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People Profile: Aaron Nichols

Editor

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ately to \$4500 a month. Simply put, Google indexing nearly doubled our sales. (Current AIP article sales are considerably higher than these 2003 numbers but still only account for 1.5% to 2% of our total publishing revenue. Referral sources today include Yahoo, Google Scholar, Ei Village, Scirus, Live.com — but Google remains the biggest driver. Not all of this inbound traffic results in an article sale, of course.)

The repercussions of “search” were profound in other ways. Most notably, users were coming directly to the abstract page of the article, and many publishers quickly adopted the view that “the abstract page is the new home page.” As a result, publishers redesigned and rebuilt their abstract pages to enhance branding, navigation, user tools (“email this article”), and “more like this” features, as well as more recent social bookmarking tools.

The dominance of general Web search exposed another problem for some publishers: the availability of multiple “instances” of an article, which might be found on an author’s Website, or an institutional repository, or a subject-based repository, or an outright “pirate” site. (Who knew there was a robust black market for scholarly articles?) This has been a very minor problem for AIP. Despite the widespread belief that all physics papers appear first in arXiv, only 3% of AIP articles are duplicated there. And only about 10% of our papers seem to be available on author or other Websites.

From Single Articles to Article Bundles

While the online sales of articles are a steady source of income, selling a single article to an unknown user (we capture only an email address in the transaction) is less than ideal for both the seller and the buyer. The buyer can satisfy his or her information needs virtually instantly, but still has to pay the full publisher royalty for a flat PDF file. The seller benefits from a virtually automatic transaction, but develops no real business relationship with the buyer. When we noticed at AIP that we had a number of repeat single-article buyers, we took the obvious next step. We launched AIP Article Packs, which allowed users to prepay, at heavily discounted per-article prices, for a fixed number of downloads across our whole publication program. Each article the buyer used was debited against his or her deposit account, and these accounts could be replenished with a credit card at will. The benefit for AIP is that we have a product that can be renewed over time, so each former “grab and go” buyer becomes an ongoing customer to whom we can communicate about new offers, new products, and new features.

Because corporate libraries have been closed in droves over the past decade, leading to substantial subscription cancellations, we knew we wanted to apply the AIP Article Pack model to the institutional — and, specifically, the corporate — market. This led to AIP

against the grain people profile

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Aaron F. Nichols

BORN AND LIVED: Born and raised in Braintree, Massachusetts; a large town just outside of Boston.

EARLY LIFE: There was a time when blue crabs were abundant in the marsh by my aunt’s house in Cape Cod. My brothers and cousins and I would catch them and bring our bounty back to our parents. They were always delighted.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Since graduating from library school I have worked in three academic libraries. I love the spirit of innovation and the culture of forward-thinking that thrives in academic libraries. While a graduate student I had the honor and privilege to work for the Providence Athenaeum and Providence College — both in Providence, RI.

FAMILY: A wife and two young children.

IN MY SPARE TIME: While I’m not busy obsessing over the Red Sox, I like to bike (both mountain and road), run, hike, and eat fluffernutter sandwiches with my children on the beach. I’m also in graduate school at Boise State University busy earning a Master’s of Educational Technology. Every once in a while I’ll brew some beer.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*. Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*. Charlie Papazian’s *Joy of Homebrewing*.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: As a personal goal I’d like to complete a triathlon. For a professional goal I’d really like to help change library services and facilities to make academic libraries indispensable to students and faculty.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: The academic library will switch from being a self-service information warehouse to becoming a full-service information service entity. 🌱



Articles On Demand (AOD). AIP certainly didn’t pioneer this model; in fact, we were influenced by IEEE Enterprise, an article-bundle product that IEEE created for its own corporate market. I’d like to take a moment to explain how this product works, since there is an intense interest in alternative purchasing models in the wake of the global recession.

AIP Articles On Demand (see <https://www.associationsciences.org/aod>) offers article bundles in sizes of 500 (for \$5000), 250 (\$2750), 100 (\$1200), and 50 (\$650), so the price per article ranges from \$10 to \$13 depending on the size of the bundle. (Note that AIP’s single-article fee is \$24.00.) These rates are higher than what an individual would pay for an AIP Article Pack, but the AOD product has benefits for institution-wide use:

- Librarians (or whoever may fill this role in a small company) choose the size of the bundle they want, and create a deposit account with AIP from which each download is debited. They thus eliminate the need to pay for each individual transaction and have a more subscription-like relationship with the publisher.
- Librarians have a password-protected,

Web-based Account Manager that allows them to track each article purchased, maintain a running list linked to the article abstracts, monitor download activity, and replenish the AOD account online whenever necessary.

- Users are IP-authenticated and can freely search across AIP’s database of journals, conference proceedings, and magazines, downloading any article of interest. Their experience is very much like any user at an academic institution with an AIP subscription. None of the behind-the-scenes, debit-by-download activity is apparent to them.
- Any article, once downloaded, is available without further charge to any other user in the company. No one pays twice for the same article.
- The librarian not only can follow the research interests of their staff scientists by monitoring the downloads, they can also receive COUNTER statistics, which allows them to monitor uses of abstracts, tables of contents, and searches, as well.

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