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ATG Interviews Skip Pritchard

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ATG Interviews Skip Prichard

President and CEO, Ingram Book Group

by **Katina Strauch** (Editor, *Against the Grain*) <kstrauch@comcast.net>

ATG: *You have recently been appointed President and CEO of Ingram Book Group. What does this mean for Ingram? Is Ingram Book Group changing its strategy?*

SP: Ingram Book Group has always been known as a dependable and innovative company, and that will not change under my leadership. Though I don't anticipate major changes in our strategy, we will strive for continuous improvement in execution and world class service. My goals include working with our sister companies, **Ingram Digital** and **Lightning Source**, to enhance our capabilities while continuing to grow our traditional business. That includes distributing physical and electronic books into libraries and retail outlets around the world.

ATG: *Tell us more about Ingram Book Group — your owners, your organization, etc. What does the Book Group include?*

SP: Ingram Book Group is a division of **Ingram Industries Inc.**, a privately held corporation based in Nashville. The **Ingram** family has been involved in and firmly committed to the book industry since the 1960s. The **Book Group** includes a number of important businesses. They include companies such as last year's acquisition, **Coutts Information Services**, as well as **Ingram Periodicals**, **Ingram International**, **Ingram Publisher Services**, **Spring Arbor** and others. We offer content owners the ability to make that content available in any form and to numerous outlets. **Ingram** is an extraordinary company with capabilities I have not seen anywhere else in the industry.

ATG: *Tell us about Coutts and your relationship with them.*

SP: **Coutts** is a leader in serving libraries, both across the U.S. and internationally. **Ingram Book Group** acquired **Coutts** in December of 2006, and the company grew nicely in 2007. We are making significant investments in **Coutts** to position it as a world class provider to academic libraries around the globe. I am looking forward to watching **Coutts** become a major player in the United States as it is in other parts of the world. We are seeing a number of new accounts and will work to continue to add accounts and provide increased customer service to the existing customers.

ATG: *Are electronic books really going to take off? What's the future of electronic books? How is Ingram going to create their future?*

SP: I do believe that the electronic book will have an increasingly important role. But it won't be as simple as turning a physical book into a digital one. The power of the digital world will be seen in everything from



the buying experience to improved research capabilities. And the generation of kids growing up today will expect that a digital book will create a completely different experience than a physical one. What may make **Ingram** different than other companies is that we offer the content where and how the customer wants it, whether it is electronic, print, or print on demand. When I first joined the company, I was utterly astonished to see our sister company, **Lightning Source**, print a gorgeous color book that a consumer ordered hours before. **Ingram Book** could then pack and ship a book that hadn't existed — even that morning — anywhere in the world. The reader didn't even realize that the book was created specifically for her. That type of customization will be what sets **Ingram** apart, but in even more complex ways.

ATG: *There is varied speculation about how much eBooks will affect traditional books, especially in the academic market. Any predictions on that?*

SP: I have read many articles and predictions, including on the pages of *Against the Grain*, about the future of the eBook. If I had to make a prediction, it would be that the physical book will be here for generations. However, I do believe that the eBook has a place and will be adopted for reasons as different as one can imagine. Price may be a factor in some places, but the real driver for eBooks is that innovation. My prediction will be unique pricing models and bundled versions of content will receive increasing attention in coming years.

ATG: *It seems technology in publishing is shifting rapidly, if not exploding. Should people worry about further changes?*

SP: Rapid innovation is a way of life for us. Librarians have always been the leaders in helping drive positive changes within their communities. Technological innovation has created unprecedented, positive opportunities for accessing content. Librarians have always

achieved a balance between keeping the traditions that benefit patrons while adapting the new technologies to serve communities in unique ways.

ATG: *How do you think your previous experiences helped to prepare you to lead Ingram Book Group at this time?*

SP: In many ways, I feel like I've been preparing my whole professional life for this role. My career serving libraries in the content industry started at **LexisNexis**. That experience was invaluable as I moved to **ProQuest Information & Learning**. With multiple content formats spanning microfiche to electronic databases to **SerialsSolutions** electronic resource and management services, **ProQuest** was and is a leader in the field. I was thrilled to join **Ingram** because of its reputation in the industry. I have always enjoyed the greater role that information plays in society. Publishers, librarians and booksellers do the important work of renewing and saving the culture — bringing the ideas of authors to students, scholars, library patrons, and other readers young and old, year after year. At **Ingram**, we are honored to have a role in serving this broader mission. Helping content reach its destination is what we are all about.

ATG: *With such a broad scope at Ingram, how do you stay tuned in to the academic customer base?*

SP: Coming from **ProQuest** and **LexisNexis**, I am blessed to have many friends in both academic libraries and in vendors serving the community. I stay connected at industry conferences, read the industry publications, and discuss issues with some of the most respected librarians around the world. And, since academic librarians are not shy and are some of the most interesting conversationalists, I enjoy learning from their experience. I am delighted to continue to serve this community and champion its cause.

ATG: *What are you reading right now? What's the most influential book you've ever read?*

SP: There is no doubt that one of the reasons I chose to join **Ingram Book** was because I truly love to read. Since I don't sleep very much, I read throughout the night and am able to read a good combination of fiction and non-fiction. This week I read two fantastic new, advanced-copy fiction books: **Harlan Coben's** *Hold Tight* and **David Baldacci's** *The Whole Truth*. Other interesting books I have read this month include the *Fortune Cookie Chronicles*, *The Film Club*, *Boom!* and *A New Earth*. I am currently reading two books: *Three Cups of Tea* and *Predictably Irrational*. There are a few others I am forgetting to mention. **Ingram**

continued on page 45

Interview — Skip Prichard
from page 44

also has a periodicals business and I am an avid reader of many current news, health, and general interest magazines.

ATG: Tell us about your family.

SP: My wife, Anita, and I have been married for sixteen years and have one daughter who is ten years old. We recently moved from Ann Arbor, MI to Nashville, TN. All three of us love music, and so we are thrilled with the diverse musical options here in Nashville. Today, we are enjoying 75 degree weather while our friends in Michigan are experiencing a snowstorm, so we think we made a good trade with the weather, too. 🌳

Something to Think About
from page 42

for different information. We have an extensive arrangement of file drawers that contain annual reports, maps, cut-a-ways of airplanes and rockets, speeches, newspaper clippings, and special issues of topical journals, mostly older or esoteric pieces.

Most of the pieces go through several decision processes before being accepted for the vertical file. We have two **Collection Development Teams** that preview donated and new materials, one for Monographs/Media/Continuations and the other for Serials. Once selected by these teams, a Reference Librarian previews the material, then begins a cataloging process. There are brief records produced and the Catalog Librarian follows up with some embellishments of those records to increase access points. The material is processed and then goes into folders in the vertical file system. Call numbers assigned are subject oriented, so that the file is basically alphabetical and user-friendly. We have found that a moderate percentage of the students end up using some of these materials during their undergraduate programs, as well as other patrons looking for specific materials. The cut-a-ways get the heaviest usage as students study specific models of airplanes in their classes. These are removed from several aviation journals (to prevent disappearance) and highlighted in the files, so that they are easier to find and use.

Located near the vertical files is a collection of model airplanes. They are housed in glass cases to keep them in a-one condition and they are labeled. There is talk of beginning the cataloging of those models in the near future to give them more access in the online catalog and market the fact that we have them. Several of the models are rockets that have been used to launch specific military or popular satellites. The other planes range from barnstorming days to the present time period. I try to look at them several times a week and understand some of the engineering. They are fascinating

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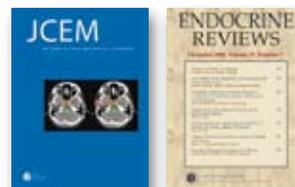
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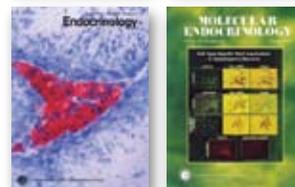
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and exquisite. At one time, there was a piece of the **Hindenburg** in those cases, but that material has had an entire exhibit developed around it and can be seen near the front entrance to the library opposite the Circulation desk. Another display case near the entrance houses memorabilia from **Embry-Riddle's** development as a school. There are old flight helmets, pictures of several locales where we were located, ledgers, stationary and goggles supplied by our archives. Many people stop to see these exhibits and they are a favorite of many families. When we find visitors remark-

ing about the front cases, we give them some short tours of the models in the back of the library, to their delight. We have found a number of ways to excite the patrons who enter our doors. I think the combination of library and museum atmospheres has drawn more people in the front doors. It's remarkable that we can utilize the materials for show and research at the same time. Perhaps after visiting our first floor, you will agree that it's the little things that count too!

Surely something to think about? 🌳