

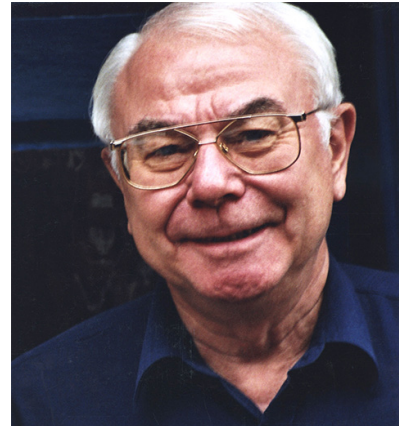
Norman Drake, 1939–2020

Trade veteran Norman Drake dies aged 80

Tribute in *The Bookseller* magazine, 16 April

Norman Drake, a former director of Blackwell's, founder of Drake Marketing Services and former co-owner of Pluto Press, has died at the age of 80.

Initially an academic sales rep with John Murray, Norman moved to the same role at Blackwell Publishing in 1970, before being promoted to sales manager and eventually becoming export and marketing director, a director of Marston Distribution and a director of Blackwell's bookshops. He was also chairman of the Academic Publishers section of the Publishers Association for a number of years. He left Blackwell's in 1987 to run his own Oxfordshire-based company, Drake Marketing Services (later Drake International Services), assisted by his wife Joy, which provided sales, marketing and global distribution services to scholarly and university presses from across the world, and was also a joint owner of Pluto Press until 1991.



His son Ashley Drake, managing director of Welsh Academic Press, described how he was a familiar face at Frankfurt and London Book Fairs for over three decades, instantly recognisable by his 'Welsh accent, infectious laugh and mischievous sense of humour', which made him a popular figure in academic publishing for many years.

Philip Blackwell recalled: 'He was one of the wonderful old school sales directors, an amusing raconteur with his soft Welsh accent, eyes alight'.

René Olivieri, former MD of Blackwell's, who worked closely with Drake during his time with the company, told *The Bookseller*: 'I was very sorry to hear that the great Norman Drake has passed away. Norman was an "old school" publisher and sales manager in the best sense. When I arrived for a job interview at Blackwell and had the after lunch slot with him, he tried to initiate me into the secrets of the famous "short sales" report, an unwieldy unperforated green print out, until I quietly nodded off. When I apologised profusely a few moments later, he waved me off and said, "No bother; happens all the time" '.

'He was a great raconteur, with a booming, infectious laugh. When he stood up to make a speech, I'm not sure he always knew what he was going to say, but it always came out perfectly. I made many a trip to the Frankfurt Book Fair with Norman and I was never able to convince him that taking a boot full of beer to Frankfurt was like the proverbial coals to Newcastle.

'He loved his wife, Joy, and his family very deeply and was hugely engaged in his local community, Deddington. I am sad at his passing but I remember him with a fond smile.'

Norman retired from publishing in 2003 to focus on his first love, tennis, and to spend time travelling with his wife Joy, who passed away in February 2019. He is survived by his four children and five grandchildren.

A memorial service in Deddington will be arranged for later in 2020.