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Charles Halpin-About Bowker and the new Books in Print

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ATG Interviews Charles Halpin

Chief Operating Officer, R.R. Bowker

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

ATG: A lot of librarians are using *Amazon.com* or other Web bookselling sites for obtaining bibliographic data free of charge. Many don't feel that *Books In Print* is necessary anymore. Can you please comment?

CH: There are very real differences between the *Books In Print* (subscription product and book vendor Web sites, and it's important for librarians to understand these differences. Web vendors are in business to sell books, CD's and other products. As with any professional retailer, there is an emphasis on availability, and they work closely with publishers to feature leading titles with the objective of maximizing product sales. A "bricks and mortar" bookstore needs to sell the stock on the shelves; with Web book vendors the same goal exists and, while the means to achieve it are new and less familiar to us, they are every bit as real. You wouldn't consider a trip to a library versus a bookstore to be interchangeable, even though they both stock books. The expectation levels are different, and it is the same with information.

Bowker builds tools for libraries; unbiased, authoritative, consistent data and, increasingly, features that "think" like a librarian, and we've been doing it for 120 years. Our search facility is the most powerful in the industry by a wide margin, giving the user a lot more fields on which to search, and flexibility, so that you can search on anything, in most any way. Our *Books In Print* reviews product has reviews from 14 major sources. You can download record content from booksinprint.com 2000 easily and flexibly in a MARC record format to load into your acquisition system or in ASCII delimited format to load into a spreadsheet or a database program. This is what Bowker professional databases are about.

A librarian should think hard about opting for commercialism over professional reference information, and about the impact of that choice on their library and on their patrons. This is a distinction that will continue to grow.

ATG: How about the library wholesaler databases? Do you see them as competitors?

CH: It's really the same situation as with the consumer Web databases in terms of these companies wanting to sell their stock, which is quite a legitimate aim. This is their business. What librarians need to realize

is that these databases are only a selection and not a comprehensive compilation, as is the aim of *Books In Print*.

ATG: Tell us about the new *Books In Print*. What is different from the *Books In Print* we know?

CH: The new Web version of *Books In Print* is called booksinprint.com 2000, and the first thing that you should know is that it is much more than any *Books In Print* up to now. It includes additionally audiobooks (in print and out of print), videos (in print and out of print), Books Out-of-Print, and the Publisher Authority Database, or PAD. All of the product databases are seamlessly linked, the result of establishing all of Bowker's content databases onto a common relational database platform, an 18-month project completed in 1999. This puts us well ahead of everyone else. This is also the first time that Bowker has enabled direct searching on the PAD database, allowing the user to search by a number of criteria including name, imprint, city, state and ISBN prefix to get complete publisher information, including related companies, on more than 165,000 publishers, distributors and wholesalers in the United States. This is the best Publisher database in the world, and we're making it directly accessible to booksinprint.com 2000 subscribers.

And that's not all. We're adding annotations, book jackets, author biographies, awards for books, audios and videos, as well as two best seller databases, in addition to the full, consistent authority controlled records that are Bowker's trademark. booksinprint.com 2000 will also, for the first time, list wholesaler and publisher availability and stock levels as a part of the title record.

There's also a Fiction Room enabling searches on the name of key fictional char-

acters and real and imaginary settings; a Lists area where librarians and patrons can create and email, print or download (in ASCII, CSV or US MARC formats) for collection development, acquisitions and suggested reading; and Usage Reports based on the **International Coalition of Library Consortia—ICOLC** guidelines for statistical usage measurement. This will all be presented through a sleek, clean, user-friendly interface, an improvement that our customers wanted and that beta testers of the product have stated lends itself to easier functionality, especially in searching. All of these features will be available during the free trial period of the beta version February 1 through February 15.

At the core of it all, there is *Books In Print*, the largest books, video and audio books databases in the world, the most extensive subject classification system in the industry and record consistency and authority across the database. Bowker is on the move with the launch of booksinprint.com 2000, and we're not going to stop here: You will see lots of exciting developments emerging from Bowker in the course of 2000 and beyond.

Have a look at it! Bowker is making the beta version of booksinprint.com 2000 available for all librarians for free trial during the first two weeks of February at <http://www.booksinprint.com> or you can request a trial at anytime from your Bowker representative at 1-888-BOWKER2 (888-269-5372).

ATG: Can you list the new features of *Books In Print* and tell us when each will be widely available?

CH: Coming in February 2000, the following new features will be available: Cleaner, easier, more direct searching; Seamless searching across books, audio and video databases; Direct searching on Bowker's Publisher Authority Database with over 165,000 publishers, distributors and wholesalers.; Stock and availability from major distributors and suppliers; Book cover images; Author biographies; Over 100 years worth of bestseller information; Annotations; Fiction Room that enables searching for titles based on names of key fictional characters and real/imaginary settings; Hyperlink searching on author, subject, publisher or award name; LIST area where librarian/patron can create and email, print, download and customize lists

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of titles for collection development, suggested reading or acquisitions; Ability to limit searches by review sources; Usage reports, based on **ICOLC** guidelines.

Coming later in 2000, the following features will be added: Hooks to Holdings; Electronic Ordering capabilities; Ability to search on fictional characters across media to find, for example, all books, audiobooks and videos in which **Sherlock Holmes** is a character; Recommendations and the ability to filter searches based on popular consumer media sources, such as **Oprah**, *Parenting* magazine and **National Public Radio**.

ATG: *What especially interests us is the "Hooks to Holdings" feature as well as the availability of stock information from book vendors. Can you provide some details and release dates?*

CH: We're very excited about these developments for booksinprint.com 2000, which reflect Bowker's new transaction orientation as we very deliberately move to integrate our products into the library value chain, helping librarians to better do their jobs.

The Stock and Availability functionality works at the title/record level and shows stock and availability of that title by warehouse location (if there is more than one) for each participating wholesaler and publisher, updated on a daily or at least weekly basis. As I mentioned, this feature will be up and running at launch in February, and we expect to have 20-25 of our almost 40 wholesalers and publisher partners up and running by then, with the others following over the coming months. A future enhancement will be the ability to limit search results by the vendor in which you are interested, by adding the preferred vendor to the search criteria. Bowker's objective is to provide as much information about title availability as possible to our library customers. This important new development is an integral part of booksinprint.com 2000.

Another exciting addition to booksinprint.com 2000 is Bowker's Hooks to Holdings. Hooks to Holdings will do just that: provide a link to the library's holdings, allowing the librarian or patron to search and instantly know how they can access an item directly from the results of the search. We plan to launch this feature in summer of 2000.

Later in the year, we plan to launch a statistics package, which will be an enhancement to the usage reporting functionality. The reports will tell the librarian what books and book categories are

being searched, and how often. These reports will aid the library acquisitions process dramatically.

Let me also add that we are now meeting with **ILS** providers to allow their systems to link seamlessly with booksinprint.com 2000 to present Bowker information to their users on the **ILS** interface. It's too early to give you a date when this will be available, but the interface development has begun.

ATG: *How will the new booksinprint.com 2000 be priced?*

CH: We are committed to building value into our products, and making them accessible to as wide an audience as possible. So, despite the substantial upgrade that our customers will realize in booksinprint.com 2000, the price will stay the same as its predecessor released in July 1999. This price will be maintained as we continue to add features throughout the year 2000 like those that we just talked about. Multiple user pricing will be similar to our existing site license and network pricing. As always, our Bowker representatives will be pleased to provide full details.

ATG: *What aggregators/integrators have/ will have [Books In Print](http://booksinprint.com) available? Can you list them for us?*

CH: Bowker will continue to make available our 3rd party partners subscription versions of *Books In Print* as well. These are **OCLC's First Search**, **Gale's Infotrac**, **Ovid**, **SilverPlatter ERL**, **Carl System**, **DRA Web** and **DRA Net**, **EBSCOhost** and **Innovative Interfaces' INN-VIEW**, and we are in discussions with a couple of other major vendors as well. *Books In Print* is also available on a Pay-Per-View basis through **Lexis-Nexis**, **OCLC**, **Ovid** and **Dialog**.

We're currently working with these vendor partners on direct remote database access in order for them to provide the same daily updating as booksinprint.com 2000.

ATG: *We are interested in the new ordering feature of booksinprint.com 2000. How will it work? What role will the book vendor play in this scenario? How about the **ILS** vendor? How about the publisher?*

CH: The Ordering functionality is an important objective for booksinprint.com 2000, and follows logically on from the Stock and Availability information. This feature will provide integration into existing public and academic library systems. It will build on the "List" feature in booksinprint.com 2000, and will function like a shopping basket, whereby a librarian builds a list, specifies quantities and vendor, and uploads the order into his or her acquisition system. We are working with a few of the major vendors

to develop this module, but it is too early to project a release date.

Longer term, we are planning to facilitate direct ordering to book vendors and publishers by passing the orders through electronically to them for fulfillment, at which time the vendor will deal directly with the library. The bottom line is that we want to do what is easiest and most efficient for our customers. Let me encourage anyone with comments or suggestions to contact us through [<info@bowker.com>](mailto:info@bowker.com).

ATG: *What about the print and CD-ROM versions of [Books In Print](http://booksinprint.com)? Will you still support them?*

CH: Very much so. It's very easy to get caught up in the excitement of the Web and its potential, but libraries have widely divergent needs based on their own circumstances. Some libraries don't have Web access, or enough of it, and stability and response time are still two very real issues on the Web. So we will continue to support and develop our CD ROM and print products as well. It's very common for a library to subscribe to 2 media versions of our product, in order to better meet patron needs. In this regard, I'm reminded of a school library that buys mostly print over electronic product, particularly on multi-volume products. With a 9 volume product, 9 students can theoretically be using it at one time. Now that's thinking!

In late 2000, our *Books In Print* CD-ROM platform will get a facelift as we move to an HTML interface that will have the look and feel of our Web product, Booksinprint.com 2000. We'll first be launching that interface on the Ulrich's International Periodicals product, and then move it across to *Books In Print* and other products.

We're also discussing hybrid products and packaging. For instance, what do you think of the idea of a 3-volume *Books In Print* (instead of the current 9 volumes) with the indexes delivered via the Web? These are the kinds of questions that we are discussing with customers through focus groups and our sales and customer service people. We want to work closely with libraries to best meet the needs of librarians and patrons, that's the bottom line.

ATG: *At **ALA Midwinter**, you gave a fascinating historical account of [Books In Print](http://booksinprint.com) and Bowker. Can you retell us some of it?*

CH: Yes, with pleasure. I came across this interesting history while researching the number of titles and publishers that were included in the first edition of *Books In Print*, published in 1880, then called *The American Catalog*. I was then able to draw

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a comparison with *Books In Print* in 2000 for my speech in San Antonio. It turns out that there were 70,000 titles from 900 publishers back then, as compared with 3.2 million titles from over 90,000 publishers in today's *Books In Print*.

In early 1876, a few years before *The American Catalog* was published by The Office (as the Bowker company was then known!), a gentleman by the name of **Melville Dewey** (why does that name sound so familiar?), the librarian at **Amherst College**, contacted **Frederick Leyboldt**, founder of the Bowker enterprise, and his young editor, **Richard Rogers Bowker**, and arranged a meeting at their offices in New York City. They met to discuss the creation of a magazine to serve the burgeoning library profession in the United States. The magazine was *Library Journal*, and Dewey became its first editor, and the first edition of the magazine was published later that year, in September of 1876.

And the story doesn't end there. The three men also thought that a library conference should be organized to bring together the profession, and they duly orga-

nized such a conference in October of 1876. At the conference, the **American Library Association** was founded. So Bowker's association with the ALA really does go back to the very beginning!

ATG: *You are a new face at Bowker. When did you join the company?*

CH: Actually, I'm just celebrating my one-year anniversary at Bowker as well as my return to the U.S. after ten years in Europe, and I can't think of a better way to celebrate than with the launch of booksinprint.com 2000, capping off a year of frenetic development!

But I'm not new to Bowker. In the U.K., I managed **Bowker-Saur**, Bowker's primary international distributor as well as being a library science publisher in its own right—you will know **LISA (Library and Information Science Abstracts)**--a job I started in 1994. It is great to be back in the U.S.; the library market here is experiencing such a renaissance, and Web usage is more pervasive than in Europe.

ATG: *So where were you born and educated?*

CH: I guess I should have made it clear that I am an American, a Connecticut Yankee, actually! I received my BA from

Hobart College in upstate New York and then later, after my first 10 years in publishing, I decided to do an MBA degree. Because I was then doing international publishing and had the great fortune to travel the world on a regular basis, I was looking for an international program and ended up in Fontainebleau, France, at INSEAD. Following my MBA, my wife and I relocated to the United Kingdom, where I went to work for **Robert Maxwell at Macmillan Publishing**. But that's another story.

ATG: *What do you like to do for fun?*

CH: Well, as you might expect from someone managing Bowker, I love to read—both books and magazines. Lately, I've been drawn to biographies. I'm currently working my way through a Vintage paperback (UK) about **Paul McCartney** entitled *Many Years From Now*, by **Barry Miles**, though I probably spend more time reading stories about **Mr. Pink-Whistle** and **Thomas the Tank Engine** to my children! My wife, **Stephanie**, and I have two children; **Jake**, now 4, and **Ellie**, who just turned 1 in January. We all love to travel, and we're fortunate to have seen in the new millennium in Australia. I'm also trying to find time to get back to my squash game one day soon! 🏸