetings across the United States. The purpose was to assure that the sale would not affect their editorships. At that time Maxwell had bought and become the publisher of the *Daily News* in New York City. It was during his reorganization of the News that I spent time with him calling Pergamon editors. He wanted to stay in touch and also to advise editors about the electronic rights that he was involved in and how he would work with them during the transition. He didn't want to let go. This was a trying time for him and it seemed to me that there was more to this sale than just the money. In my opinion this sale was more to protect his legacy because there were other assets that could have been sold. I have come to this conclusion based on numerous conversations with him, in which he said, "When I go to my maker or baker there will be nothing left," and "My children will not receive a penny from my life's work". Both of these statements did come true. Decades earlier, during the five-year Leasco matter I had traveled heavily with Bob to line up support, and this reminded me of much the same plight.

In November 1991 Maxwell was found drowned off his private yacht, The Lady Ghislaine. There will probably never be an answer to what occurred. It was Maxwell's request to his family that he be buried in Israel, and this was accomplished [4, pp. 1–7]. There has been much discussion on how or why Maxwell received a national burial in Israel. A eulogy was offered by the President of Israel and prayers offered by Chaim Herzog, Chief Rabbi of Haifa, by many other dignitaries, and also by his son Philip [4, pp. 34–37]. In addition to being born a Jew, his involvement in the 1948 Israeli war for independence was little known and never discussed [6, pp. 197–218]. One had to be at the funeral to fully appreciate the words that were spoken in recognition of his life.

During Robert Maxwell's tenure as founder and publisher of Pergamon Press he was instrumental in publishing over 7,000 monographs and reference works and in launching some 700 journals, 418 of which continue to be published with the imprint of Pergamon Press within the Elsevier publishing group [9, pp. 139–140].

I believe that of all the tributes that Bob Maxwell has received, this quote from Arnold Field best captures how Maxwell would have liked to be remembered.

> I do believe, however, that he possessed a genuine desire to publish works on scientific and professional subjects which I am certain would otherwise remain just dusty manuscripts. Selective he must be, astute to the market potential he must be, but those of us who have had the privilege of being published, are grateful for the fact that he also prepared to place on record for public knowledge and present and future research, books on subjects which would otherwise remain within the domain of restricted groups. [3, p.104]

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