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ATG Interviews Bob Nardini

Group Director of Client Integration, Coutts Library Services

by Pam Cenzer (Science Librarian, University of Florida) <pam.cenzer@gmail.com>

Column Editor’s Note: In early January 2007 YBP Library Services called me to let me know that Bob Nardini had left YBP and joined a competitor, Coutts Library Services. I spoke with Bob two weeks later. — PC

ATG: In the press release from Coutts about your appointment your title includes the phrase “group director of client integration” was does that mean?

BN: I think it is more or less a British term. It means that my job will focus on making sure that Coutts’ services mesh with the processes of academic libraries, so that it is easy to do business with Coutts.

ATG: You joined Yankee Book Peddler (now YBP) in July 1985, many academic libraries have changed since then. How have these changes impacted Coutts’ services?

BN: I think technology has had the biggest impact. The rise of the Internet, and much of library automation, have made work easier and more efficient. And that’s good.

The changes have also given us new opportunities and challenges. We’re seeing more growth in open access publishing, which might have a big impact on us. One thing that hasn’t changed is the need for our services: libraries want branded services that are easy to use and make their lives easier.

ATG: As a system administrator, I see many libraries that are fully automated and have all of their services in one place. Do you think that’s the future?

BN: I think that’s likely to be the future for many institutions. First, it’s cost effective. Second, it’s easier to use.

As libraries continue to automate, they’ll want to offer branded services that are easy to use. This means that they’ll need to have services that are easy to integrate with their systems. And that’s something that we’ll be able to provide.

ATG: Thanks for the interview. I think you’ve given us a great overview of what’s happening in the library automation industry.

BN: You’re welcome. I think it’s an exciting time for the industry, and I’m glad to be a part of it.

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different company, in many ways, than the one I’d joined and known for all those years. In a very real sense, the best thing I could have done for the company was to leave.

**ATG:** I remember the Coutts company that John Coutts founded with the University of Toronto as a big customer. Are they still a customer?

**BN:** Yes, they certainly are. Toronto is a very large customer. A couple other large customers in Canada would be the University of British Columbia and the University of Western Ontario.

**ATG:** Tell me about the Coutts customer base, is it primarily Canadian?

**BN:** Actually the biggest group of clients is in the UK, with Canada second, and the U.S. next. Coutts has offices in four different countries, including the Netherlands, where Coutts Nijhoff International is based. The people in these offices have the language skills and the cultural skills to expand globally.

**ATG:** Is hiring you part of the company’s goal to expand the customer base within the U.S.?

**BN:** Yes, there is certainly a lot of room for growth in the U.S. Stanford is Coutts’ more prominent customer in this country. A few of the others include Central Michigan, Nova Southeastern, and James Madison.

**ATG:** Has Coutts hired others from YBP?

**BN:** Yes, Carolyn Morris and Cathy Boylan were hired from YBP. Carolyn is Director of New Business Development in the U.S., with territory responsibility in the Northeast. Cathy is responsible for sales in Europe.

**ATG:** Ingram is now the parent company for Coutts. Could you explain how this arrangement works?

**BN:** The day I interviewed with Coutts it was announced that Ingram had acquired them. Coutts will become the academic division of Ingram. Coutts has the people with expertise on academic libraries. Ingram has an enormous inventory that Coutts will now be able to draw upon. Also, the combination of eBooks, with Coutts’ MyiLibrary platform, and Ingram’s Lightning Source print on demand business, should be a powerful one. MyiLibrary will become part of a division called Ingram Digital Ventures, headed up by James Gray, who had led the revived Coutts since buying the company a number of years ago.

**ATG:** Is the Coutts relationship with Ingram analogous to the YBP relationship with Baker and Taylor?

**BN:** Yes, the situations are similar, in that YBP became the academic division of Baker & Taylor. But the possibilities at Ingram Digital Ventures are unique.

**ATG:** Another phrase from the press release describing your appointment was “the full seamless ILS covering both print and electronic content” can you elaborate?

**BN:** The electronic content of eBooks is fully controlled by Coutts, since MyiLibrary, the company’s eBook platform, is a sister company. Coutts controls the platform and the content, and so does not have to rely on third party suppliers or aggregators.

**ATG:** When I read the phrase “fully integrated” I imagined eBooks delivered automatically to a library as part of an approval plan. Is this possible with Coutts?

**BN:** This is a service offered now by Coutts, yes.

**ATG:** Will you be relocating as a result of your new position?

**BN:** Yes, eventually I’ll be moving to the Buffalo, New York area, nearby where I grew up.

**ATG:** Was this location a positive factor for your decision to change companies?

**BN:** Well, it wasn’t a negative. I can live with snow.

**ATG:** At least it isn’t snowing here in Seattle. Thanks so much for talking with me, Bob and I wish you every success at Coutts.