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Interview - Dan Tonkery

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Interview — Dan Tonkery

President & CEO — Readmore, Inc.

by Katina Strauch (College of Charleston)

Recently I found myself in New York where I had the pleasure of interviewing Dan Tonkery. My fondest memory of Dan is when he pulled me down from the sky when gale force winds were trying to take me into the stratosphere in Birmingham, England, at UKSG several years ago. We didn't have a weather problem this visit. The Readmore set up on Cortlandt Street (near Century 21 Department store) is impressive. Even though Dan had a banker from England visiting as well, we had a stimulating time talking about the industry. Here it is, specially done for all our ATG readers! — KS

ATG: Where else can we start but Faxon. You used to work there. When was that? And what else will you tell us about the serials industry in light of the Dawson purchase of Faxon?

DT: I went to Faxon in '82, as the Managing Director for North America. Prior to Faxon I spent ten years at the National Library of Medicine (NLM) in Technical Services, specializing in automation of bibliographic records. I worked as Head of Acquisitions, and was part of the team that developed online technical services systems at NLM. From NLM I moved to UCLA as the AUL for Technical Services. At the end of four years, Dick Rowe was looking for someone at Faxon who had a presence in the academic market and who had a background in library automation.

ATG: You left Faxon for Readmore?

DT: No, I left Faxon to try my hand as an entrepreneur and set up **Horizon Information Services**. I wanted to get into CD-ROM production. I had written a business plan for the Faxon board about creating a division to do database publishing on CD-ROM, and the board decided they didn't want to do it. It was such an exciting opportunity that I decided well, maybe I'd do it myself. So I set up Horizon in Los Angeles and was one of the first companies to put out Medline on CD-ROM. After a while, I needed additional investors and finally sold the company to **EBSCO**. It became part of their Electronic Information Division.

ATG: You didn't want to stay in that line of work anymore?

DT: I found out long ago that when you sell your company, you don't want to stay with it. If it's your baby, once someone else takes it over to raise it, you need to get out. One

of the investors that I had spoken with was the Menzies (UK) organization. When we accepted the **EBSCO** offer, Menzies came back to me and said: we just bought this company in New York and how would you like to run it? That was in October of 1986. I decided that would be something exciting to do, as I could still operate much like an entrepreneur. **Readmore** in 1986 had limited automation and presented itself as a growth opportunity. It had a small market in New York, Connecticut and New Jersey. I could use my automation skills that I had developed in the other organizations and it would be a real challenge to build **Readmore** into a major player in the U.S. market.

ATG: So how did you accomplish that?

DT: By working a hundred hours a week and having a small team of dedicated staff that shared the dream. It was my hobby as well as my job. We had two competitors who were light years ahead of us — **EBSCO** and **Faxon**. We were not a serious player in 1986. But since 1986 we have built **Readmore** into a major player. We've basically gone from being a smaller, specialty supplier with little automation, to become a major, full service subscription agency, probably the most sophisticated of all the subscription vendors.

One of the things I like to say is that technology has been the great equalizer of the ages. The cost to automate, the cost to develop and maintain systems has dropped so that our type of organization has been able to take advantage of rapid change without massive overhead. I'll give you an example. When I first started at Readmore, Faxon had 60 people in development; I had three. Our much smaller staff — by using much more modern software development techniques, and taking advantage of the rapid drop in equipment cost — was able to leapfrog both competitors in the application of technology to our business systems.

ATG: How many people worked here?

DT: In 1986 there was a large staff. It took more people to process orders manually. There were about 120 people then. Now we're up to about 160 here. So basically we switched and retrained many of the people, and we improved productivity.

ATG: You have a large medical and corporate base of customers, right?

DT: We have two companies. In New York our company services the medical and corporate clients. In New Jersey we

service our academic clients. We service over sixty medical schools, over 4,000 hospitals, and over 80% of the top 100 companies in the U.S. Our New York office has always been a STM vendor and in that market we are a major supplier.

ATG: How many sales staff do you have? I know you've hired a lot recently.

DT: We have fewer than twenty sales staff worldwide. Each person specializes in a specific market. We have recently added to our academic group and we are still searching for three more individuals.

ATG: So how much of this year's annual sales have you picked up from Faxon?

DT: Instead of providing an exact figure, I'd say that not all of our growth has been from Faxon. A few years ago, **Majors**, a major medical serials supplier, sold their serials business [they still have a thriving book business] to EBSCO. A number of these ex-Majors serials accounts found our services appealing. We had always been specialists in the STM area. This year we were careful to target only certain kinds of organizations because we did not want to jeopardize our service to our existing clients. So we did not seek every Faxon account. We identified the libraries we felt that we could best serve. Readmore, for example, still has no public libraries, no school libraries, no junior colleges. We don't bid on those markets. We're not trying to become all things to all people.

ATG: Do you want to say anything about Dawson and Dawson's purchase of Faxon and how it changes the industry landscape?

DT: I certainly want to wish them a lot of luck. **Dawson** went in after everyone else had said no. We considered purchasing **Faxon**. We had an opportunity to look at the Faxon numbers and do whatever level of due diligence we wanted to perform. **The Blackwell Group** looked at it and backed out early because the real cost to our operation was too great or risky even though the purchase price was low. The full cost to turn it around, the long-term cost of putting it back together was just too great a drain on both human and financial resources. We decided that the best thing to do would be to just focus on our clients and take on additional clients where we could do it. It's the long-term cost of rebuilding Faxon and I think any organization, whether it's Dawson or EBSCO, whoever bought it, is going to have a challenge because the Faxon condition didn't happen overnight. That's the important thing to remember. This had nothing to do with a sudden change of events. This is something that happened over the last five, six years, and I believe was just an unfortunate choice of management decisions that was made over a long period of time. I think to undo that is a long, costly rebuilding program.

ATG: What has this done to the serials industry?

DT: I think the serials industry has been damaged by this. The publishers are not totally convinced — let me rephrase that — I think the publishers are not comfortable with their dependence on agents. Some of the larger publishers are going to make sure that they're never in that same situation again.

When you realize that 90 percent of their business comes largely from agents, few publishers are going to want to be held hostage in the future. We don't know what the end result will be.

Few publishers have sales forces anymore. Few publishers have the big customer service staffs that they once had for data

input, for example.

"Technology has been the great equalizer of the ages."

We're not talking about all 20,000; we're really talking about the top two hundred pub-

lishers. And they rely on agents. We do a tremendous amount of work for them. When you have your number one supplier in serious trouble and the order flow is broken, there are a lot of publishers saying, "why should I be in this situation?" It's just too dangerous. It has been a warning shot to the publishing community that life might not be the same as it has in the past.

ATG: And that's also happened in libraries.

DT: Yes. And I think what has happened has been a wake up call to the libraries. The choice of agent is no longer for the head of technical services or the head of serials alone. It's become a director's issue too. It's moved out of the serials department into the front office. And during much of the decision process last year the agents had more involvement with the front office than ever before. I know just in our presentations to some of the **ARL** libraries, we've seen more directors this year than we've seen in the last ten years who would either be at the presentation or would sit in for part of it — far, far more involvement than even with the serials pricing issue.

ATG: Well, I know that's true at our library. And we are not an ARL library by any means.

DT: It happens all over. The probability of you not getting your journals or the probability of you losing your deposit account — I mean, if you're a major institution and you put up a deposit of a million dollars and you lose that, what are your chances of keeping your job as well as your university librarian keeping her/his job? The probability is somewhere between zero and minus ten. You'd be lucky if you weren't hauled into court. So it became very serious for a lot of institutions which were very concerned, and with good reason.

ATG: One thing I have heard more librarians say than I've heard in a long time is maybe we'll go direct; maybe we'll go direct to the publishers.

DT: It is certainly possible that some of that will occur. There's no way to prevent it, although it is still important to remember the economies of scale as well as the many services subscription agencies offer. There's been a change in our industry and there's going to be a change in behavior. The biggest change I would say is access versus ownership and that probably will have more long-term impact than people deciding to send orders directly to the publishers. We see a continuing trend, that hasn't stopped yet, of all kinds of libraries — corporate, academic, medical. — cutting four to five percent of the subscription base annually. There is still an

ongoing process of weeding the collection of high-priced, expensive, lower-use material.

From our numbers, I would say that within the last four years, very close to 25% of the subscription volume has evaporated; it's gone and it's never coming back. This has had more impact on us as agents than the Faxon situation or anything else. And, as I said earlier, it's happening in all kinds of libraries. It's not just the ARLs. Corporate libraries, for example, are re-programming their money. They're putting it into software; they're putting it into article delivery; they're putting it into reference CD-ROM services. They've found that they don't have to own everything in order to provide a reasonable level of service to their clients. And that's probably the most damaging thing that's going on right now.

ATG: It seems like every time I open an envelope, it's a press release for someone new hired at Readmore. Are you hiring a lot of new people?

DT: We have been active in building specialty skills, and in responding to our growth in the academic market. We're building our academic team. We've hired a number of people and we'll still be hiring a number of people. As you grow, the kind of management structure that you had when you were a small company has to grow and change and we're investing in that management team as well.

ATG: That segues nicely into one of my questions. Part of the strength of Readmore was that it was a small company. Are you going to lose that strength as you get bigger and bigger?

DT: We are trying very hard to maintain that spirit and drive. We've been the most innovative, we've been the most creative, we've been the most entrepreneurial and we don't want to lose that. At the same time, you have to have a little more management depth but make sure that management doesn't stifle creativity so we're trying to balance those two.

ATG: I wanted to ask you about Kit Kennedy. I understand she's moving to San Francisco? Is that part of your trying to have more of a presence in a wider market?

DT: Yes. Kit is the Director of Academic Sales and she will have a staff of probably five or six who work for her and she has moved to California. Kit moved out there to develop that territory as well as manage a team of people. We are building a strong reputation as an academic supplier on the West Coast and we're increasing the awareness. We have very large accounts on the West Coast that need close attention. Of course, Kit will continue to travel extensively in the U.S., visiting accounts and potential accounts with our academic sales representatives.

ATG: Well, it's a totally different mind set out there for sure. How would you say the competition has changed your strategy?

DT: Our strategy is basically the same: provide good service at a reasonable price and stay close to the client. I think the competition has never acknowledged that we exist for the most part. Certainly Dick Rowe didn't think that we were ever a threat to him. His real threat was always EBSCO.

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ATG: *Well, the basket of goods is getting smaller.*

DT: Yes, the overall number of subscriptions is declining but we are gaining market share. Fundamentally, the library market is still concerned about receiving good service even though issues surrounding access are mounting. Libraries continue, understandably, to exert pressure for good service. Our mission is to provide the best service and all that the concept of "best service" entails.

ATG: *Do you want to say anything about service charges? How are they going to grow as the competition narrows?*

DT: There is a likelihood that service charges will climb. Non-discount titles and the continued erosion of margins will contribute to this. For example, we still have a large volume of non-discount titles which the agents service at a loss. I think in general, the competition has always kept service charges lower than perhaps they should be. We do certainly. Service charges have been below 4% for a long time. I think the pressure to raise service charges certainly is going to be there as publishers continue to change their discount policies and the number of non-discount titles continues to grow as well.

Certainly we've seen constant erosion in publisher discounts. While this has been damaging, the real problem for agents is the non-discount publishers. I think you'll see some gradual climbing in service charges over the next three or four years. And I think part of it's going to be some penalty on the publishers who give agents no discount. The book people have been adding charges to non-discount titles for years. The journal agents have never done it and I think that practice will change sooner than later. Instead of seeing an increase in service charge, I predict you may see some kind of penalty or added charge on certain kinds of publishers who refuse to give discounts.

ATG: *I know that you just hired Marilyn Geller from MIT as Internet Product Specialist. When I saw the press release and talked to her very briefly about what she was doing, I thought it was an incredibly smart move on your part.*

DT: It's a strategic move, absolutely. Marilyn is one of the few librarians who has a real deep understanding of the Internet and what it means to libraries. We're looking for a whole series of products and services that we're developing for libraries. The first Internet product that she and Amira Aaron have already developed is **BACKSERV** which is a back issues database and listserv which now has, since its inception in the fall of '94, over 600 subscribers from about 16 different countries. It took off so fast that it just nearly drowned our UNIX server. I think there is great demand for Internet products and services. We'll be having sample copies up online; there are a number of things that we're going to be putting up in a multimedia format and Marilyn is working on that. So we see that that's where the future really is heading. We've put up a gopher server and a World Wide Web server and we'll be selling some of those services to some of the smaller publishers who don't have their own R&D departments.

ATG: *When you say multimedia, what are you thinking of?*

DT: I'm certainly thinking of a variety of electronic journals and multimedia presentations. Then there are teaching

packages that are out on how to use **Lotus**, how to use **Microsoft Excel**, and you can put a little one-minute sample from that learning package up on your Home Page. Those are the kinds of things.

ATG: *Are you looking at interactive?*

DT: I don't want to tell you exactly what we're doing because I don't want to alert our friendly competitors . . . let's just say that we recognize that the Internet, the superhighway, is a very important future component of the services that we provide.

ATG: *Would you tell us a little bit more about the structure of Readmore and how it fits into the Blackwell organization?*

DT: We're owned by the **Blackwell** organization. We're part of their distribution group. There are also several companies or divisions within **Readmore**. There's Readmore, Inc., Readmore Academic, Readmore Canada, Readmore Automation, and Readmore Asia-Pacific. We've divided up the world with Blackwells and we avoid areas where they're strong. For example, you won't see us in Australia; you won't see us in the UK or Western Europe. We have a marketing treaty around the world. So we cultivate our chosen markets and they cultivate their chosen markets.

Blackwell has a number of investments. They own **Blackwell North America**, they own Readmore in the United States, they own other companies in Australia and the UK. And we do have a group strategy with the managing directors or presidents running their own organizations. I report to **Terry Collins**, the Group Managing Director.

ATG: *Where does UnCover fit in?*

DT: Legally, the investment in **UnCover** was actually through **Readmore Academic**. It's an American company. But it's a Blackwell Group investment in the sense that Blackwell's money is behind UnCover though the actual investment vehicle and the actual operations were through Readmore Academic. UnCover is part of our article delivery strategy. I have the pleasure of serving on the board of UnCover.

ATG: *Tell us about UnCover's European presence.*

DT: It is growing rapidly. We have contributors from Australia and Ireland; we're talking to additional contributors from the UK. Probably one of its largest and most growing markets in terms of delivering articles is in Australia. We have an agent in Japan. Actual percent — if you looked at where the deliveries are going — I'd say that 30 percent, in that range, of the articles are probably delivered outside the United States

"We're not trying to become all things to all people."

and that includes all the different countries. But Australia is probably the one country that has the highest foreign delivery. Part of the growth outside the United States is hampered somewhat by the different copyright rules. For example, if you buy an article in England, you don't pay the U.S. copyright rate to the British Library. You pay a few dollars. We actually

pay the publishers the U.S. rate where we deliver the article. So we're at a little bit of a marketing disadvantage, or pricing disadvantage because we're paying the full price.

ATG: *Joe Alen from the Copyright Clearance Center was interviewed in the February 1995 issue of ATG. In that interview we talked some about the Texaco case. Can you make any comment on the dollar amounts that UnCover pays to the CCC and to publishers?*

DT: **UnCover** makes substantial payments to the CCC. I don't know what the exact dollar amount is, but UnCover pays either the publisher or CCC depending on the contracts with publishers which determine whether the publisher wants to be paid direct or paid through CCC.

ATG: *The Texaco decision is sort of an upsetting decision, at least to me as a librarian.*

DT: Yes, upsetting but not unfamiliar as the battleground is going to be increasingly littered with other companies as intellectual property becomes a hot issue on the information highway. I'm not a lawyer but, Texaco's view was that "We did it, we've always done it, and it's all right to do it because that's the way research is done". There was never an argument that said Professor Chickering didn't do this. The library community does the same thing. I've worked at a number of places. There's a hot article on something in acquisitions and you make fifteen copies and give it to all your people. Unfortunately, it's over five. It's over the fair use but probably most

people have never paid any attention to the law because that is part of how research is conducted. But I think that as a result of the Texaco case we will see an increasing number of corporations and libraries signing agreements with CCC. Because certainly we know there are many libraries and interlibrary loan departments that are providing articles in their communities that are not collecting any copyright. The question is, "When do you cross the line into a quasi-commercial organization?" We see this with UnCover all the time. Because a corporation says we obtain all of our articles from one of our local universities, we don't have to pay a copyright. Or we receive all of our articles from a neighboring university so we don't have to pay a copyright to them, why do we have to pay it to you? That's a constant theme. If you can get it from your local college or university, or if you can get it from another place, why pay UnCover any copyright fee?

ATG: *I know I've been surprised at faculty members who just don't want to pay. Even when it seems like a very reasonable cost.*

DT: It's part of our tradition that information is free. If you bought the journal once then you feel that you have a right to make copies and give it to whomever you want. Unfortunately, intellectual property law disagrees.

I think there is a trend in this country that's going to become increasingly prevalent: that the copyright is not going to be given automatically to publishers and that the authors are going to want to share in the royalties. And I think that it's just a matter of time before there is — if not a revolt — then a tremendous amount of pressure for publishers to pay authors,

for authors looking to share in that royalty stream more. **Nicholson Baker's** articles aren't in **UnCover**. They can't be delivered because there are a number of trade journals that don't give us delivery rights, in part because they don't have the copyright. But you can go to any academic institution in this country and get those articles and have them delivered by fax without Nicholson Baker ever getting a dime out of it or the publishers ever getting a dime. So we're in sort of a mixed community.

ATG: *What kind of copyright fee increases have you seen?*

DT: The three dollar rate has gone to five; the five's gone to seven; the seven's gone to nine. Every month there are increases coming through. I think you're going to see within time that the average price is going to be \$15 or more just for the copyright fee. The three dollar copyright fee per article is becoming extinct.

ATG: *Does Readmore take a percentage of the copyright fee just for handling the transaction?*

DT: No, it's a direct pass through. Whatever the publisher's fee is we pass it right to the publishers and there's nothing taken from that. But you're absolutely right; there is an increase in copyright fees and it's occurring very rapidly. I don't think you're going to see publishers getting rich off of copyright. For example, at **UnCover** (and also at the **National Library of Medicine** and other places that I have worked), there is very, very little second time use. The number of articles

that are used a second time or a third or fourth, is almost nonexistent. Our design of UnCover is based on putting things in to optical storage with repeated use of the same articles. But the amount of repeat usage on any given article just isn't there. There are not many articles that will be used by a thousand different people.

ATG: *With a journal that gets that kind of use people will probably subscribe.*

DT: Perhaps yes, if it's the kind of journal that has that kind of usage. About 17% of UnCover articles in a given month come from second-time use. We see almost no third time, no fourth time use. You store it, it's used once again for a few times, and then that's it. There's very little third and almost no fourth time use. It shows you that everyone's doing their own thing in terms of research. There's not this polarization into one area.

There is a usage shift in how people use information. And I don't know what the mark is, but if your title is over \$1,600, the number of times the people look at that and scrutinize it has gone up from once a year to probably once a month. There are certain thresholds and if you have a title that's \$5,000 annually then you may have ten people trying to kill it within an organization. People are becoming increasingly vigilant about subscription rates. Price is really becoming a driving force far more than quality.

Probably our most popular report is the high price to the low price journal. Every year before renewal time we have many requests for these reports. In the old days, collection development was based on what you were teaching. Today

collection development has shifted to what you can afford; getting the most for your money. It's a fundamental shift in American libraries and I think it's happening all over the world.

ATG: *Can we get back to the Internet and the additional services that you are thinking of offering over the Net. If you can create a service that will give people real access to what's on the Internet, you'll have something. But can you get by with charging for it?*

DT: Absolutely. I think you're going to be able to buy books, you're going to be able to buy journals, you're going to buy food. I think the Internet is going to become the great electronic catalog of the twenty-first century. Right now if you want to buy parts for your classic antique car or if you want to buy parts for certain kinds of old Harley Davidson motorcycles, you can order these through the Internet. This will increase. You're going to find book ordering, cards, calendars. The Internet will become the Home Shopping Network for the professional.

In time you might buy electronic journals, and purchase a password. But I think it's really going to hit the travel industry. I mean why should you pay a travel agent? If you want to go to Florida, you type in Florida. Up comes the city that you want and then up comes the list of organizations, hotels, bed and breakfasts, whatever you wish. Your online reservation system is going to be on the Internet. You're going to reserve your plane, car, whatever.

ATG: *Given that your personal strength is really on the electronic side, on a sort of practical level, what do you think, are you all going to charge for electronic journals?*

DT: We will. We certainly sell electronic journals especially as electronic journals become more structured. For example, **Springer Verlag** has four or five electronic journals as do some of the other publishers. As an agent we will be selling electronic journals. We will be selling passwords. As an agent, we'll probably have our own server that has those journals on it. People will telnet to us. And we certainly will be selling books on the Internet — certain kinds of books — medical books, business books. I think you'll see that within the next three months.

We have the billing mechanism. Agents have been very good in managing money. We take the risk, we manage the money, we pay the right parties. That's been our traditional strength and I think that will continue to be our strength in the future.

ATG: *How about EDI?*

DT: We've been doing EDI for probably five years; we have a programmer who's an EDI specialist. The biggest use of EDI is in delivering invoices to our corporate accounts. We have some people who are ordering on EDI, but again most of it's in the corporate world, mainly in our pharmaceutical firms. We've tested several X12 formats as part of the SISAC/ICEDIS development process and we're working now with SIRSI to exchange EDI claims and invoices with a major

academic library. The corporate world has certainly been into EDI for a lot longer and the academic community has lagged behind.

One EDI product which we are using is the standard for dispatch data which was issued by ICEDIS. We receive EDI dispatch data from around seven publishers and load it on a regular basis into our system. We use the data to prevent the production of premature claims and we also display it to our clients on ROSS, along with actual check-in information from the UnCover libraries. So we're able to offer timely information about the status of issues as well as titles.

We put a lot of time and effort into EDI development. **Sandy Gurshman**, Manager of Publisher Services, and **Harry Hoffer**, Director of Publisher Services, participate heavily in the SISAC and ICEDIS committees and subcommittees. All I can urge is that librarians realize how important EDI implementation is to our community and put pressure on integrated library system vendors and publishers to make an investment in this technology as well.

EDI is basically just a translation protocol that takes data in a structured format, and however it changes, we just follow that and make the same changes. Theoretically it's machine-

machine communication. What ends up happening is that when it comes out you then have to make it fit into your operating system or your application.

And that's where we've all had work to do. It takes a long time to restructure your support databases to accept EDI information and do something with it.

ATG: *Do you want to talk about Readmore's use of the barcode?*

DT: We make extensive use of barcodes. We've worn out two printers producing barcodes. We produce barcodes with our **Bar-Pro** program to support the whole process of changing agents and updating a local library system. And there are a lot of people who just like to update their system with barcodes and find it's easier to wand in rather than doing manual input.

In terms of SISAC and the use of barcodes by publishers, we're all still waiting for that to become a reality in terms of practice. **Remo**, our check-in system, can now accommodate them, but there's not enough volume yet to make it really cost-effective for our customers. Again, I urge publishers to use the barcodes and encourage librarians to speak to publishers about doing so.

Our business ethic is about customer service and labor-saving devices. We want you to use us because we save you time. And whether it's EDI or whether it's bar-coding, or whether it's just a straight **NOTIS** invoice load, they're all things that are used to cut down the time-consuming aspects of technical services. There is a feeling in the people I talked to, the **ARL** directors, that the cost of technical services has just gotten out of hand and they're looking for ways to re-program that money.

ATG: *Earlier you mentioned videoconferencing. Will you elaborate?*

DT: We're working on videoconferencing; we have it set up already between our own offices. We plan to communicate

with our major clients by videoconferencing and a lot of the training and new releases of software will be discussed through videoconferencing. I would say, almost all of our **Fortune 100** clients have videoconferencing as well as many government, hospital, and academic accounts. We believe videoconferencing will become attractive because of its effect on travel and we're anxious to start using it. I think that this is yet another application of technology and how it changes the fundamental way that agents work.

In the future, say five years from now, you're going to see that the account executive is going to be able to communicate with the person on the other end through their PCs and have a visual conversation. Already on the Internet they're testing multimedia, where they have six people connected, and I think we're going to be able to provide better service through that kind of mechanism as well. You get to see the person you're talking to. It makes a nice and personal link.

ATG: Will you tell us anything about your education? You are a librarian?

DT: Yes, I am a librarian but I was raised to be something else. I was supposed to have been a physician. I finished pre-med; was accepted to **Vanderbilt Medical School**, and decided I had enough of labs. A strange quirk — the Biology Department paid about 50 cents an hour less than the library did and so I worked in the library. One was \$1.75 and the other was \$1.25 So I worked in the library because it paid 50 cents an hour more. This was in a small college in Tennessee. Instead of washing petri dishes and setting up lab experiments I worked in the reference department and circulation and was exposed to the library community.

I was one of those few biology students who did not work in the lab. It was just an accepted thing — you were in a pre-med program and you were supposed to work 20 hours in the lab. That was where the cheap labor came from. I was one of the few who worked in the library. I fell in love with it. It was fun. Plus I had access to all the reserve books. You know, in the sciences there are many books that are put on reserve and I always had unlimited access to two-hour reserve, which helped. And I had access to the xerox machines too. It was great. Plus I had the keys to the library. When the library was closed, I had 24-hour access. So on the weekends, when other people would miss going to the library, I had the keys to the library, I had access to the material, access to the xerox machine. It was great. And I got paid 50 cents an hour more.

So I didn't go to medical school. Instead, I went to what is today the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the **University of Illinois** in a Biomedical Communications program which was a combination of library science and medical librarianship and computing. It was in the library school but it was a special program on Biomedical Communications. Actually, I was on a scholarship and from there I went directly into the **National Library of Medicine** where I spent ten years.

ATG: So you weren't one of these people who went into librarianship as a second career?

DT: I'll tell you what happened. The biology professor where I went to school always thought it was a kick that I worked in the library. Not that it was stupid, but he always

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thought it was humorous that I was one of the few people who didn't work in the biology department. Somehow he got on the mailing list of the University of Illinois. After I graduated from college, he sent me the announcement for the Biomedical Communications program with a snotty note that said, well, you're not going to medical school so maybe you should look at this graduate program in biomedical communications. It was at the **University of Illinois**. It was a PHS grant funded by the **National Library of Medicine**. So I thought, that it looked like a lot of fun and I applied. Then I was accepted and I never ever thought about going back to medical school again. Broke my mother's heart. Broke my mother-in-law's heart. I was supposed to be a doctor.

You know, at the end of the day, I would either be an obstetrician, a gynecologist, a surgeon or something. Everybody wanted me to be in medicine more than I wanted to be. And after four years of constant labs . . . you spend hours and hours as an undergraduate in the labs and it wasn't fun. By the fourth year, I had decided I was just going to take a couple of years off because I was just sort of burned out with labs. I went into the library and I never looked back. Then I got a heavy dose of computing and thought that computers would revolutionize the way libraries functioned and wanted to have a part of that. At NLM I was very involved in setting up the Medline network and I was active in the development of the online industry.

ATG: That would have been a key time, very exciting, to be at NLM. I was a lowly medical reference librarian back then myself. I remember it well.

DT: It was absolutely the best. We did everything. One of my jobs was to pick the cities where telnet and tymnet were going to open up offices. I was there before there was a local call to dial. NLM actually paid to have those sites. I picked the cities where telnet would be installed and we paid them \$100,000 a city to put their equipment in so the local physicians in med school could dial in on toll free numbers.

It was exciting. I came on just at the time **AIM-TWX** was experimenting. I was just at the end of the experiment. I put up **Catline**, I put up **Avline**. I put up all the NLM technical services databases. Automation of technical services was my main focus. I also set up **CIP** in the medical community. That was my first real exposure to technical services, cataloging and publishing. Actually, that was my first sales job. I went to 50 publishers and sold the managing directors on CIP. I sold them on the concept of participating in the program, on sending their galleys to the Library of Congress, and the benefits of being in the program.

LC did all the social science and the **McGraw-Hills** and we did all the **Williams and Wilkins** and **Mosby** and all the medical publishers.

ATG: Speaking of **Williams and Wilkins** and the NLM, were you there when they had the big lawsuit — the big NLM vs. **Williams and Wilkins** lawsuit?

DT: I was the data collection person who helped pull together the government's data so I was involved in the **Will-**

iams and Wilkins lawsuit. The director of the library at that time was **Martin Cummings**, and he was a god. He really was. He was an M.D. and he had a lot of power. And NLM won the copyright. What **Williams and Wilkins** was trying to do was to get us to cease copying without paying and NLM never paid. They do two million articles a year and they've never paid a dime in copyright. They define it as all fair use. So **Williams and Wilkins** lost and they lost big time.

Being at NLM from 1970 to 1979 was absolutely a technological paradise . . . there wasn't a month that went by when you weren't involved in some industry-breaking event. It was just one milestone event after another. We experienced the nascent evolution of the online industry; the seminal evolution of indexing and abstracting services; we witnessed the beginning of photocomposition; we led the way on that. NLM was the leader in telecommunications, in online services, software development. That was the place. NLM was it. It was a great place to learn. It was a great place to work. Plus they had the money. There was a fundamental belief that locked in some journal was the secret to heart disease and stroke and cancer and Congress just kept pumping money into NLM's programs. Cummings's great, great strength was on the Hill. **Lister Hill**, **Dan Flood**, and **Kennedy**. **John Kennedy** and **Edward**. And **Hubert Humphrey**. There was a large group of very

powerful, influential people in the Senate, in the House, and Cummings maintained and developed those important relationships.

As a result our budget would be presented and NLM would be appropriated extra money. You know, NIH would cut our budget, try to block us, and they'd sit us down and say, this is what you say on the Hill. We don't want you to open your mouth. Cummings would just sit there and someone of such stature as Senator **Lister Hill** from Alabama would ask, "Now, Dr. Cummings, I understand that if you had two million dollars more you could probably save another 50,000 lives; is that right, sir?" Cummings would reply, "Well, yes, sir, we probably could do that." Senator Hill responded, "Well, I'll direct the director of the NIH to see that you're reallocated from internal funds two million dollars more." Just like that. And NIH would come back and if there was a way they could have beat us they would have beat us because the money was re-allocated from other NIH programs; although it wouldn't necessarily come out of other money. They would just tell the director of NIH to reallocate. Cummings would always walk away with more money. It was great.

ATG: He retired when?

DT: He retired a number of years ago. He's recently been elected chairman of the **Council on Library Resources** which I'm on the board of also. I enjoy working with him again. He's a brilliant man. He had a vision that just couldn't be stopped. Medical information needed to be out early. Before Cummings, **Index Medicus** was six months to a year behind.

It improved greatly through that period [the seventies]. We used every automated advantage there was and it was really an exercise in applying technology to solve horrible logistics and problems of all sorts of delays. And it worked. NLM led the

industry and **Medline** was the database on **Dialog**. It kept **Dialog** alive. They used to have a thousand databases. Out of that group there were probably about four databases that paid for all of that traffic. Then on **SDC Medline** was the number one. **Medline** was a money maker. It led the medical community and it fostered growth in the online technology.

Cummings is someone to whom the community owes a great debt. Anyhow, we started on my education and it got to be a long involved story. Let's just say I was a great disappointment to my mother who still doesn't know what I do. She says, "Do you check out books?"

So that's my education. Graduate school at the University of Illinois. It was a fine program; I enjoyed it.

ATG: How did you get into management?

DT: I got into management when I went to NLM. Bio-medical communications consisted of a curriculum that was one-third traditional library and aspects of medical librarianship, a third in computer science, and a third in management. I enjoyed all three sections. When I went to school, computer science was very different from what it is today. Big mainframes dominated and you submitted your job on cards and the next day you received your answer. In the late 60s, Illinois had developed something called **Plato** which I spent a lot of time on. It was an online interactive learning system. So Illinois in

Dan Tonkery has been the President and CEO of **Readmore, Inc.** since 1986, and has seen the company grow to be a major player in the subscription management industry. Prior to coming to Readmore, Mr. Tonkery was President of **Horizon Information Services** in Los Angeles. After graduating from the University of Illinois with a master's degree in Biomedical Communications, Mr. Tonkery began his library career at the National Library of Medicine. At NLM, he worked for over 10 years in technical services management and was instrumental in automating technical services functions at NLM.

He then joined the academic library community as Assistant University Librarian for Technical Services and Systems at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he was responsible for the development and implementation of **ORION**, UCLA's local integrated library system. Mr. Tonkery left UCLA in 1982 to become Managing Director for North America at the **Faxon Company**. Throughout his career, he has been respected as a knowledgeable and influential spokesperson in his field and a firm advocate for automation and standards. His leadership skills and creative vision of the applications of technology to the library/publishing fields have had a major influence on the online information industry today and have transformed every organization with which he was involved.

Dan Tonkery currently serves on the executive boards of the **Council on Library Resources**, the **UnCover Company**, the **Friends of the National Library of Medicine**, and on the editorial board of **Serials Review**. As well, he serves on the board of **NASIG** as Treasurer. Mr. Tonkery met his wife, **Linda**, when she was manager of circulation at the UCLA Research Library. They have three sons, **John**, **Steven**, and **Andrew**, and one new granddaughter **Jamie**, who is their pride and joy. Although free time is at a premium, the family enjoys golf, tennis, gardening and fishing.

terms of its computing department was well advanced in computing. It was one of the leaders. And the library school was excellent. You know, one of the best courses in library school was bibliographic structure and bibliographic control. Because I have used that, if you look at the people who have worked for me, one of the things that I've always required is that they have a certain amount of cataloging experience or bibliographic experience. People like **Amira Aaron** who handles our academic automation development, was a former cataloger. **Marilyn Geller** is a former cataloger. Other people who have worked for me in the past, I think, in libraries, understand that bibliographic structure is the key to systems development. I've always said that course opened my eyes. If you look at a card catalog, you might think that anybody could come up with that, but there's a real structure, there's a real process. Not that I wanted to be a cataloger my entire life but I gained a great deal from this course. I actually took two courses in addition to what was required. It was fun.

If people are just totally driven towards delivering what people want it's going to totally change the nature of what libraries have been about in the past. Cataloging is going to be an extinct science. Nobody wants to pay for it. That is a valuable tool that people are losing in terms of the whole bibliographic structure. I think the money's going to drive it to another direction, unfortunately.

ATG: What else do you want to say about yourself? This has been fascinating. I appreciate your taking so much time to talk.

DT: I have a family — a wife and I've got three kids, two older boys and I have a twelve-year-old. Two older boys that have gone on — one's a lawyer and one's a banker. The twelve-year-old is becoming a computer hacker, I think.

And at the tender age of almost fifty, I've taken up golf which in my declining years I hope is going to become a passion. I love it. Not everything is computers. I'll set down my laptop and pick up a golf club. It's much more fun. Golf and gardening are my two main passions. I'm still an avid gardener. I enjoy working the soil. And if I didn't work for a living, I'd own a huge farm and play golf. I think farming is very relaxing. It's one of those few things where you can do something and actually see that you've made a difference in a short period of time. It's very satisfying.

Anything else you can think of?

ATG: Do you want to say anything about what you've been reading?

DT: I'm not big on fiction. I read fiction mainly for airplane flights. I like mysteries. I read a lot of **Robert Ludlum** and **Robert Parker**, **P.D. James**, **Wodehouse**. The last thing I read was *God's Other Son* by **Don Imus**. It's on the bestseller list. It's a stupid story of the Reverend Billy Sol Hargis. I just read light fiction for entertainment. Most of my reading is in the computer area. I still spend a lot of time with LAN, LAN technology, telecommunications, that's still my hobby. And so if I have serious time I'm reading in the computer area. ☞

Y'all, this was quite an interview. I think I'll go relax and read Agatha Christie! — KS