



In Memoriam: Arthur Brody, June 30, 1920 – May 10, 2012

Arthur Brody's commitment to serving the library community really began inside a small lending library in Newark, New Jersey known as the Bro-Delle Book Shoppe. It was located in a pharmacy owned by his parents, Samuel and Ruth, and provided the inspiration for a career where his accomplishments are still evident in libraries today.

Arthur's entrepreneurial prowess literally began with his ingenuity and photographic film. As an electrical engineering student at Columbia University in 1939, he parlayed his photography hobby into a business by covering his textbooks in clear photographic film. It did not take long for his classmates to take notice and demand for his first product was born.

In his basement "lab" he used rollers from a wringer washing machine and miscellaneous store bought parts to construct a machine for creating book covers. He experimented with different thicknesses of plastic sheets and repurposed X-ray film until he found a combination, which folded easily, yet was still strong enough for protection. The resulting product extended the life of his books, those of fellow students, and those in circulation at the family store. This simple clear plastic jacket remains in great demand and is used by libraries worldwide.

Granted a patent for his book jackets and using a small personal savings, he started the Library Service business and by the time he graduated from Columbia, Arthur had eight employees working for him. With very little capital and a good idea he placed his first ad with *Library Journal*. The decision increased sales and afforded him the opportunity to do more advertising and to further grow his business.

World War II placed his business growth on hold when he became a commissioned officer in the Signal Corps of the U.S. Army. He taught the Theory of Frequency Modulation at the Army signal school at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey and served in the European Theater of Operations.

When Arthur's duty to country was over he resumed where he left off, changing the Library Service company name to Brodart in 1946. Incidentally, the name was chosen through an employee contest where the winner suggested using Art's first and last names turned inside out.

Through the years he positioned Brodart as the company to supply all things required to run a library from filing systems to furniture. His instinct for business is illustrated through the many firsts highlighting a career populated by the perfect blend of inventiveness, good timing, and calculated risks.

In the 1950s he partnered with commercial lending library businessman, Nelson McNaughton, turning his investment into the original library subscription model for high-demand material, which set the standards for McNaughton plans still popular today.

During this decade he also purchased a library furniture business, laying the groundwork for what would become our Contract Furniture division, respected for furniture styles ranging from traditional to the most innovative design concepts in the industry to date.

In the 1960s Arthur moved Brodart from New Jersey to Williamsport, Pennsylvania and acquired a Chicago based wholesale book distributor, officially extending Brodart operations into the general book wholesaling business. In addition, he leased the first IBM 360 computer system to be used commercially in Eastern Pennsylvania. Another first included the provision of cataloging and processing with materials, so libraries could concentrate their resources on tasks other than routine processes. Prior to this libraries had to get their cards from the Library of Congress and purchase their books from a separate location.

Arthur was the first in the library industry to understand the importance of creating a management team that truly understood all aspects of the library market and was creative enough to see new ideas through to fruition. By 1966 he had built a unique management team comprised of professional librarians, writers, engineers, and administrators.

1968 would take Arthur full circle when he added retail sales to his impressive résumé through the acquisition of Stacey's Book Store, which became a San Francisco institution. By the mid-1990s he would add 10,000 square feet of retail space to the three story flagship store, pioneering yet another first—the super store concept. He tied his industries together neatly by offering library books, recycled from lease plans, through Brodart's Tartan division, to be sold at his hugely popular Stacey's sidewalk sales.

By 1969 Brodart was newly available on the American Stock Exchange, where it would remain until the 1980s when he utilized BDI Investments to acquire all outstanding shares of Brodart stock, returning it to private status.

By the 1970s Brodart employed upwards of 1,500 and contributed greatly to the growing economy and industrial life of Lycoming County in Central Pennsylvania. Always the visionary, Arthur had the uncanny ability to recognize the possibilities in solid ideas and even other people's failing business prospects. He would continue to look for intriguing business opportunities throughout his career.

Arthur lent his creative mind to many ideas and had a hand in recognizable industry names of today. He was involved in experimenting with a formula for a new adhesive to replace library paste, which later became Elmer's glue. His idea for "Magic Mending" tape would be picked up by Minnesota Mining & Manufacturing better known as 3M.

A simple Google search will turn up some of the many patents credited to him throughout his lifetime. The book jacket and book pockets, plus the machinery to produce them, tabs for ring binders and systems for recording library transactions are among the products he developed for library use.

During the late 1980s he was a partner in the purchase, and also the Chairman, of Tura Inc., a Long Island based maker of eyewear frames, known today for quality collections from names like Ted Baker, Lulu Guinness and others.

By 1989 Arthur was no longer managing the day-to-day business of Brodart, choosing instead to remain involved as Chairman and CEO. Management was instead in the capable hands of Brodart's president, Joseph Lagen, who at the time had been Arthur's business partner for 20 years. They would go on to share a partnership lasting 40 years and together acquired many companies, building Brodart into a respected name in the library industry.

In the early 1990s Arthur was a partner in the purchase, and also the Chairman of the Board, of CRS Inc., an employee absence management solution serving school districts and libraries in the U.S. and Canada. During his involvement the company grew from the original 35 accounts to more than 1,000 school districts.

In 2004 anticipating a growing need for quality Spanish-language material, Brodart purchased Books on Wings, a San Francisco based wholesaler of Spanish-language children's and adult titles.

Arthur officially retired on August 30, 2004 after 65 years in an industry he remained passionate about and very much enjoyed. Although his business ventures were varied the main focus of every idea was geared in the same direction, serving the total needs of libraries. He made it possible for libraries to begin with an empty building and become a fully furnished library. Supplying furniture such as shelving, catalog card files, seating, tables, and computer workstations. He offered supplies for protecting and circulating a collection, book carts, and spinner racks for all types of material, plus database management software, and scanners—essentially every product necessary for everyday life in a library.

Arthur's accomplishments in the business world are only part of his amazing legacy. Serving on a number of civic and not-for-profit boards, he contributed time and money to many local and national charities.

He was a founding member of the World Presidents Organization, and a member of the Young Presidents Organization. He was active on several boards and commissions of library organizations including, the San Diego Public Library, the UCSD Chancellor's Associates, founding president of the UCSD Advisory Library Board, San Diego Dialogue, a founding member of the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, the National Book Committee, the National Advisory Council of Hampshire College in Massachusetts, a member of the American Library Association, the National Education Association and a UCSD San Diego Foundation trustee where he helped establish the Student Foundation. He was also a member and past president of Friends of New Jersey libraries, a former president and CEO of BDI Investment Corporation, a member of the advisory board and a founding member of Sorrento Ventures, and past president of Brosoar Corporation.

Arthur was listed in *Who's Who* for more than two decades. He served as an executive board member and council member at large for the Robert Treat Council of Boy Scouts of America, was a Mason and a Shriner, and a past president and trustee of Newark Symphony Hall. He served on the boards of the Rady School of Management, the San Diego Symphony, Seacrest Retirement Village and the Sanford-Burnham Cancer Institute.

Perhaps Arthur's greatest achievement will be his philanthropic legacy created through serving as the President of the Sophie and Arthur Brody Foundation. His success in business afforded him the opportunity to give back to the communities he loved both far and wide by donating generously to a host of causes important to him and his family. The Congregation Beth Israel (housing the Sophie and Arthur Brody Library), the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, the United Jewish Federation, and the American Joint Distribution Committee just to name a few. Through the Foundation he also established the Sophie Brody Medal in honor of his wife. Four medals are awarded annually to U.S. authors who have made distinguished contributions to Jewish literature for adults.

As employees of the company which bears his name, we remain thankful for the opportunity he has given us. Perhaps we understand best that he never lost sight of his goal to build a library centric company. Did libraries change because of his innovation or did his offerings change to match the evolution of libraries? Those mentored by him know it to be the former.

As we say goodbye to Arthur Brody we stand in awe of his many accomplishments both professional and personal.