June 1998

ATG Interviews David Cheatham

Katina Strauch

Against the Grain, kstrauch@comcast.net

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Strauch, Katina (1998) "ATG Interviews David Cheatham," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 10: Iss. 3, Article 17.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2792>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

ATG Interviews David Cheatham

Information Quest <dcheatham@eiq.com>

by Katina Strauch (Editor, *Against the Grain*)

ATG: *Information Quest is a relatively new Web-based research, access and retrieval service by Dawson. What's so unique about it?*

DC: Information Quest is an aggregator with a difference — in both content and technology. We provide better access to information through our superior technology. Regarding content, IQ contains over 8.7 million Tables of Contents of over 12,000 journals.

We have agreements for delivering the fulltext of these journals encompassing publishers like **American Institute of Physics, Carfax, Kluwer, MCB University Press, Plenum, Royal Society of Chemistry**, and many others. We are also loading fulltext patent content from worldwide patents provided to us by **Micropatent**. We have an agreement with **Cambridge Scientific Abstracts** to add over two million abstracts. And this isn't all. We have an agreement with **Infonautics** to provide access to their **Electric Library** database which contains over 1,000 business, popular consumer, and reference titles, 2000 complete works of literature, and over 2 million newspaper articles.

Information Quest also has several significant and unique features. Document Delivery is available from **UnCover** and very soon from the **British Library**. If you have an electronic subscription, you can access fulltext articles immediately at your desktop computer. For some publishers you can order individual articles on a pay-per-view basis. Alerting Service — you can specify specific search criteria and you will receive an email when an article that matches your criteria is published. Integration with an ILS allows you to tell if a particular item is in your library. One important difference about IQ is our fulltext searching. Users can search on any word in the fulltext articles. This capability provides access to information in a completely new and powerful way.

ATG: *We have heard of your Excalibur search engine. What is significant about it?*

DC: Excalibur extends the functionality of retrieval beyond Boolean. Three key factors limit the accuracy of Boolean systems. Boolean cannot rank documents according to their relevance. It can't account for word variety, meaning that users don't know which exact words and phrases were used by the authors of the documents they are searching. Lastly, Boolean can't account for word meaning. Information Quest can do all of the above.

IQ includes a built-in semantic network which utilizes published reference works, including dictionaries and thesauri. This builds a strong body of contextual indexing which is more valuable than other types of indexing. For example, a Boolean search for the work

"stock" cannot distinguish among its more than 25 definitions in the English language, which range from corporate shares to a herd of cattle. A user may intend to search for financial stocks, but the system will return many false hits — matching the word, but missing the intent of a user's query.

Another feature of Excalibur is its **Adaptive Pattern Recognition Processing (APRP)**TM. This feature converts data to binary patterns. In its simplest form it allows users to misspell words and still get search results. I don't have to know how to spell "Tschickovsky" to find information about him — or is it Chikovski or Tchaichovsky? In addition, APRP can be used to retrieve virtually any type of digital information, including text, images, video, and sounds.

Using these technologies, IQ also includes a natural language searching capability. A search such as "What are the effects of modifying endocrine levels in mammals?" will bring up articles about endocrine levels in rabbits, even though there is no reference to mammals in the article.

ATG: *You used to be based in Carlsbad, California, but now you're moving to Faxon's home base in Westwood. Why?*

DC: Actually, the bulk of the sales and marketing for IQ is now in Westwood. Product support and development are still in Carlsbad. Now that we are beyond the development stage and we have a salable product, it makes sense to involve our existing extensive sales and marketing staff. Information Quest has always been a subsidiary of **Dawson/Faxon's Information Services Group (ISG)** and this will just focus marketing and sales coordination in one location.

ATG: *What sort of sales have you experienced with Information Quest? How much does it cost? Is it big in the academic or corporate market or both?*

DC: We have really just begun selling Information Quest. We expect to focus on our 28,000+ Dawson clients worldwide. This product is for corporate, academic and public libraries. We do have a significant number of corporate and special library clients and have been very successful in that world. Corporates want information now and they will pay. Quick turnaround is probably their most salient requirement. Our search engine also makes us popular in the academic world which is concerned with depth and breadth and content and archiving. Information Quest is not expensive. The basic price is \$500 for a single user license. Additional license fees are required to access the **Infonautics** database.

ATG: *Is it true that nobody is making money off of the Internet? We sure seem to be*

spending a lot of money to access electronic material!

DC: The problem for the information provider is that people want information — or a lot of it — for free. Providers need to add value and deliver on that promise. Investing in hardware and software and products requires lots of money, obviously, and staying power. This gives users comfort. Electronic delivery takes longer and costs more than you expect it to. So, yes, right now, very few software and information providers are making money off the Internet.

ATG: *What kind of industry trends do you see out there? And where do libraries and librarians fit into the picture?*

DC: Content was king and it is still powerful. But the real king now is knowledge — knowledge, understanding and effective use of content in cyberspace. We need a new model. Publishers are fearful that the number of subscriptions will fall and so they increase subscription prices. We have to make information/knowledge valuable to the market.

The future of the library profession? We are going through turmoil, but it is also an opportunity. There is a vast paradigm shift going on and librarians are at the heart of the shift. They are part of the group to make it happen. They should cherish the moment.

ATG: *Tell us about yourself? You started DataTrek?*

DC: I've been working with librarians and libraries for over 17 years now. I have thoroughly enjoyed it. I started **DataTrek** in 1981. DataTrek is now **EOS International** and is headed up by my brother Scott, who I've been working with for over 16 years. EOSi is the leading supplier of library automation solutions for special libraries worldwide. Dawson invested in DataTrek in 1988 and I started developing Information Quest in late 1996. I have a BA in Business (Principia College) and an MBA in Management (Pepperdine).

I grew up in Los Angeles and went to Hollywood High School. My claim to fame is that my second grade girlfriend was **Rita Wilson** who is now married to **Tom Hanks**. I have a wonderful wife and three kids (12, 9, 4), a son and two daughters. Life for them right now is school, piano practicing, dance, tennis and soccer. 🌱