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ATG Interviews: Skip Prichard, President and CEO, OCLC

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**Interview — Mark Cummings**

Implications for our business. Concomitantly, our respondents made us aware of their growing sense of displacement as a result.

One of the most common laments during these sessions was that publishers and aggregators are taking decisionmaking out of the hands of librarians. Other themes included the need to address information literacy issues among students, who more often than not do not discover information in a disaggregated form, stripped of its context. And of course, curation of open-access content and sources, including concerns about ensuring version integrity, was the subject of repeated comments. We are looking hard at these and other issues, but again, it’s premature to comment on specific initiatives at this point.

ATG: We know that you must be incredibly busy with your responsibilities at Choice, but everyone needs some down time. What are your favorite activities when you can grab a little time off? Besides Charleston, what are your favorite places to visit and spend time?

MC: At last, an easy one! We’ll keep this short. In the summer I enjoy sailing our little Flying Scot on a local lake. I cook year-round, a tremendous source of relaxation. And my favorite places to visit, other than Charleston, of course, are the canyons of southern Utah. Cellular towers are pretty scarce out that way.

ATG: Mark, we really appreciate your willingness to talk to ATG and keep our readers informed as to what is going on at Choice. And on behalf of those same readers, we also want to thank Choice’s Ann Doherty who has contributed the “Collecting to the Core” column to Against the Grain for a number of years.

MC: I know I speak for Anne when I say that our contributions to ATG reflect our commitment to your mission and to the ways in which it dovetails with our own. So thank you for this opportunity to speak with your readers. I look forward to talking with you again as our plans mature. By the way, I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention our email address for comments and questions: <TellChoice@ala-choice.org>. The address comes straight to my desk, so don’t be shy!
to get deeply involved in the organization, whether they’re helping us as pilots or advisors in the development of new services, or getting involved in the governance of our organization. Their impact and influence are essential.

For example, libraries that stepped up as early adopters have been essential to helping guide the development and implementation of our WorldShare Management Services. The cooperative approach to this kind of innovation is critical to our success.

Since OCLC moved to the new governance structure of Global and Regional Councils, there has been a steady increase in involvement of libraries in OCLC governance. For example, 340 librarians from 14 countries attended the annual Asia Pacific Regional Council meeting in Bangkok this year, up from 100 four years ago.

One of the challenges we face as an organization is that, with thousands of member libraries around the world, it is difficult to meet regularly face-to-face. We are trying to find even more ways to connect and to use social tools to facilitate more member library interactions around the world.

Could the relationship be improved? Undoubtedly, I believe it is always possible to improve in any relationship. The historic relationship with member libraries in the U.S., for instance, was primarily through regional networks. In some cases, the transition went well and in others, I see the need for review and continued work.

**ATG:** What are the key differences between running a non-profit like OCLC and a company like Ingram Content Group or ProQuest Information and Learning? Does it require a different set of leadership skills?

**SP:** I’ve been serving libraries in various capacities nearly my entire career. Leading OCLC is in some ways similar to, and in other ways completely different from my past experiences. It’s similar in that there are organizational disciplines that are essential to all leadership positions — operational efficiency, technological innovation, or product development. It’s different because OCLC is a nonprofit organization with a unique mission. This is an environment that demands collaborative leadership.

Member needs guide our actions and our investments. Profit achievement, quarterly financial results and growing share value are not our drivers. We are driven to fulfill a public purpose for libraries and their users. It’s this fundamental difference that attracted me to OCLC. Our only goal is to deliver for our members long-term.

**ATG:** You mentioned that while you were the CEO at Ingram one of your main goals was “repositioning the company to improve results and grow key parts of business significantly.” Is OCLC in need of a similar repositioning? How would you currently rate OCLC in terms of serving library needs? What strategies will you pursue to keep up with the ever changing service needs of libraries?

**SP:** Every situation is unique, and OCLC’s needs are different than others I have experienced. What matters is what our members think, what they need, and what they want us to do with our resources. Members are telling me that we need to strengthen our position in electronic materials, and we are doing that. Our research and advocacy work is important, and we have goals to increase the collective voice of libraries and share relevant library trends. We are also working in the area of analytics. Most importantly, I am working to simplify our message and provide clarity in terms of where we are going.

We know that users’ expectations are continuing to grow and this will drive demand for new services and new approaches — through mobile technologies, through non-library applications, and social media. To support this, we have to continue to strengthen our position in metadata, not just for print, but for born-digital assets and other electronic materials. You will see more from us in these areas in the near future.

So our top priorities include delivering user-focused, community built services to support libraries and their users, relevant research, and library advocacy. **continued on page 38**
Interview — Skip Prichard
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**ATG:** On your LinkedIn summary page it says that OCLC’s “goals include furthering access to the world’s information and reducing library costs.” Exactly how are you doing that now? What can we expect in the future, particularly in terms of reducing library costs?

**SP:** OCLC has a long history of providing services that further access to information and save libraries money by working together. For example, libraries that copy catalog using WorldCat enjoy a hit rate of 95 percent, which increases their efficiency and means they don’t have to spend as much on original cataloging. Libraries use our ILL Fee Management to eliminate costs associated with invoice processing and payments between libraries. Libraries that use WorldCat Cataloging last year added some 6.5 million records to their catalogs through machine-to-machine interactions that required minimal staff involvement. Our new WorldShare Management Services are designed to help libraries reduce their hardware and software costs and modify workflows to gain new efficiencies. We take our objective of reducing library costs seriously.

Furthering access to information is really interesting in today’s electronic communications environment. One of the more unique ways OCLC is furthering access to information in libraries today is through syndication of WorldCat data. This data is used to help connect users to the unique, authoritative information collected and maintained by libraries in new ways. Through partnerships with Web services such as Google, Yahoo!, EasyBib, Goodreads and others, library users can find library materials through the sources they use for research, reading, homework and socializing. We will work to expand this type of access to help member libraries gain more visibility and discoverability on the Web.

**ATG:** OCLC’s cloud-based WorldShare Management Services is a major initiative, and you are incrementally moving new and existing OCLC services to the WorldShare Platform. Can you give us a progress report? With any major new venture like this there are glitches. What have been the most serious for the WorldShare effort? How has OCLC overcome them?

**SP:** In March (2013), staff of the Criss Library at the University of Nebraska Omaha celebrated the launch of its OCLC WorldShare Management Services — the 100th implementation of WMS since the services went into production in 2011, a significant milestone. We have many more libraries in process, so we are seeing strong interest in this new approach to library management services.

Development of WorldShare Management Services is the result of careful long-term planning, and steady technological innovation. For example, last June, OCLC took a bold step into the cloud by converting the underlying technology for WorldCat to Apache HBase/ Hadoop. This new structure is used by many organizations such as Facebook, Adobe and Salesforce.com. There are always glitches with these types of generational shifts in technology, but given our staged approach and library development partners, these moves have been very manageable. It has been an exciting endeavor.

Long term, the WorldShare platform will support cataloging, resource sharing and discovery as well as traditional ILS functions like circulation. Libraries can pick and choose from services on this new platform. It’s a more flexible environment, which is what libraries tell us they need.

**ATG:** As you mentioned above, OCLC partners with Web services such as Google, Yahoo!, EasyBib, Goodreads and others to help serve the library community. What do those partnerships entail? How do libraries benefit specifically?

**SP:** OCLC has more than 300 development and commercial partners. Each partner brings its unique resources and strengths to the table for the benefit of the membership. Last year, some of these partners supplied over 450 million records that were used by OCLC members. They generated over 227 million Web referrals to libraries. These partners include EBSCO, Gale, ProQuest, Atlas Systems, EasyBib, Ex Libris, Google Books, HathiTrust, and Sustainable Collection Services, among hundreds more.

Content providers contribute data, and in return they get exposure via OCLC services. They can also buy services from OCLC if they want. We continue to offer APIs through the WorldShare platform that make it possible for libraries to use data in new and different ways. Most important, OCLC members get the data they need at a low cost. Their collections are syndicated for broad exposure. And libraries get the benefit of improved applications.

In addition to content partners, we have service provider partners that fall into two categories: consumer Websites relating to education and research, and library/institutional service providers. Among the former are the world’s largest social network for books (Goodreads), Google Books, Wikipedia, EasyBib (the world’s most heavily used citation management site) and many others. Among the latter: all major ILS and resource sharing software vendors, of course; but also a number of Analytics providers (such as SCS and Plum Analytics); Blackboard, and many others. These partnerships focus on integrating library services into the services...
that libraries buy for their patrons and patrons choose for themselves.

**ATG:** You wrote on your blog, Leadership Insights, that although you “own every digital device,” you also “still love to have printed books around.” As the information industry goes through an obvious digital transformation, what future do you think printed books have? Can they play a role in information delivery as library services move increasingly to the cloud? If so, what would that role be?

**SP:** In the past few years, I have tried every device you can name from numerous types of Kindles to the Nook, the iPad, Kobo, and several phones. You can’t beat the convenience of a digital reader, though I admittedly prefer to read a printed book. For several years, I have talked about the future of the book at conferences, written editorials, and argued that both will co-exist. The digital book will morph as we take advantage of new technologies. That will change the digital book from just another container, and reinvent it into an entirely different experience. Currently, though the trend is strong, it is not just a steady march to digital. Interestingly, recent AAP statistics show hardcover growth outpacing eBook growth. That surprises some so early in the process.

Libraries will continue to collect and maintain the human record and pass it on to future generations, whether that human record is on a clay tablet, a scroll, or the latest version of an eBook. That’s been the role of libraries for the last 5,000 years, and it’s an important role that must continue. We at OCLC intend to do our best to help libraries fulfill their vital mission into the future, whatever technology comes our way — print included.

**ATG:** The last few months must have been incredibly hectic. How do you relax and recharge your batteries?

**SP:** Relaxing and recharging simply has not been on the agenda of late, but in my dreams I would be on a beach somewhere. Normally, I find balance with family activities, reading, blogging, a few concerts sprinkled in for music and a few live sporting events.

**ATG:** As a self-described “foodie” how would you rank the restaurants in Charleston? Do you have a particular favorite? What Charleston dish would you recommend to a friend who was visiting Charleston for the first time?

**SP:** No visit to Charleston is complete without visiting a few of the city’s fine restaurants. I wouldn’t even know where to begin. The Charleston Grill’s shrimp and grits are particularly memorable, but then they were also amazing at Hank’s Seafood after she-crab soup. If you push me, I would comment on the Peninsula Grill’s crème brûlée done the right way (it’s chocolate!) and their lobster and corn chowder. Not to mention the swordfish at McCrady’s, and their special homemade bread. Perhaps in another life I would be a food critic.

**ATG:** We’re impressed! You know more about the Charleston food scene than we do! In any case, we know how valuable your time is, so we really appreciate you talking to us. We learned a lot.

**SP:** It’s been my pleasure. And I learn from every issue of ATG. 😊

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**ATG Interviews Kim Massana**

**CEO, Innovative Interfaces**

by Tom Gilson (Associate Editor, Against the Grain) <gilsont@cofc.edu> and Katina Strauch (Editor, Against the Grain) <kstrauch@comcast.net>

**ATG:** Prior to joining Innovative you spent a number of years in leadership positions with Thomson Elite. Can you tell us about that? What experiences at Thomson Elite helped prepare you for your current responsibilities? What Is Thomson Elite’s business model?

**KM:** I actually had a couple of different positions with Thomson Reuters. I was originally based in London working with the Westlaw product, which brought me into contact with the library community since we were selling the product to both academic and law firm libraries. In this role, I got to know academic libraries throughout Europe, Africa and the Middle East. In 2008, I became President of Thomson Reuters Elite, which is based in Los Angeles and is a leading provider of enterprise resource planning software (known as ERP) to law firms.

(Editor’s note: ERP software includes things like legal time and billing software, docketing software, legal calendar software, etc.)

So in coming to Innovative I thought it was a positive combination of my days with libraries and my software background with Elite—in a way the library systems that we’re working with are like ERP for libraries. The Elite business is similar to Innovative’s in terms of focusing on product with a big service component.

**ATG:** According to the Innovative Website, you have been immersing yourself “in the library community, listening and talking to librarians at conferences, events, and library visits around the world.” What are the key takeaways from these conversations? What do libraries want from their ILS vendors and Discovery Services?

**KM:** There have been a number of themes that have run through my conversations with librarians. Obviously, the library community is very open and I’m continually impressed by how much sharing goes on among libraries both in terms of resources and best practices. Librarians are also focused on changing technology, as well as the changing expectations of users. Users compare libraries to other places where they can get information, like Google, and to places where they can get books, like Amazon. So the expectations have changed and libraries need a library technology partner to help them take their offerings and services to the next level. This is a role we want to play — to be their technology partner of choice, making it easier for their users to find information through discovery and then access that information through the ILS (Integrated Library System) or LSP (Library Services Platform).

**ATG:** At your first Innovative Users Group conference in May 2013 you admitted that Innovative had not been good in dealing with third parties and partnerships. You called for greater openness and collaboration. What changes have you implemented to make this happen? Are you satisfied with the progress so far?

**KM:** We have made a number of changes that are focused on opening up to the community. We have made a number of changes that are focused on opening up to the community.