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Simon Inger, Managing Director, CatchWord

Katina Strauch

Against the Grain, strauchk@cofc.edu

Ana Arias Terry

Informed Strategies

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ATG Interviews Simon Inger

Managing Director, CatchWord <simon.inger@catchword.com>

by **Katina Strauch** (Editor, *Against the Grain*) and **Ana Arias Terry** (Vice President, **Informed Strategies**)

ATG: Tell us about CatchWord. We know that it began in 1994. Who started CatchWord and why? What was going on six years ago that made this idea viable?

SI: In 1994 I was running the Product Development Department at **Blackwell's** subscription agency in Oxford, responsible for developing electronic products for serials librarians. I was regularly involved in discussions with colleagues, such as **Chris Beckett** (now Sales & Marketing Director at CatchWord), **Heather Steele** (now CEO of **Swets Blackwell** in North America), **Tina Feick**, **Dan Tonkery** and others on how we saw the future of journal publishing and serials librarianship. A recurring theme in our discussions was that the Internet was going to revolutionize different aspects of scholarly publishing. The difficulty was in identifying exactly what the implications were.

One thing that was perhaps clearer to those of us working in subscription agencies than those outside was the sheer size of the task that confronted publishers. At that time the large publishers such as **Elsevier** and the **ACS** were experimenting with electronic publishing products. It was evident to us that while the big publishers might want, in the embryonic stages of electronic publishing, to develop and own their own services, this was not a solution that would scale to meet the needs of the smaller and medium sized publishers. There are over 40,000 of these, and the one thing we knew for sure was that they were not all going to successfully build their own solutions and then get their content effectively delivered to their library customers and their readers.

I and others thought that a new industry sector – outsourced electronic publishing – was going to emerge and be focused on providing publishers with electronic publishing services, in much the same way as typesetters, fulfillment houses, and subscription agencies had historically provided analogous services in the print environment.

So at that point I figured out that there was a first mover advantage in this new industry to be had, and I contacted an old college friend, Dr. Pete Trevellick, who was, at that time, running computing support for the Inorganic Chemistry Department of **Oxford University** and together we set up **CatchWord**. Fortunately, through industry contacts I met **Duncan Spence**, Chairman of **Publisher Services Ltd.**

Publisher Services Ltd. had both the industry knowledge, and the money to see the wisdom of investing in this new sector.

ATG: Is CatchWord a privately held company? Who owns CatchWord? What is the governing structure of the company? Is there a Board of Directors? How are decisions reached? Do you have any sort of advisory board that includes librarians?

SI: **CatchWord** is a privately held company with the two founding Directors, namely **Pete** and myself, and **Publisher Services Ltd.**, as the owners. There is a Board of Directors, which in addition to the shareholders, includes **Chris Beckett** and **Duncan Spence**, who is our Chairman. The three Directors manage the business on a day-to-day basis, with quarterly Board meetings. While our Board does not include librarians, we do actively solicit their views.

ATG: How many people work for CatchWord, in how many countries?

SI: We were slightly ahead of the market in setting up **CatchWord**, and growth in the early days was limited by the speed at which the industry as a whole was getting its head around all the issues to do with electronic publishing. Consequently, we grew from just two of us in 1995, to 12 in 1997 to 17 in 1998, 25 in 1999, and now 45 full-time employees. Nearly all our staff are based just outside Oxford in England, in a town called Abingdon, which incidentally is the oldest continuously inhabited town in England, with recorded inhabitants as early as 2000 BC. In historical terms, Abingdon has been around a long time. In electronic publishing terms, **CatchWord** has been around a long time, too. We have had a US operation since 1997, which is now based in New York at Madison and 31st. Recently we also added a sales resource in Washington, D.C.

ATG: Tell us about your technical support infrastructure. Do you help in the production of metadata or is this done by each individual publisher?

SI: One of our early assumptions was that while full text SGML production techniques provided a very thorough way of encoding and structuring scholarly content, it also represented a very significant additional cost to publishers. It was clear that the large commercial and society STM publishers would go down that route. It was equally clear that the vast majority of publishers would probably not be able to afford it. So we set about devising a technical solution that would confer the key benefits of SGML encoding without the cost.

So we went back to basics, figured out that nearly all publishers, whatever their print production technology was, could produce a Postscript or printer file, and that such a file

contained all the key information needed to produce the SGML metadata. Our publishers (or their typesetter) simply give us a print file (Postscript or PDF). From that file, we generate all the metadata, including author, author affiliation, article title, volume, issue, date, pagination, keywords, and abstract. This saves our customers a lot of time and money in rekeying this metadata.

This approach has been vindicated, since for a **CatchWord** publisher the costs of having a fully functional electronic journal product require only a small (typically 1-5%) one time, increase in the subscription price. Some publishers who have had large amounts of data re-keyed in SGML or HTML are charging libraries a 100% surcharge for the electronic journal, at least in part because of the technology they have adopted. We think this is unhelpful to libraries and the industry as a whole.

ATG: You currently host 828 journals for 56 publisher clients. How many companies are doing the same thing that you are? Who are your competitors?

SI: Actually by early January we will be hosting close to 1,100 titles from 60 publishers. By the end of 2001, with the addition of 130 **MCB University Press** titles to **CatchWord** plus further organic growth, we expect 1,500 journals.

There is no one doing exactly the same thing as we are. Our strategy has always been governed by two things. Firstly, we would make our money by charging publishers for technology services related to the production, hosting, and distribution of scholarly content, and secondly, we would be as library friendly as possible in all our efforts.

So as far as publishers are concerned, we have always argued that it is implausible for any aggregator, gateway, or Web portal to be the only place that their readers will need or use to access content. It is clear that in the electronic, even more than in the print world, readers will get to content through a variety of routes. So for instance a medical librarian will use **Medline** as the first point of access, probably via a product targeted specifically at the library market such as **Ovid**. A medical researcher may use this or alternatively **ISI's Web of Science** or **PubMed**. A member of a medical society is likely to visit the society Web site and expect to find the content of the society journal there. A medical undergraduate in an academic library will be provided with finding tools such as electronic journal Web pages, or the OPAC as the primary route to content.

Therefore a distribution strategy to ensure
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that any publisher on CatchWord gets the maximum visibility through as many gateways, portals, and other Web based outlets as possible has always been a key strategic goal for us. Publishers who contract with us need only come to one place (i.e., **CatchWord**), and we will not only process and host their content, but also build the necessary distribution relationships and accompanying links, so that their readers can get to the articles they want, through their favored interface.

In that sense we see ourselves as very different from the gateway services offered by the subscription agents, A&I services, and hybrid services such as **ingenta**. These all offer one possible point of access and compete amongst themselves on the basis of how many journals they have and the quality of their interface functionality. Our view is that they are all perfectly valid routes to content, but a publisher needs the greatest possible exposure and no single gateway offers this. We supply content into all these gateways and the A&I services, subject to publisher authorization. The benefit to the publisher is clear. They get their content in all the places their users are, but only have to deal with one company to handle that electronic distribution. Right now we have in place or in development 17 distribution partners, such as **Ovid**, **SilverPlatter**, **ISI**, **Cambridge Scientific Abstracts**, **PubMed**, **PubScience** (with a further 21 under development). In addition thousands of OPACs from over 4,000 registered institutional libraries also link directly to us using our openly available linking syntax. More than 90% of the ARL libraries have registered and are using **CatchWord**. Right now 65% plus of our traffic comes directly to us.

We have three major competitors – typesetters such as **Allen Press** and **Cadmus**; **HighWire**; and **ingenta**. **ingenta** are somewhat of a hybrid competitor. In so far as they behave as a gateway, then, as far as we are concerned, they are just like the subscription agent and we distribute content to them by building links, for instance to the 130 **MCB** journals we will be hosting using **CatchWord** infrastructure next year. In so far as they offer hosting services, then we compete with them.

ATG: *A lot of your services are dependent on what publishers and aggregators themselves are willing to offer. You are truly in the middle. How do you moderate what is being requested on the library/end user side with what publishers and aggregators are willing to offer?*

SI: We don't moderate what's being requested per se. We are dependent clearly on the content that is available on **CatchWord** and thus the content that we can distribute directly into library OPACs or via A&I services or via subscription agent gateways. But at the end of the day, that's dependent on how

many publishers we've convinced to come with **CatchWord**, and they pay us to make that distribution happen.

We don't really think there's an issue with what publishers and aggregators are willing to offer. We are the last port of call for any gateway, OPAC, or subject portal for all of the publishers on our system. Our job is to ensure that all of those gateways and third party portals come to us as the final and authoritative point of supply for any of the publishers on our service. So in that sense, we don't have to moderate anything. If somebody wants it, there's only one place to get it for the 56 publishers that we represent. Your question implies that there is some kind of tension in that position. By and large that really isn't the case.

Most libraries—and we have the unsolicited testimonials of many libraries as evidence of this—are extremely happy with the way that we make the content on our system widely, but simply, available. We try to keep the process of obtaining content from the **CatchWord** system, to which the library has valid subscription rights, as straight forward as possible. We do this by having a one-time authorization process and a simple subscription activation form. The library only needs to register once with **CatchWord** and that gets them a unique identifier that's good for all the different content from all the different publishers. We seem to have generally got it right as a result of listening to the libraries' concerns in this area.

Publishers of course are by and large paying us precisely because we do understand these issues, and because we can get it right. And that's part of the value-added service we offer to them. So if libraries find our system easy and simple to use but we don't always have the content that they would like on the service, then the best thing that we can suggest is that they recommend us to the publisher concerned as a library friendly service.

ATG: *There are more and more aggregators out there. How should libraries pick from among so many possibilities?*

SI: Our role is that of a production and distribution hub and the ultimate source of supply that feeds the aggregators, gateways, portals, and A&I services, for all the publishers and titles that we represent. So in that sense we are completely neutral as to the best way to access a given piece of content. The important thing for us is that they get to the content. Whether the library comes through a subscription agent gateway or whether it drives access directly to us through the OPAC is a strategic decision that all libraries confront, and there are pros and cons to both routes. Our job is to ensure that all the possible routes are working well so that our publishers get the maximum visibility whatever route the library finds most appropriate. One thing we do provide for those libraries that want it is TOC information for inclusion in their OPAC.

ATG: *You offer your services to libraries for free. Where and how do you get your operating capital? Is there really money in this service? How do you recoup your costs?*

SI: We do indeed offer our services to libraries for free. We have always positioned ourselves this way. As I mentioned earlier, we believe there's a need in the electronic environment for organizations similar, in terms of their position in the information chain, to the role of typesetters, printers, and fulfillment houses in the print world. Libraries don't pay those organizations. Publishers pay those organizations. And it's exactly the same with **CatchWord** – publishers pay us for providing them with services. That's our income stream.

We offer services to publishers, which involve producing, hosting, distributing, and enhancing their content with features like reference linking. They pay us an annual fee per title for each of the journals that we put online. Increasingly these days, they also pay us for additional services to ensure that their content is available on their own Web site for their editors and authors and other stakeholders. We're also assisting them with back office subscription systems.

Is there money in this service? Certainly. We are a tightly managed and prudently funded organization. We've grown from myself in an office, with a phone in 1995, to 45 people with offices in New York, Washington, and Oxfordshire, pretty much on the back of organic growth. For example, every time we've contracted with a new publisher, we've taken that money and re-invested it in the business to grow the business. This is entirely the opposite of many of the classic dot com strategies, which often involve coming up with half an idea; paying a lot of people a lot of money to build half the solution; and then marketing the heck out of it. They then get the interesting challenge, somewhat late in the day, of figuring out whether or not an operational business actually exists. We figured out the business case first and since then have prudently re-invested in support of that goal.

Our continued re-investment in **CatchWord** is one reason we have succeeded and have doubled all our key numbers every year.

ATG: *As more and more electronic journals become available, the need to index the contents of these journals in some sort of aggregated way becomes more and more critical. In many cases, links to a journal title, and not to a specific article, is all that is available. This can be frustrating to the end user. Is the Digital Object Identifier (DOI) the answer to this problem and how many of your publishers are employing the DOI in their publications?*

SI: It is true that a huge amount of content does require a more imaginative and precise way of providing access. It is also true that in many systems the links can only be

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made at the journal title level. But as I alluded to earlier, our system has always allowed libraries and anyone else for that matter, to link at whatever level they feel they want to. So it's possible on **CatchWord** to link to the journal title page, which displays the volumes and issues available. It's also possible to link to a specific issue, for example, to the TOC on **CatchWord** using a predictable linking syntax. But it's also possible to link to a specific article as well. These links can be made through user interfaces such as OPACs but also by devices such as DOI look-up resolvers.

The uptake of linking below the journal title level, in the library market place, has not been overwhelming, and I think that this is, in part, because libraries have insufficient resources to manage the deployment of some of these more sophisticated linking syntaxes. However, there are no technical obstacles to doing so, and we're very happy to offer such specific levels of access. So if any libraries out there would like to link at a more specific level than journal and title level, then please check our linking page on our Website at www.catchword.com/opacs.htm so you can see how to do that.

We believe the DOI can be part of the answer to this and many other problems. We were building linking-based reference resolution systems prior to the arrival of the DOI, and we have enhanced our service in this area to incorporate the DOI technology. We offer publishers a service for either them or **CatchWord** to allocate DOIs for their content. So for instance in the case **Mary Ann Liebert**, we allocate the DOIs and feed that information back to them for them to integrate into their production system so that in the future they will be able to take on this task. The whole of the **Taylor & Francis** group, which covers 500 of the journals on our service, **Mary Ann Liebert**, and **MIT University Press**, for example, are all using different parts of our DOI-based technology. Our ability in this area to take a publisher into **CrossRef** using DOI-based technology, even when they have not developed a full SGML-based production system themselves, is a key differentiation factor between ourselves and some of our competitors.

ATG: What about the end user? Where does the end user fit into your business plan?

SI: Right now all the statistical evidence that we're gathering demonstrates that end user access is still mainly enabled through institutional registrations on our service. So although we have many thousands of individuals registered, the reality is that most full text delivery occurs via an organizational registration - either corporations or from academic scholarly institutions. So the end user receives publisher content that's hosted on

CatchWord via the interface choice of their institution—whether a library OPAC, a corporate Intranet, a subject-based portal, or an A&I service, such as **ISI's Web of Science**.

However, we have gathered recently some interesting statistical information with reference to the **CatchWord Web Integrated Service** we offer to publishers. This service ensures that the publisher's Website is a fully functional source of full text content for their editors, authors, and readers. Some of the publishers that have bought a **CatchWord Web Integrated Solution** are experiencing significant traffic growth that puts their own sites ahead of some of the other distribution points for their content. It's still a small part of our business in percentage points, but we think that is likely to grow.

ATG: Let's talk about user-driven article sales. Do you offer any individual article delivery either to libraries or to end-users either in print or electronically? Also, as more and more content is made available on the Web, users expect desktop delivery of information. What is your response to this demand?

SI: We do offer individual article delivery either to the library or end users, but only as electronic files available for local printing.

We have a couple of payment mechanisms for this individual article delivery. It can be transactionally based using a credit card or, alternatively, libraries can establish deposit accounts with the ability for those deposits to be used against specific titles or classes of titles.

So desktop delivery of content is exactly the business we're in, and it's based on whatever payment methodology works for that user base. If it comes as part of a print subscription and use of content at the desktop is authorized, that's fine. But if either the organizational or end-user wants to make use of deposit account or credit card methodology, then we accommodate that as well.

By definition, everything on **CatchWord** is available electronically and therefore the provision of "paper only" output doesn't arise for "**CatchWord** hosted" content. However, when we get to the references at the end of the articles hosted on **CatchWord**, that is a different story. Right now from the references we link out to A&I services, such as **Cambridge Scientific Abstracts**, **PubMed** (and soon **CAS**) to pick up free abstracts to the cited reference, and through **CrossRef** to pick up the full text of the cited reference. This works for a high percentage of our titles. However, there are bound to be references that can only be delivered by conventional means, on paper. Consequently we are aggressively pursuing relationships with document delivery companies in order to provide users with the ability to get cited articles in paper form by fax or through the mail when this is the only way it can be delivered.

ATG: Looking back over the last few years, what's your assessment of where our industry has been? Where **CatchWord has been?**

SI: This new sector of electronic publishing outsourcing has been emerging like a butterfly from a chrysalis over the last four years. Both **Chris Beckett** and I were involved at **Blackwell's** in the development of electronic products 10 years ago, and we had an opportunity to do some innovative things there with **Blackwell's Connect**. **Chris** was involved with the **Uncover** company with the development of **Uncover Reveal** and **SUMO**. Those were straws in the wind, especially with **Uncover**, that gave a clue as to where the industry might go.

We think the key thing that has happened in the last five years is that the kinds of jobs that need to get done in the new information landscape have started to clarify. It's clear that there is a role for an organization to provide publishers, in particular, with services that get their content on to the desktop. Four years ago, publishers were uncertain as to whether they really needed to bother about this at all. There was uncertainty about how significant Internet-based delivery of electronic content to the desktop would be in the academic and scholarly field, especially for the smaller publisher. Now the evidence is clear, and librarians attest to this, that if it's not on the Net, it doesn't exist as far as many students and faculty are concerned. Consequently, if the publisher is not online, they might as well turn the lights off and make sure they lock the door on the way out.

So from that perspective, there clearly has emerged a strong opportunity for companies like **CatchWord** to provide services to get publishers onto the desktop. We are the biggest independent host and distributor of full-text content. By early 2001, we will have more hosted content than **Elsevier's Science Direct**. We will have built that hub of content through persuading approximately 60 or so publishers, by the end of 2001, to put their content with us. When we have achieved that, we will have a 1% market share and only 39,000 publishers to go and yet still be the biggest player. So there is a tremendous upside for this sector and for **CatchWord**.

ATG: Tell us about the future from your perspective. What are your long term plans for **CatchWord? Does a service such as **CrossRef** fit into your future plans?**

SI: We've been quite successful with the business model that we've developed. We see ourselves migrating into a wide range of services aimed at providing publishers with solutions to meet their needs. This may include activities such as facilitating rapid electronic publishing through pre-print and peer-reviewed pre-publication dissemination; consortial sales support; subscription system integration; discussion forums; e-commerce; alerting services; advertising options; Website development; and linking.

CrossRef and other linking efforts will continue to represent critical functionality to the academic and professional publishing

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Profiles Encouraged

Name: Adrian W. Alexander (I always include the middle initial to distinguish me from all the other Adrian Alexanders out there).

Position: Executive Director, Big 12 Plus Libraries Consortium
<<http://www.big12plus.org>>

Along with a program officer, I plan and coordinate a wide variety of cooperative programs for this group of 30 research libraries in 15 states. My office is in the Linda Hall Library (<http://www.lindahall.org>), which is one of the most unique libraries in the country, not to mention one of the loveliest. We basically rent office space and admin support from Linda Hall and they handle our financial affairs as well, although my program officer and I are actually PAID through other member libraries.

Born: July 23, 1950; Waxahachie, Texas.

Current Residence: Overland Park, Kansas

Education: MLS, University of North Texas; BA (History), Texas Tech University.

Job Experience: Hired as first executive director of Big 12 Plus in March 1998; previously spent 13 years in the serials vendor world with Faxon and Swets (very briefly). Worked in academic libraries for five years as a reference librarian and in admin services before moving to the "dark" side as a serials vendor (I'm still confused about why librarians call it the "dark" side; the glare was pretty intense when I was there!).

Proudest accomplishments: Professional — Member of UCLA Senior Fellows Class of 1999.

Personal: Recently appeared in the "world premiere" of a new play by a local playwright/director/actor who also happens to be my acting coach (I was cast without an audition).

First job: My very first paying job ever was at the age of 14 when I worked summers for my godfather, who owned an extermination company. I got to crawl under houses and dig trenches around the foundation so we could spray for termites. This job convinced me early of the importance of a good education. My first "professional" job after college (but pre-library school) was as an investigator for the old U.S. Civil Service Commission; I did background investigations on government employees and government contractors who needed security clearances.

Biggest recent surprise: Getting sunburned in sunny 70+ degree weather at St. Andrews, Scotland while watching the British Open (my 50th birthday present); that's never happened to me in Scotland before!

Favorite pastimes: Theatre (spectator & participant), golf (spectator & participant), good food & wine, reading, traveling, collecting single malt whiskies.

Literary tastes: I do believe that good food and good books go together. I tend to read mostly historical fiction (favorite author: Dorothy Dunnett), southern fiction (Ellen Gilchrist), plays, and European history (mostly British now, formerly Russian).

Seven Years from Now: I'd like to retire early and spend my time acting and traveling, although not at the same time, with at least a weekly round of golf thrown in for good measure.

Had I but world enough and time... Shouldn't that read "money enough and time?" Either way, I would like to visit every continent on the planet before the hole in the ozone layer gets too big.

From the Reference Desk

by **Tom Gilson** (College of Charleston)
<gilson@cofc.edu>

More than half way toward completion, Gale Group's *Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia* (1999 – 2001, 078763736X, \$995) is emerging as a significant contribution to the reference literature. Projected to be 16 volumes (including the index) with more than 8,000 entries, this set promises to be a landmark in women's biography. International in scope, *Women in World History* offers a serious but accessible treatment of women in all walks of life and helps redress the lack of coverage of women in other biographical works. In short, there is nothing else like it in this important area of biography.

Ranging from 3100 BCE up through modern times, this encyclopedia includes biographies of queens, actresses, athletes, politicians, writers, soldiers, diplomats, artists as well as, women in other diverse fields. The length of each entry varies from short personal profiles to a full-fledged bio including a multi-page narrative, pictures, a list of reference sources and a byline. There is also an interesting use of sidebars for entries to women related in some way to the main subject being discussed. Fortunately, a sometimes confusing system of directional arrows, pointing to the related entries, is augmented by cross-referencing within the overall alphabetically arrangement. Another fascinating and helpful feature is the genealogical chart section in volume 1. Grouped by country, these charts identify ruling families and display the name of the women in bold. A total of 90 such charts are included. In addition, the set is thoroughly cross-referenced by name, name variant and title and there are plans for occupational, geographical and master indexes.

Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia represents 9 years of collective work. The commitment and level of research that has gone into this set is obvious. Editors **Anne Commire** and **Deborah Klezmer**, along with more than 300 contributors, are providing an exceptional reference work that will find a place in most libraries. Naturally, there will be omissions. The editors admit that they wanted to include more women writers but were limited by the sheer number of worthy possibilities. But knowing Gale Group, you can count on supplements being published as long as there is demand. Completed volumes can be purchased individually. Check out *Books in Print* or Amazon for details.

It would be hard to overestimate the influence of religious practice on human history and a recent **Fitzroy Dearborn** title, the *Encyclopedia of Monasticism* (2000, 1579580904, \$295), gives added proof of that influence. The *Encyclopedia* covers 45 countries and regions with monastic traditions that have existed over the centuries and contributed to the spiritual and social needs of people worldwide.

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community. The importance will only increase as scholars, researchers, and end-users look for easier, faster access to the information they seek when they need it—from different publishers and via different interfaces and services.

ATG: Tell us about yourselves. What do you do for fun?

SI: For fun? This industry is a great place to work, the people are intelligent and focused on building solutions that work for their customers, whether they are library customers or publishers, so I still get a kick out of the conferences, shows and meetings I go to.

However with a young family and an extensive set of neglected hobbies such as "potholing" [spelunking], climbing, and 4-wheel drive off-roading, I really need to get out in the hills a little more.