June 2009

I Hear the Train A Comin' -- ProQuest

Greg Tananbaum

Scholar Next, gtananbaum@gmail.com

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Recommended Citation

Tananbaum, Greg (2009) "I Hear the Train A Comin' -- ProQuest," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 21: Iss. 3, Article 41.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2341>

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consumers are no longer willing to pay for their print newspapers as a result. A recent study by the **University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication** "found that 22 percent of Internet users have canceled a print subscription because they could get the same product online" (Vanacore).

"Newspapers and magazines traditionally have had three revenue sources: newsstand sales, subscriptions and advertising," **Isaacson** explains. By giving away news content online, the revenue generated from newsstand sales and print subscriptions has diminished. In addition, the newspaper industry has failed to embrace the money-making opportunities of the Internet. "Circulation and advertising revenues have been in steady decline, and newspapers have not figured out how to profit from their Websites. Only about ten percent of newspaper advertising revenues are earned on the Internet," says *CQ Researcher*. "Papers still generate 90 percent of their shrinking income from their printed products."

Where Do Newspapers Go From Here?

In an effort to stay solvent, some newspapers, like the *Seattle P-I*, have either severely reduced or eliminated altogether the print version of the newspaper, focusing instead on their Websites.

The *Christian Science Monitor* published its final daily print issue on March 26, 2009. A weekly publication, available both in print and online, was launched in its place. The *Los Angeles Times* stopped printing its *Sunday Book Review* in print last fall, greatly reducing the physical size of the Sunday edition of the newspaper. **AnnArbor.com**, the Web-based company launching in place of the *Ann Arbor News*, will publish continuously online and in print only

on Thursdays and Sundays (http://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/index.ssf/2009/05/last-day_for_ann_arbor_news_wi.html).

Isaacson suggests that one solution to the dilemma newspapers and new organizations find themselves in is the return to an old concept, charging for content and subscriptions, even in the online environment. No longer can news organizations afford to give away their content for free online.

Only a few newspapers currently charge for their online editions by requiring a monthly subscription. The most notable of these, says **Isaacson**, is the *Wall Street Journal*. While not common, this has turned out to be a good business decision. "Paid subscriptions for the *Journal's* Website were up more than 7% in a very gloomy 2008," says **Isaacson**.

Pointing out that few people will subscribe to a paper to read a single article or issue, **Isaacson** also advocates a "micropayment" system, an easy iTunes-like method of payment. "Under a micropayment system, a newspaper might decide to charge a nickel for an article, or a dime for that day's full edition or \$2 for a month's worth of Web access," he says.

This approach is also supported by **Jason Pontin** at *Technology Review*. Says **Pontin**, "A reader should be able to buy a lifetime's subscription or subscribe for a year, a month, a week, or a day. If it made sense, a reader should be able to buy a package of stories or even one story. The price of a subscription should reflect its duration and the platforms on which it is delivered." The key is to offer flexibility and to consider the online content its own revenue stream, rather than a supplement to the print content.

Conclusion

Most print newspaper advocates voice a strong commitment to maintaining both print and online presences for newspaper publications. In the March 27, 2009 issue of *CQ Researcher*,

John Sturm, current President and CEO of the **Newspaper Association of America**, argues that "the future is not print or online. It is both, creating a combined digital and print platform that makes newspapers the most efficient medium — and media buy — in any given market." **Sturm** expresses optimism in the future of the print newspaper, and it remains to be seen if his optimism is well-founded.

For more on this topic, I recommend the entirety of the March 27, 2009 issue of *CQ Researcher* (vol. 19, no. 12), which is devoted to the decline of print newspapers, the future of journalism, and its effect on politics and democracy.

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I Hear the Train A Comin' — ProQuest

Column Editor: **Greg Tananbaum** (Consulting Services at the Intersection of Technology, Content, and Academia)
<gtananbaum@gmail.com> www.scholarnext.com

Recently, I had the good fortune to check in with **Boe Horton** and **Marty Kahn** of **ProQuest**. **Boe** is Senior Vice President of Research Solutions at **ProQuest**, responsible for building the **Serials Solutions**, **Community of Science** and dissertations businesses. He served as Senior Vice President of **Strategic Initiatives** during the integration of **ProQuest** and **CSA** and successfully led the strategic integration of the two companies, as well as the strategic planning process. **Marty** is the CEO of **ProQuest**, with 30+ years of experience in the space. He has previously held senior management positions at **OneSource Information Services**, **Ovid Technologies**, and **Vista Information**, among other prominent organizations. **Marty** and **Boe** were

kind enough to provide an update on **ProQuest** as it nears the two year anniversary of its acquisition by the **Cambridge Information Group**.

What are the three biggest challenges facing information providers in the next few years, and what is ProQuest doing to meet those challenges?

Boe Horton: I think the issues are fairly straightforward: have the right content, make it visible, and deliver it to users wherever they are. However, the real challenge comes in developing the best solutions to those issues.

Our role as an information partner is to ensure that we focus our resources on the new products and technologies that deliver the most value to libraries and their users. That means listening intently and responding to a unique community: researchers. **ProQuest** is listening to users every day, in focus groups, advisory boards, Webinars, and inside the library to determine what they need and what they expect. We're zeroing in on researchers and the institutions that serve them, finding the precise common denominators that mean success to these users to build products that

fit new and emerging online search behaviors. In fact, I've just come back today after a series of interviews with academic faculty members, researchers and graduate students regarding their needs and ideas we have regarding next generation services that would aid them in the research process.

Our outreach to researchers extends around the world. We have just completed a study of researchers in China that I will be presenting next week to senior Chinese academic librarians in Hang Zhou that looks at the challenges researchers face and areas in which librarians and vendors can help. I'd be pleased to share some of the key findings in a future edition of *Against the Grain*!

We've also formalized the feedback process with the establishment of a dedicated R&D organization, which is focused on investigating and promoting new ways in which our services and content can improve user performance. Our R&D organization is continually monitoring

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new technologies and testing their applicability within our products. The team collaborates with technology vendors, publishers, librarians, end-users, and educators, and tests prototypes in ProQuest's R&D lab. For instance, the team is currently looking into enhanced language and translation capabilities and intelligent linking of cross disciplinary content.

ProQuest is a substantially different company today compared to a decade ago. In what ways has its mission changed, and in what ways has it stayed the same?

Marty Kahn: While the times have changed considerably, our commitment to libraries as our core business has not. We firmly believe in the role that libraries and librarians are going to perform over the long term. Their creative function in helping their communities find sources of information and enlightenment is not diminishing. In fact, it's increasing and will become an ever more important function as information becomes more complex.

A decade ago, ProQuest was beginning to leverage its experience as a leading microfilm and CD-ROM provider to create online information solutions, and users were just beginning to experience the potential of the Internet. It was very much about this new way of hosting information. Today, we're looking at the user experience: breaking down silos of information so that it's all there for the user without barriers, enabling research that goes deeper and deeper into content, uncovering insightful, new pieces of data that illuminate the user's research. It's really about creating tools to work effectively with that content — identifying it, sifting through it, analyzing it and applying it. In fact, we're well into the development of a brand-new platform which, over time, will host all content in the ProQuest family. By early 2010, we expect to unveil this new platform, which for starters, will provide users with access to existing ProQuest, CSA, and even some Chadwyck-Healey content on one platform, with a set of consistent, powerful tools that unlock the potential of this extraordinary information vista.

It has been almost two years since Cambridge Information Group acquired ProQuest. What tangible impact do you think this change has had on the marketplace?

Marty Kahn: We've seen tremendous growth in the last two years. The lines between our former businesses and organizations have been dissolved to build a united, stronger, more competitive company. ProQuest plays a pivotal role for researchers and the librarians who serve them, so a strong ProQuest brings a fair amount of stability to the marketplace. We've had global growth — especially in countries like China, India, Brazil, and in the former Eastern bloc — so more researchers are using ProQuest resources. In fact, we recently launched an Arabic interface. Further, we've had a very active acquisition program — WebFeat, RefWorks and of course, Dialog was acquired just short of a year ago and we're investing in these companies. I think where we'll see the most significant impact is in a variety of innovations coming to the market now. We've built an environment that breeds innovation — at ProQuest and all its operating units.

For example, Serials Solutions has pioneered the Summon unified discovery service, which brings Google-like searching to library collections

and conquers a fundamental barrier between users and libraries. One search box to find the best results irrespective of content type. There's no weighting in favor of ProQuest materials. That would destroy the whole purpose of this. Information is treated neutrally. It's going to help libraries brand themselves as entry to all kinds of serious search activities — and to the kinds of materials libraries are paying for that you can't get from Google. Right now, it's in beta with academic libraries on three continents, with commercial launch in July, but it's certainly already set the market in motion.

ProQuest makes the greatest impact in academic markets, but we're also enthusiastic about and investing in our schools division. You can see that effort in our revolutionary change to the eLibrary research database. The new eLibrary lets students engage immediately with a topic by offering editorially selected results that jumpstart the research process. That's the big hurdle for young researchers — where do I start. It's designed for next-gen users, with features familiar from Web search engines, customized in-product Web applications, media-rich content and Web 2.0 interactivity.

I'll touch on one more example — one that will make a big difference for public libraries and casual researchers around the world: we formed a partnership with Google that will enable the digitization of more than 100 million pages of local newspaper content that will be available on the open Web. This is an interesting model that spares library budgets and brings to the online world content that wouldn't normally be digitized, but has value to someone.

I believe the growth and development we've had since the acquisition is a direct result of the combined deep knowledge of libraries that both CSA and ProQuest brought to the table and the extensive end user research we've done as a unified organization.

In the press release at the time of the acquisition, there is a quote stating, "The new company will leverage deep content sets with a history of innovative product development to bring the community of libraries, researchers, faculty and students one of the most extensive electronic resources available." How would you grade the company on that front, and why?

Marty Kahn: At that time, we were looking at the almost eerily perfect way that ProQuest and CSA content complemented each other. For instance, CSA brought expertise in natural sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities. ProQuest brought content strength in business, economics, general reference, genealogy, humanities, social sciences, scientific, technical and medical content. Put those two together and you have the spectrum of academic research covered. Both sides of the business brought technological and A&I expertise. The ProQuest platform, of course, has a history of innovation and CSA brought deep indexing technology that allows unprecedented searching and retrieval of the content that resides in illustrations. The combination of assets formed a foundation to address the challenges faced by libraries and their users better than ever before.

It's still heady stuff, but that was just the start. We continue to hunt down valuable content sets — hidden data that offers genuine insight. Further, we know that another important role we can play in this world is giving the user very clear sign posts about how to get to the information they want. We're tackling that in a number of

ways, all of it aimed at helping users find obvious ways to start their research. Not only is there the Summon service and the new eLibrary, but in 2008, we also launched ProQuest Central, the largest aggregated full-text database for libraries. It serves as the foundational research collection for academic libraries. ProQuest Central offers the most full text scholarly publications in a single database. As the crown jewel of our aggregated offering, we anticipate that it will be the single most used database across disciplines — it's already giving libraries a solid starting place for the diverse needs of their patrons. The launch of ProQuest Central helps fulfill our mission to create indispensable research solutions that connect people and information.

Serials Solutions has, in recent years, expanded the notion of e-resource management. Can you explain the process by which an innovative product such as the Summon unified discovery service comes to be?

Boe Horton: The genesis of the Summon service is our own research into end-user markets — specifically, students — and a growing body of studies showing a gradual disintermediation of the library in the faculty research process. These studies showed a fundamental stumbling block in getting to library resources — no clear, compelling starting point. End-users were just confused by the wealth of resources. We saw in Serials Solutions a unique combination of assets and expertise that we could bring to bear in developing an effective solution that would eliminate confusion of end-users and get researchers back to the library.

Serials Solutions has a deep understanding of libraries. It was founded by librarians and set its mission to identify the barriers that prevented libraries from fully leveraging the opportunities that e-resources present. It has a legacy of creating logical tools that allow libraries to overcome these barriers. Further, it has technical expertise and experience with hosting systems. However, because this is a single search against a pre-harvested index of content, cooperation of content providers is an absolutely critical component to its success. Obviously, ProQuest brings an excellent set of resources — not only content, but relationships with publishers. The involvement of other publishers is essential. Gale, with its tremendous content, is also a key contributor. We also have about 100 other content providers and more are signing on everyday. We're all in this together — aggregators, publishers. We all recognize that tackling this barrier is essential to healthy use of libraries and their content.

ProQuest celebrated its 70th birthday last year. What is the common thread that binds the company's history from its University Microfilms days through today?

Marty Kahn: University Microfilms was created in 1938 by Eugene Power to safeguard threatened scholarly resources, and has served as the dedicated steward of significant collections — including graduate works — ever since. Eugene Power's vision of using UMI to preserve and make content accessible globally is similar to the mandate of today's online publishers. Power used the best technology of his time to provide worldwide access to information, just as ProQuest does today.

ProQuest continues to be a pioneer — increasing access to information, ensuring that content is available for generations of patrons to come, and redefining the end user experience.