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Innovations Affecting Us

Inforonics — Titlebank Internet Catalog

Column Editor: **Judy Luther** (The Faxon Company)

*To learn about publishers catalogs on the Internet, I contacted **Bruce Buckland** who has officially been with Inforonics since October 1992. Our conversation focused on their new service and his role in bringing this about. It is also a complement to the interview with his father, **Larry Buckland**. — JL*

JL: How did you come to work with Inforonics and what background/skills do you bring to the company?

BB: I've had extensive experience with the Bell Companies in software communication support and I helped them fine tune their technical operations. Much of my time was spent working with their operations department to maximize uptime on their computer systems.

Over the years I've been involved on numerous software development projects and with my dad in various projects. Then I joined Inforonics last fall as the Product Manager to structure the product line to take advantage of new technologies, such as the telecommunication links. **The Titlebank Internet Catalog** is one of these newly expanded products.

JL: Tell us more about this service.

BB: Titlebank is a book marketing service for publishers which includes a title information database and many output products, including various print and CD-ROM. Although we have offered the database service for several years, the **Titlebank Internet Catalog** provides the publishers a commercial presence on the Internet by enabling them to provide access to their catalogs as a value added.

This means that the catalog is easily accessible 24 hours/day and the publisher can provide more information on each title than it is cost effective to offer in a printed catalog which must be mailed. Information can always be up-to-date, listing the newest books as they become available, without the time constraints of a printed catalog.

Additional features of the **Titlebank**

Internet Catalog include an announcement section for news items, a new titles section, a complete list in subject order, an order form for each book, keyword access to author, title or text. We have adapted the popular Gopher program to mount the publishers' catalogs on our server. Orders can be placed for titles via email, fax, or an 800 number.

JL: What impact do you think this type of access will have on ordering?

BB: It opens an area for publishers to get direct contact with their customers in a very immediate way that is new to the industry. They can put information in an announcement section that is very current. It is also possible to have some analysis and feedback to the publisher

"You can either telnet or gopher to our address on the Internet which is 'gopher.infor.com' and login as guest."

on the users of their catalog — so that the publisher can determine who is looking at their catalog, what is of interest and how it was found. The marketing and acquisitions people have never had this kind of feedback before.

The promise of online ordering for publishers is the potential to sell directly to their customers, if they are prepared to deal with an increased number of delivery and invoicing options. The customer will determine the importance of the value-added services now being handled by vendors, along with the economies of scale which vendors now provide.

JL: What will be the impact of more commercial information available on the Internet?

BB: The lack of a commercial infrastructure on the Internet, such as a Mastercard or Visa system, puts limits on how information can be sold. While technologically feasible, the problems of managing billing and payment for single orders and small quantities of information have not yet been resolved. When they are, the Internet will be a much richer tool for everyone.

JL: How would a library look at these catalogs? Are you marketing to the library?

BB: You can either telnet or gopher to our address on the Internet which is "gopher.infor.com" and login as guest. You can view the catalog of the **American Chemical Society** now and will soon be able to see several other presses who have committed to the **Titlebank Internet Catalog**.

We are listing our gopher address in a variety of newsletters and postings on the Internet to announce it to the 15 million users and 20 thousand librarians who can access the Internet worldwide. Rather than direct marketing to the library, we are focusing our efforts on bringing up publishers as quickly as possible.

JL: What other types of services are you planning to offer and how do you see your role changing? What vision do you have for the company?

BB: We are working with publishers to develop prototypes of various products. This prototype development workshop moves the publisher well up the learning curve as they apply the Internet to their own needs.

I see my role as becoming less technical and more product oriented. I'll deal more directly with how the publisher uses the technology rather than how to make the technology work. I think my dad will be here for a long time since his father worked as a consultant into his eighties, as he said "until all his customers died" about a decade ago.

JL: What do you do for fun?

BB: Maybe I'm a workaholic. My wife jokes about getting an Internet account to get in touch with me at work. I do enjoy downhill skiing with my family and eating (a favorite of mine, too). I recently read *Breaking the Maya Code* by Michael Coe and *Computer Wars* by Charles Ferguson.

You can contact me over the Internet at "bhb@infor.com". I'd be glad to provide more information for anyone who wants to work with our new **Titlebank Internet Catalog**. ☼