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ATG Interviews Dennis Bruning talks with Sue Polanka

Dennis Brunning

Arizona State University, dennis.brunning@gmail.com

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such as **LibQual** which when performed year after year reflects finely targeted needs coming from the university population, suggestions for improvement and acknowledgement of the strengths of the library's approach. The emphasis now on measurement of performance through statistical measurement and metrics is not just a new trend. It speaks clearly to those in charge to whom understanding the nuances of each function is not necessary, but who need to be able to recognize the relative success or failure of the library, within the larger organization, and its components through well presented numbers. It is a business-like approach which is necessary where money is involved and funds are tight. The effective presentation of these numbers is essential to achieve the required objective.

Listening at every level to what users perceive as faults and strengths is one managerial technique that produces results. Librarians learn what people think, and have the chance to change that thought. This kind of thing comes from getting out of the library, getting

involved in non-library activities and contacts not assigned. And how does this happen, short of frog-marching staff out the doors and into the food court with notebooks and pencils? It comes from high staff morale from which arises, naturally, involvement in the organization, university and town. Some of this takes the form of formal contacts, getting put on university wide committees, increased information literacy offerings for university staff and faculty, and informal ones such as asking and listening.

One of the most productive ways to manage a library is to produce good staff morale. At all times good staff morale means getting a lot more from staff, for relatively little. But in these hard times, without it, services will suffer. The fear of job loss will do a lot to keep employees on the ball, but real success comes from putting one's heart into it and that can't be faked.

Many readers are probably familiar with the comic strip **Dilbert**. The dysfunctional staff who illustrate all the worst aspects of an organization, and the pointy-haired boss who is clueless are unfortunately not as ridiculous as they should be. The boss is computer il-

literate, in a computer company, that it takes **Dilbert** to discover that his computer isn't working because it is unplugged. Out of touch, inept management happens in all organizations including libraries.

What is good management and a good organization? I went back to what I learned in library school (**Indiana University**). It turns out that a course built around the ideas of **Peter F. Drucker** was about as good of a model of a management style as one would wish. He invented management. His thoughts and ideas, both written and taught are considered as sound as they ever were and are based on common sense and uncommon wisdom of a great Renaissance man. He came up with the idea that workers should be treated as assets not liabilities, what everyone knows is frequently wrong, and if you keep doing what worked in the past, you are going to fail. Read *A Class With Drucker: The Lost Lessons of the World's Greatest Management Teacher*. Written by **William A. Cohen**, and published by AMACOM in 2007. 🌳



@Bunning: People & Technology

At the only Edge that Means Anything / How We Understand What We Do

by **Dennis Brunning** (E Humanities Development Librarian, Arizona State University)
<dennis.brunning@gmail.com>

No Shelf Required: Talking with Sue Polanka

Meet **Sue** for the first time and you know, immediately and instinctively she's passionate about libraries. She is bright, articulate, focused. By day, she is head of Reference Services at **Wright State University**. By night, she is super-blogger, with compelling interest in all things library but especially eBooks. **@Bunning** got some of her thoughts before she headed for the **ACRL Conference** in Seattle.

@Bunning: *Sue, your blog, No Shelf Required, is a blog about eBooks, librarians, and publishers. Why blog about eBooks?*

SP: I've been fascinated with eBooks since **NetLibrary** launched the first one 10 years ago. After writing several articles and presenting at a couple of conferences about eBooks I decided to start a blog on the topic. I wanted to provide a resource for finding and sharing information about ebooks.

@Bunning: *Are eBooks better than print books?*

SP: That depends on the book. I believe that reference books, technical manuals, STM resources, and some textbooks are better in electronic format than print because they are mobile and can reach our users wherever they are. Additionally, eBooks are frequently better

for those with disabilities, as the format of the material can be adapted easier.

But, when it comes to reading my children bedtime stories or carrying the trashy paperback novel to the beach, or highlighting a textbook for a class, I definitely want the feel of pulp between the fingers. But in the end, I read much more in electronic form than print.

@Bunning: *Today there are many technical platforms for eBooks. Why is this and should it be this way?*

SP: Why? Because the publishers want it that way. They want the freedom to express their brand, content, and features in a unique manner and not be tied to someone else's interface. Publishers also want to tie together journal, eBook, and other content into an information portal. I don't mind the amount of interfaces available, as long as each is open url compliant down to the lowest level of granularity and is compatible with other standards to maintain easy linking in and out. One exception to this is with reference sources. I want them in one platform so that during library instruction or a reference transaction I can search one interface.

@Bunning: *Recently you moderated a panel of library vendors about single point of access. Did they answer any of your questions to your satisfaction?*

SP: Well, of course not or I'd have my dream of a single point of access for reference! They cited technical and political barriers, budget issues, and resistance of libraries to move to eBooks as reasons against this. But hey, they compete against one another in the marketplace, so what advantage do they see of merging their content with other publishers? I would argue that usage would increase which could impact sales in a positive way.

@Bunning: *ATG readers, though sensitive to access issues, are especially sensitive to pricing. I'm not sure any of us understands the many pricing models eBook publishers offer. What is your take on this?*

SP: eBook pricing is not a one size fits all approach and it probably never will be. Publishers have to remain flexible with pricing models in order to sell their products to a variety of markets, at least until the prices stabilize. Despite the ten year history, eBooks are still in their infancy. The technology behind the content and interfaces is expensive. In order to recoup these new costs, eBooks are priced higher. Since some schools can't afford the subscription or 24/7 unlimited access business model, others must be offered in order to sell the books. Plug here: There is a nice article explaining eBook and print pricing on the NSR blog.

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@Bunning: *After digitization of millions of books and settling with the Authors Guild, the Association of American Publishers, and a handful of publishers, on a way to work together commercially, Google steps into the eBook space as a major player. What role do you see Google playing in academic eBooks?*

SP: Google will take any and all roles they possibly can, just as they've done with other services. I foresee many academic publishers selling to users via **Google Books**, enticing them with free content along the way. And, new business models will probably develop too, adding more angles to eBook pricing.

@Bunning: *Many librarians, students, and faculty have strong opinions about reading books on computer or reader devices. Some positive, some negative. Is this a problem for your vision of the role and future of eBooks?*

SP: No, eBooks are not for everyone or every book. It's never been my vision that eBooks would consume the print world, rather they will supplement it. We are just beginning to see the variety of devices that support eBooks — PC's, eBook readers, PDAs, and the like. Most of these are first generation, so years from now, we could be reading or listening to digital content in a whole new way.

@Bunning: *Beyond convenience, what does the eBook have going for it?*

SP: Potential, lots of potential. eBooks could transform collection development practices, offer new ways of delivering library services like ILL and course reserves, and provide alternative delivery methods and access points for our users.

@Bunning: *Many argue that online access — to journals, books, reference works — assumes a singular type of user. This user demands convenience, speedy and direct, answers to inquiries and queries. You have talked about the need for an "easy button." Does everyone reach for the easy button in library research?*

SP: No, there are some out there who use the advanced features of interfaces! These same researchers will use multiple databases and bib citation stuff too, but I'm certain they enjoy the modern conveniences of online searching and full text retrieval just as much as the "easy searcher." Case in point, I don't recall anyone asking for the Reader's Guide in print in the past five years, but we did get hundreds of complaints when our Electronic Journal Center crashed last month, and that was just from faculty!

@Bunning: *Recently, Wright State, on behalf of Ohiolink, issued an Invitation to Negotiate for a comprehensive discovery layer. This proposal challenges search providers to design a unified search interface that would present library users with a search experience similar to popular search engines. This would be awesome. Any news on this?*

SP: Actually, our design involves four major components, a unified index, a federated search tool, a user interface, and a delivery resolver. This is to allow a single search across all **OhioLINK** and member library content. We are investigating modular components and could end up piecing together a solution that is a mixture from various vendors and projects. Unfortunately, our requirements cannot currently be satisfied by any single vendor or project. But, **OhioLINK** will continue to push the envelope to develop a Discovery Layer that provides for the search needs of the consortia and individual library.

Talking to the Kindles

Note: Amazon introduced the second generation of its Kindle book reader — Kindle 2 — in early March. The many reviews and blog comments inspired @Bunning to chat with both Kindles as they recharged at a local Starbucks.

@Bunning: *Feeling Good Kindle, despite Roy Tenant's prognostications? <http://sophia.smith.edu/blog/libideas/2009/02/10/kindle-2-announced-roy-tenant-yawns/>*

Kindle 2: You talking to me — or my older, fatter, brother — the guy who looks out of Apple 2 era?

@Bunning: *Either — it's all good. But you bring up a good point, who is Kindle?*

Kindle 2: I'll answer that (moves into the female version of his on board text reading voice). We were born in **Jeff Bezos'** strategic plan. He required a cover to complete his domination of publishing...

Kindle 1.1: Who is **Roy Tenant**?

@Bunning: *Well, it's hard and easy to say...he blogs on technology at Library Journal.*

Kindle 2: We have blogs...as cheap as 99 cents per month.

@Bunning: *Ah...aren't blogs free?*

Kindle 1.1: Like bottled oxygen, you get the blogs on us, you can carry around, read on a plane, read while you twitter in Senate...

@Bunning: *The Kindle twitters?*

Kindle 2: Not yet. No. Maybe...we'll have to ask **Jeff**...

@Bunning: *Roy Tenant, a year or so ago, "yawned" at the thought of Kindle...*

Kindle 2: What is "yawn"?

Kindle 1.1—2: Look it up in your *American Heritage Dictionary*. Think with CPU and not your joystick.

Kindle 2: You are lucky to have a CPU.... I'll search wikis...oh, yes, **Tenant** — **Kindle** is a yawn, librarians like to search everyone else wants to find.

Kindle 1.1: Next question...

@Bunning: *iPhone, iPod Touch — they are neither phones or pods — discuss...*

Kindle 1.1: They are over-destined as readers but they do supplement the once and future **Kindle**.

@Bunning: *What about DRM — digital rights management?*

Kindle 2: We practice safe downloading. **Jeff** supplies us with DRM when required.

@Bunning: *as required?*

Kindle 1.1: Yes, when publishers ask for it.

@Bunning: *when do they ask?*

Kindle 2: Almost all of the time.

@Bunning: *So everything costs on Kindle?*

Kindles: No and Yes. Nothing free costs. All else: 9.99...most of the time...some higher...some lots higher...

@Bunning: *9.99...seems familiar.*

Kindle 1.1: It is a multiple of 99 cents. Capisce?

@Bunning: *Yes, but I confess, I'm a fan, almost a stalker...but I have noticed my price floats around — mostly 9.99, some 14.99, others significantly higher... What's up with that?*

Kindle 1: Gratification is instant, is it not?

@Bunning: *My God, yes...let's move on...I understand there isn't much wiggle room in the Kindle's retail price of \$350.00.*

Kindle 2: I can speak to that...no, no...as **Jeff Bezos** says, we've got costs here what with the electronic ink technology, the **Sprint G3** cellular technology for effortless, fast downloading, the list goes on. Then there is R&D going forward...for you know **Kindle** versions unknown to mere man...no **Mr. Bezos** has set the price and it is \$350.00...

@Bunning: *So you are kind of like Apple, you are in the hardware business...*

Kindles in unison: Not at all. We are a book distributor. We work for publishers, authors, and readers to provide the most ideal environment for publishing...

@Bunning: *So you are not like Apple?*

Kindle 2: We are **Amazon**.

@Bunning: *Yeah, yeah... but there seems to be some plan here...*

Kindle 2 to Kindle 1.1: Bro, did you just go into screen mode? Are you saving your batteries? Press your Alt + aA keys.

You think there is a plan?

@Bunning: *Think so.... Amazon wants to sell us device and content all managed within a tightly entwined commercial relationship...selling the device is nice but even better, elevating the brand to total identification with eBooks, that's seems to be the ticket...*

Kindle 2: ...whatever...

@Bunning: *This interview will be read by librarians and the publishers who serve them. What do you think about libraries?*

Kindle 1.1: I like librarians. We will always need librarians and libraries...every eBook, an e reader...

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Kindle 2: Excuse my brother. He's gone back to library school — at **University of Arizona**... we want to be right by our publishers and right by our customers...we...

@Brunning: Will you work with libraries?

Kindle 2: One book per device is how we roll until the time when we can arrange other terms set by the market place...

@Brunning: Which means...?

Kindle 2: It means whatever you want it to mean...

@Brunning: Moving along...markets will be markets...but hey, congrats Kindle 1.1 for a career move...taking the MARC class?

Kindle 1.1: You bet your open access... can't read if you can't find (or search?).

Disclaimer

Dennis Brunning (@Brunning) is long on **Amazon**, **Apple**, and libraries none of which should mean much. He is an avid reader of books, books on **Kindle**, and books on **Sony E Reader**. There may be a Be Book somewhere on his laptop. He keeps books under the bed which he hopes will be available on the **Kindle**. He is a librarian and therefore doesn't have much money which his **Kindle** addiction is not helping.

Two years of **Kindling** have taught him much the least of which are the following:

- Do not read in bathtub.
- Do not drop on Saltillo tile.
- Limit visits to **Kindle Store**, on device or on Web, to 1x monthly.
- Do not count on photographs, illustrations, figures to be available.
- Limit expectations to free reading.
- Sample feature, usually the first chapter or close to it is great, especially to avoid crap.
- Order **Kindle 2** now unless you want to get in line for **Kindle 3**. 🌱

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And They Were There

Reports of Meetings — 14th National ACRL Conference and more from the 2008 Charleston Conference

Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)
14th National Conference — March 12-15, Seattle, Washington.

Reported by **Bob Holley** (Wayne State University) <aa3805@wayne.edu>

The **Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)** held its **14th National Conference** on March 12-15 in Seattle, Wash-

ington. This conference was similar in format to the **Charleston Conference**. It focused on subject content without the committee meet-

ings that take up so much time at **ALA Annual Conferences** and the **Midwinter Meetings**. The conference offered keynote speakers, invited presentations, referred papers and panels, workshops, poster sessions, table discussions, and a Cyber ZED Shed for technology demonstrations plus social activities such as the exhibits opening and an all conference

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