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People Profile: Erich Staib

Editor

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The number of functions **Project Euclid** had to manage in order to develop into a sustainable enterprise surprised the project's management. **Euclid's** entrepreneurial status fostered interdependence with disparate units within the library and with an ever more complex supply chain of service providers outside the university. **Project Euclid** was able to weather the transition from the incubator to the marketplace by outsourcing its marketing program and repurposing library personnel hired and trained for more conventional job functions, e.g., a department accountant also assumed responsibility for subscription order fulfillment. It was clear that a long-term strategy for **Project Euclid** needed to include a hospitable business partner who would share the library's principle goals for this venture, and be able to meet a growing desire on the part of the publishers for a deeper and more diverse portfolio of services. **Duke University Press**, publisher of the *Duke Mathematical Journal*, one of **Project Euclid's** highest profile journals, had also become one of the library's most consilient content partners. **Duke** had inaugurated a STM publishing initiative in 2004 and began to focus its acquisitions energy on building a strong collection of math journal titles. As **Euclid** and the relationship with **Duke Press** matured apace, both parties agreed to explore the benefits and consequences of entering into a formal partnership for joint management of **Project Euclid**. **Cornell** and **Duke** were shepherded through the year-long negotiation process by **SPARC**. A formal joint venture agreement was signed in March, 2008.

Duke's primary investment is in human capital; it hired a dedicated project manager and quickly incorporated **Euclid** into its marketing, financial, and order fulfillment workflows — areas where **Cornell** was incurring the greatest resource deficits. The partners agreed to divide their management responsibilities along naturally occurring lines of influence and specialization: the library would continue to support the technology infrastructure (architecture, code base, hardware, and network support) and provide archiving and preservation services. The press would manage on-ramp and off-ramp functions: finances, journal recruitment, marketing, customer relations and order fulfillment. Identifying precisely where and how to divide the responsibilities was probably the single most critical task.

While the **Cornell-Duke** partnership is barely six-months old, some ground-truth data are worth noting:

- This represents an asynchronous collaboration: While both parties were involved during the planning phase (1999-2000), **Cornell** assumed responsibility for **Euclid** prior to, through, and well after launch. When it became clear that **Cornell** needed to roll **Euclid** up, a university press, with whom we had a strong and constructive working relationship, became the obvious partner.

against the grain people profile

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Erich Staib

BORN & LIVED: Northeast Ohio.

EARLY LIFE: North Carolina since 1986.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: More risk taking. Innovative and exciting partnerships; sure, some won't work out over the long term, but we can't let that keep us from trying. 🐼

Most library-publisher projects have involved both entities jointly incubating, implementing and then managing the initiative. But a "relay" model, where one party provides early-stage development and then the other assumes operational responsibility for a more mature product or service, might also be politically and economically desirable.

- While this library-press partnership was specific to one enterprise-scale project, collateral benefits extending beyond **Project Euclid** began to accrue early in the relationship. Through the library the press was able to establish a beachhead at **Cornell**, providing it with an ever-open window onto the local publishing environment and resulting in several new journal acquisitions in non-STM areas, notably *New German Critique* and the *Philosophical Review*.
- **Cornell** and **Duke** also believe that the partnership they choreographed for **Euclid** will help define the scope and characteristics of future collaborations. If the alliance is perceived as an investment, by both parties, then it should also be scalable. While collaboration between a library and a press at the same institution seems logistically obvious and desirable, joint efforts involving libraries and presses that do not share the same genetic material can produce products and services that play to the unique strengths of each institution.

It is worth underscoring the unique nature of the relationship between **Cornell Library** and **Duke Press** that ultimately transpired around **Project Euclid**. **Euclid**, unlike other more indigenous library-press collaborations, was designed from the ground up to be an online publishing service for a heterogeneous collection of publishers with no specific or even symbolic relationship to either **Cornell** or **Duke**. **Project Euclid** is a domain-specific online publishing service that competes directly with a variety of commercial-grade

and NFP service providers. It also competes indirectly with commercial publishers — were an independent journal, already participating in **Project Euclid**, to be acquired by, say, **Springer Science+Business Media**, it would terminate its agreement with **Euclid**. **Euclid** was, and still is, a distinctly market-facing operation, and that market is two-sided: we must recruit journals from a broad playing field and then sell those aggregated journals to academic and corporate libraries.

While **Cornell** and **Duke** hope to be able to extrapolate a richer and more complex relationship from their shared responsibility for **Project Euclid**, we don't expect the model for future collaborations to look or feel the same as this first-generation effort.

This particular joint venture also raises issues relevant to the objectives of these reformative collaborations for organizations beyond **Cornell** and **Duke**. The publicized library-press partnerships, some extending back fifteen years, at a dozen research institutions, have been heroic and artisanal but certainly not insurgent or transformational. The byproducts of these collaborations, to paraphrase **David Carr** of the *New York Times*, do not have an audience problem, they have a consumer problem, and the survival of these projects and programs depend on the latter not the former. Have these discrete and, by all accounts, non-disruptive projects had an impact on the status quo bias in scholarly publishing? Are libraries simply providing IT services to presses and authors, services that could more cost-effectively be supplied by third-parties? Are these, in effect, supply-side initiatives in search of a demand that isn't there?

The current docket of library-press collaborations have yet to mature into competitive publishing programs. And they must compete in the marketplace to survive. The future of library-press partnerships will not, perhaps should not, look like what we see today. Academic libraries and university presses are homesteading on a frontier now crowded with

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