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Dennis Brunning

Arizona State University, dennis.brunning@gmail.com

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ATG Interviews Steve Bosch

Materials Budget, Procurement, and Licensing Librarian, University of Arizona

by Dennis Brunning (E Humanities Development Librarian, Arizona State University) <dennis.brunning@gmail.com>

Column Editor’s Note: Steve Bosch is Materials Budget, Procurement, and Licensing Librarian at the University of Arizona. Steve’s abilities exceed the length of his title; he manages content and change with the grace of a University of Arizona point guard. We’ve worked with him many years. Steve is a resource and a great guy. — DB

ATG: You are a big University of Arizona sports fan. What does the average fan need to know about your job and profession?

Steve Bosch: About my job and profession — probably nothing! Although, one good thing to know about the Library is that for “Tailgaters” the Library has the best public restrooms closest to tailgate parking and the stadium. Also good to keep in mind that the Library has some great sports stats in case a fan needs to stock up on little known sports trivia to impress their friends.

ATG: University of Arizona Libraries is well known for its team concept. What’s team-based collection development like?

SB: Herding cats? Who’s on first? Can decisions really get made outside of geologic time frames? Pushing decision-making to the lowest possible level and empowering people to act works really well most of the time, as long as the basic parameters are well understood and agreed on. There are problems with getting everyone on the same page at the same time especially in rapidly changing environments like we are seeing now. Since there is a need to shift focus from local collections to delivery and access the traditional selector roles are changing so we are now “herding fewer cats” and that is getting easier. Despite drawbacks we do get a lot done by a small number of people and users seem to appreciate their efforts.

ATG: U of A embraces technology and organizational change. Which technology knocked your socks off? What could you have done without?

SB: Actually these are one and the same. The Arizona Universities consortia did a group purchase for streaming video from FMG that was essentially a patron initiated plan where we exposed all the content, then purchased the streamed video based on use. Since this was brand new and the technology not mature there were all kinds of things that came and once you thought you had one thing fixed another thing popped up. Things were constantly changing and this really was a case when we were trying to nail jello to a wall. In the end things worked really well and the users loved us for bringing up the service. We had to keep shifting the purchase trigger up as use skyrocketed. Since this was brand new and cutting edge there was a good deal of feel good about getting it up and running.

ATG: Is the era of the “big deal” in library content over?

SB: Who the heck knows? If I really knew I probably wouldn’t be in a library but would be out consulting, showing folks how to make the transition. I suspect that we will continue to see content bundled to get reduced prices, but I also suspect that a hard look will also happen concerning the low use content that gets into the agreements. Libraries will be increasingly concerned about buying content that isn’t used. Unfortunately there isn’t a business model now that can really support “you only buy what’s used” but that could be a real “killer app” in the library marketplace.

ATG: Is there a role for collection development — and the library for that matter — in “open access” publishing?

SB: A better question might be is there a role for collection development in the world of networked digital information. It is not about the collection any more so we should really be thinking about information resource management at the network level. I seem to be having to unlearn everything I thought I knew about collection development as things shift in focus from local collections to network level discovery and access.

ATG: What’s Steve Bosch working on for the Fall 2009 semester?

SB: Patron initiated acquisitions will be the big thing this fall as we move from testing to implementation across several fronts.

ATG: Is there a Lute Olson for the librarianship in the Google era? Or do we need a Bobby Knight?

SB: Frankly, we don’t need more/better coaches, but we sure could use some Michael Jordans — folks who can finish plays, put the rock in the hole, and energize the fan base and get them back in the door and excited 'bout the game.

Rumors

Anthropology bachelor’s degree at Pembroke College, the University of Cambridge, and an MBA from Oxford Brookes University. We are looking forward to seeing him in Charleston in November!


Speaking of Purdue University Press! Remember Tom Bacher who used to run the press and write for Against the Grain?!? continued on page 58

52 Against the Grain / September 2009