**Preface**

The world of Buying and Merchandising in 1988 was very different to the one that exists today, but it did exist, and was the one that I joined in the April of that year. I leant quickly about the processes and activities of a busy buying office, the first being that it was very loud. The buzz of telephones ringing, fax machines and people blended together into a constant background noise, which seems to have been lost in many of the buying offices of today. Activities were different too, technology was almost on existent and there were periods of time where had nothing to do because we were waiting on some other function to provide information or complete a task.

The most striking of the differences was this waiting. My early role as an allocator meant I had to go and collect sales and stock data print outs and bring it to the department for review. Our allocation system did not work on a Monday because it took all day to process weekend sales data. Stores had to send stock requests in the post, and we had to queue up to send a fax or telex from the only machines able to do so. If one contrasts that with the retail business world of the twenty first century, there is little that has not changed. Online data is readily available at ones desktop meaning that the concept of waiting to make a decision is little experienced. One of the benefits of having waiting time is that one has the ability to think, and even today I find that I make my best decisions when I have had the luxury of being able to wait before committing to a course of action. Today, the inevitable surge of data availability often feels as if one cannot see the core message, but instead focus on the many micro messages which can often conflict. This “analysis paralysis” is symptomatic of a loss of focus required to create that perfect product range and earn that life changing bonus.

Fashion Merchandising: Principles and Practice, has been written therefore to lay out not just the role and activities of the fashion merchandiser, but also demonstrate why I believe the role to be integral within fashion retailing. The scale of the fashion industry is large, the competition fierce and the opportunities to connect with the consumer huge. With all the noise of social media and new business models, it feels timely to stop and offer the opportunity to think, about not just what the fashion merchandiser does, but also why. The approach to its writing has always been to identify the practical process and the principles that guide, to explain why that process is important, but also how it can add value within product management.