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People Profile: Adam Corson-Finnerty

Editor

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and presumably through amazon.com, bn.com and so on.

Out of Print Titles

The **Google Book Settlement**, through its creation of the **Book Rights Registry**, bridges a major IP hurdle to scanning and re-purposing book content.

The impending **Google Book Settlement** shines a spotlight on the universe of out-of-print books (OP). In the **Settlement**, these titles are described as “not commercially available.” There are an estimated *20-30 million titles* in the OP category, and the vast majority of these books are in publishing limbo.

Once the **Settlement** is finalized, **Google** will have the right to scan OP titles for inclusion in its database, and for selective display, and commercial use — unless the rights-holder formally objects. **Google's** right to scan and sell OP titles is *non-exclusive*. This means that any other entity, whether commercial or non-profit (like a library or a university press), could undertake a similar program.

The Espresso Book Machine

The **Espresso Book Machine (EBM)** is a miniaturized printing press. It combines within a footprint of 6' x 3' a high-speed printer and a color cover printer, a binder, and a trimmer. It produces a 300-page paperback book in less than five minutes — indistinguishable from a conventional paperback — and for a materials cost of under \$3.00. The EBM's “iTunes-like” software system connects the book machine to a vast network of content, both in-copyright and out, and remits all publisher royalties (public-domain titles, naturally, require no royalty payment).

At the **Penn Libraries** we have formed a small team to explore entrepreneurial ideas, including the use of the EBM. This effort is supported by student researchers from the **Wharton School's Sol C. Snider Entrepreneurial Research Center** (<http://wep.wharton.upenn.edu/Research/overview.html>). Our analysis indicates that the EBM can “break even” with a relatively low output per day. If the machine “takes hold,” as it has at the **University of Alberta** campus bookstore, it could produce a gross profit in excess of \$100,000 per year.

Drawbacks, Blowbacks, and Pitfalls

Should every academic library hire an in-house entrepreneur — or, as some managers term it, an *intra-preneur*?

I don't recommend it — primarily because it is expensive to deploy someone to work full-time on this task, and it will take years to generate significant revenue streams. I think that it will be better to hire a consultant to come in and study your assets and opportunities, make recommendations, and then let your staff decide what to do with the recommendations.

However you approach it, you will discover several problems with the idea of undertaking new income-producing activities. I can share

against the grain people profile

Director of Special Initiatives
Penn Libraries

VPDLC, 3420 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 191104-6206

Phone: (215) 573-1376 • Fax: (215) 898-0559

<corsonf@pobox.upenn.edu>

<http://musingsofcorsonf.blogspot.com/>

Adam Corson-Finnerty

BORN & LIVED: Born Chautauqua, NY. Air Force kid. Lived all over: New Jersey, Florida, Bermuda, New Hampshire, Alabama, Kansas, Alaska.

EARLY LIFE: As above; attended 18 different schools between K-12. Learned to adapt.

FAMILY: Catholic, Southern, Conservative Father. Northern, Liberal, Presbyterian Mother. Ended up like my mother.

EDUCATION: BA, MA from Penn in American Civilization. MSW, Bryn Mawr.

FIRST JOB: Peeling potatoes at the **Kindley AFB Officers' Club** in Bermuda.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Writer, Speaker, Author of four books, Group Therapist, Encounter Group Leader, Conference Center Director, International Development Administrator, Fundraiser, Activist.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Garden.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Pride and Prejudice*, *Middlemarch*, *Shantaram*, *Shogun*, *Goodnight Moon*, *Information Rules: A Strategic Guide to the Network Economy*.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: War, racial prejudice, over-packaging of inkjet cartridges.

PHILOSOPHY: Quaker.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Building a new library within the walls of the library I used as an undergraduate: the **Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center**.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Enlightenment, bliss, the ability to levitate.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Mostly, still wringing its hands and wondering why the parade has passed it by. But, on some campuses, utterly transformed, and probably no longer calling itself “The Library.” 🌱

these under three headings: Money, Mindset, and Mindshare.

Money, Mindset and Mindshare

New business ventures usually require capital. If you are like most academic libraries, you don't have any money to invest. And if you do have a few free dollars, there are probably ten hands outstretched for the money. Our Director has decided to make this program a priority, so that some funds have been made available. First of all, for my salary and benefits. Second, for assistance from student researchers. Third, for selective investments in new technology, including (I hope) an **Espresso Book Machine**, and a high-speed automated scanner from **Kirtas**. I have also begun to develop plans to approach foundations and individual donors for investments in our publishing program.

It will come as no surprise to hear that most librarians take an instant dislike to the idea of “trying to make money.” After all, libraries are not businesses, we are certainly not in the business of making money, and we didn't enter the field with a commercial intent.

But, shall we sit on the well side, like **Snow White**, singing “Someday my prince

will come,” or get out there and garner new resources? It's your choice. Pious Poverty is an option.

Even if you have some money to invest in new activities, and even if your library staff agree that it would be nice to generate extra income for needed programs, you will discover a third problem: *Your colleagues don't have time to ponder your great ideas.*

This was the one unpleasant surprise that I encountered in my first year. Here I was, writing 20-page memos about print-on-demand and disruptive technologies in the publishing industry, and my colleagues literally did not have the time to read them, much less write long responses for me, and much less attend meeting after meeting to discuss these ideas. I started off thinking I was bringing drafts of fresh air to the library and my fellow librarians, but instead they felt my notions just added another demand on their time and energy.

Do I therefore counsel patience? No, I do not. Your job is to be the small voice in the ear, the nudge, the pest. Remember this: in the heated environment of the 21st century academy, if we libraries stand still, we die. 🌱