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Back Talk -- Closed to Open

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Morgan Interview from page 58

ATG: *What appeals to faculty to author a lecture? (Citable unit, their work can be found via Google, Inspec, Marc records)*

MM: We have had a great deal of success in attracting many prominent and active researchers to author lectures for **Synthesis**. One reason is that prominent experts, being closest to these issues of communicating research information, they easily see the needs of the audience and the benefit of this approach. These are people who are constantly approached by students, colleagues and developers for guidance and advice in their areas.

Often these are people who have considered writing books but who recognize that information is changing too quickly for this to be very satisfying or viable. Also, the opportunity cost for an active researcher to write a broad book is very high since the time necessary to research the work necessary to broaden a book beyond his own research area can add a year or more to the process. Writing a 75 page overview of one's own area is a much more tractable undertaking.

Another element is that, unlike contributions of chapters to handbooks or edited volumes, **Synthesis** lectures are stand alone, citable works that can be widely read and referenced in the same to collected volumes, handbooks and encyclopedias are buried.

Finally, I think that people are symbolically attracted to the fact that we share revenues by paying royalties to authors and editors as do book publishers. Although most of our authors won't find the amount of money involved to be hugely significant I think it is a fairness issue, especially in the context of the current debates about the economics of research journal publishing.

ATG: *What's it like starting a publishing company? (Lack of legacy systems)*

MM: Probably one of the most fun and intense things that I can imagine. This is my second startup and **Joel's** first. The most exciting aspect is trying to create a new organization that can partner with its audience to create innovative content that fills an important need for the target community. There are a thousand details and a thousand potential mistakes to make but if you get that part right it will work. A great advantage is not having legacy systems to work around or redesign. It's also great not to have legacy revenue streams that we need to protect. This gives us much more freedom to design systems and business models that are ideal for a new generation of readers and authors.

ATG: *Tell us about your partners. (2 publishers (recruit new content), 1 award winning faculty and author) (also Glyn and iGroup).*

MM: It's an amazingly talented and experienced group. **Joel Claypool** has been an engineering publisher for over 20 years. He developed the **CRC** engineering handbook series and subsequently, a large number of successful titles at **Academic Press**. He is the consummate publisher and cares deeply about authors and readers. **Joel** is our VP and Publisher and is personally responsible for publishing in engineering whereas my publishing focus is in computer

science. Our third cofounder is **Professor Dick Dorf** at the **University of California, Davis**. **Dick** is one of the most successful textbook authors in engineering and has been since I represented his controls textbook as an **Addison Wesley** college sales representative 25 years ago. In addition, he is a prominent entrepreneurship professor and author and served as the mayor of Sonoma, California a few years ago. **Glyn Davies** recently joined us as VP, Director of Marketing and Sales, coming to us from the same position at **Sage Publishers**. **Glyn** and I worked together for several years at **Morgan Kaufmann** and we share much of the same perspective and values. One of his major contributions is a keen focus on the customer which is important since **Joel** and I spend a good deal of our time with authors and editors. Also, **Glyn** has spent much of his career in international publishing and this, combined with the fact that he is English, brings a global perspective to our efforts. This is important because technology publishing is rapidly becoming global in both readership and authorship.

ATG: *This is a tough economic climate to launch a new business. What do you want to accomplish? (Very broad distribution to researchers, students, engineers and scientists)*

MM: This may sound almost unbearably optimistic but I actually think that this is a great time to start our business. There are two major trends that I see **Synthesis** being in synch with. The first is the substantial increasing preference on the part of engineers and computer scientists for online sources. The availability of journals and technical reports on the Web has really changed expectations and behavior. In this climate, information in print books is much less accessed and used. We hear that even eBook versions of traditional publications are not seeing substantial use because of issues of length, static content and usability issues such as restricted printing. In this environment, the **Synthesis** model may provide the vehicle of choice for book-like content.

The second trend is that budget pressure is requiring librarians to look carefully at issues of cost and value. We believe that our model will be very much more efficient and economical than current monograph and handbook pricing and, at the same time, that our content will be more widely used. In a tough economic environment, we think these advantages will be meaningful.

ATG: *Where do you see the company going? (Not bought by Elsevier)*

MM: One of the things I've learned in my career is that as companies become larger and more diversified, it's harder to stay close to the customer. Staying close to the needs of the reader and the author is an important value. We have a long term commitment to independent publishing based on a belief that a publishing company is most successful when it is externally focused on the market rather than internally focused on short term corporate goals. Everyone at **Morgan & Claypool** has been involved with large companies and each of us has chosen to work with a smaller company that can be focused on great publishing. I can also say that all of us have been through acquisitions of publishing companies and that part of our plan is to avoid repeating that experience.

ATG: *Tell us something about your background and personal life.*

MM: I started in publishing pretty much right out of college as an academic sales rep for **Addison Wesley**. After a few years I was invited to Boston to edit a list of computer science books, which of course was and is one of **Addison Wesley's** strongest publishing areas. In 1984 I was approached by **Bill Kaufmann** (president of **William Kaufmann Inc**, former president of **Freeman**) and **Nils Nilsson** (Chairman of the **Stanford** Computer Science Department) to found **Morgan Kaufmann Publishers** in San Francisco. My co investors and I merged **Morgan Kaufmann** with **Academic Press** in 1998 after which I became VP, Director of Book Publishing at **Academic Press** while continuing as President of **Morgan Kaufmann**. **Reed Elsevier** acquired **Academic Press** and **Morgan Kaufmann** as a part of its acquisition of **Harcourt** in late 2001 and I left to take a sabbatical a few months later. **Joel** and I started **M&C** about six months after that.

My wife, **Debra Hunter**, is also a publisher and is President of **Jossey-Bass Publishers** in San Francisco. We live in Marin County, just north of the Golden Gate Bridge, with our 12 year old son **Hunter**, our 8 year old daughter **Hannah**, our Flat Coat Retriever, two cats and a gold fish. I am a volunteer Board Member of **Small Press Distribution**, a not for profit distributor of books from 500 independent poetry and alternative literature presses. What little time I have for hobbies is devoted primarily to music. I am learning to play the piano and try to stay current with Jazz and some rock.

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to comply? And for what reason?

Really, I am conceptually not against these three worthy attempts to openly share software and intellectual content. Yet, I wonder if we aren't spending too much time selecting music to be played while Rome burns. In any event, I think it is wise to avoid getting on overloaded bandwagons. Based upon the following **Googleresearch**, I am going to focus my energies on open archives:

"open source" 11.8 million hits
"open access" 2.4 million hits
"open archive" 55,100 hits

Endnotes

1. Open. (n.d.). Dictionary.com. Retrieved October 12, 2004 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=open+source&r=67>.
2. Wheeler, Brad. (2004). "Open source 2007: How did this happen?" *Educause Review*, 39, 12-27.
3. Young, Jeffrey. (2004, September 24). "5 Challenges for Open Source." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, B2-B4.
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5. Open archives. (n.d.). Open Archives Forum. Retrieved October 12, 2004 from <http://www.oaforum.org/resources/glossary.php#o>.
6. Open. (n.d.). Dictionary.com. Retrieved October 12, 2004 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=open&r=67>.

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or "e-resources" becomes superfluous. Alternatively, as electronic equivalents of books, journals, and other collections proliferate and require subscriptions rather than one-time payments, will serials librarianship become distinguished not by work with journals and magazines, but with electronic resources? These resources require review and ongoing payments, link checking, and adding new contents, whether they are new journal issues, new book chapters, new editions, or new collections of resources added to a database.

Additional research would prove illuminating. One possibility for study would be to measure the magnitude of changes wrought by the proliferation of Web-based resources, either by looking at older advertisements to measure the rate of change over time, or by examining the impact these changes have had on several areas of librarianship, comparing the pace and extent to which they have changed. Another possibility would be to see how serials librarians and library administrators perceive changes in serials positions, how they want to change them, or would change them in the event of a vacancy.

Endnotes

1. Copeland, Ann W. "The Demand for Serials Catalogers: An Analysis of Position Advertisements 1980-1995." *The Serials Librarian* 32:1/2 (1997) 27-37.
2. DeLon, Barbara. "Position Descriptions: What they Are, Are Not, and Can Be." *College & Research Libraries News* 55:6 (June 1994) 339.
3. Copeland, 28-29.
4. Non-serials duties appeared with diminishing frequency: liaison duties with faculty dropped from 20% in 1993-94 to 9% in 2003-04, and government documents responsibilities completely disappeared by 2003-04. These changes could reflect a decrease in adding outside responsibilities to serials positions, or they may be typical only of the advertisements analyzed. Positions advertised in 2003-04 tended to be at larger institutions, which may have more specialized positions than the institutions represented in the 1993-94 sample.
5. Buttlar, Louis; Garcha, Rajinder. "Catalogers in Academic Libraries: Their Evolving and Expanding Roles." *College and Research Libraries* 59:4 (July 1988) 311-21.
6. Khurshid, Zahiruddin. "The Impact of Information Technology on Position Requirements and Qualifications for Catalogers." *Information Technology and Libraries* 22:1 (March 2003) 20.
7. Khurshid, 20.

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many went bust. Some libraries then banded together to take over the community development process themselves. All of these experiments ended in failure. Will the current attempts at community development succeed this time?

Similarly, open access is supposed to mean free or nearly free access to research by going around greedy publishers — yet the indications are that instead of giving the money to libraries, with which to purchase commercial publications, the money will be given to researchers to give to supposedly friendly publishers. Again the enormity of the cultural change that comes with the open access model is mind boggling. With hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of articles published annually, should we really contemplate pushing for this revolution in how information is shared?

Finally, what is the value of a near empty open archive? At my university a call is issued annually for the faculty to report what they have published. This year the number of articles reported in the first round was down, not because less had been published, but because the rewards for reporting their research to this general effort were not obvious. The value of sharing this information with colleagues, department chairs, or even one's dean was clear but inputting the information to common list doesn't seem to be valued. One of my staff members asked why we couldn't make such submissions mandatory. I have toyed around with the idea of being open about my thoughts concerning how to achieve compliance, similar to those used by Donald Rumsfeld when enforcing democracy and freedom of choice in Iraq, but decided against doing so in this public forum. If it is difficult to get the faculty to provide a bibliography of their year's work, how much more difficult is it to get them to upload their articles into an open archive. How can they be forced

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Back Talk — Closed to Open

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I am contemplating opposing "openness." In the past I liked people who were open-minded, who opened up, who favored open-shop workplaces, who liked the open road, who like to watch the **US Open** on rainy days, and I like stores with signs that say "open" when I go there. But with the advent of the open access, open source and open archives movements, I think the word open is over-used at best and really means closed to lots of things at worst.

"Open Source," according to THE source of all knowledge [the Web] means "a method and philosophy for software licensing and distribution designed to encourage use and improvement of software written by volunteers by ensuring that anyone can copy the source code and modify it freely."¹ This sounds great, but in the context of universities and their libraries, it now relates to a millennial view of life in which universities which normally strive to kill each other in physical, bureaucratic, and intellectual sports contests, will somehow agree to pool huge sums of money to develop systems of mutual benefit. Moreover, they will then freely give these programs to the other institutions which were too cheap to pitch in to help in the first place. Open source requires them not to purchase a commercially produced e-portfolio, learning platform, e-resource repository, registration system that works, more or less, but instead work together to develop something that meets all their needs.

Recently, two good articles were published about open source. The first, entitled "Open Source 2007" by **Brad Wheeler** in the July/August issue of *Educause Review* sketches two possible scenarios for the future.² The second, "5 Challenges for Open Source" by **Jeffrey Young** in the September 24 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, notes that for the movement to be a success there must be

community, an agreement on how open is open, a commitment of funds up to 75 to 80 percent of the off the shelf price, a willingness to work with the commercial sector, and a willingness to dump what was at least working in favor of something that might work better.³ I would like to be optimistic that open source will be a success, but my experience as a largely ignored preacher of cooperative collection development doesn't give me much hope. While at **Columbia**, I was overjoyed when, after more than 170 years, **NYU** and **Columbia** agreed to allow each others students to freely enter each others libraries (stay tuned, mutual checkout privileges may come next). In Hong Kong, six out of eight university libraries recently agreed to relax access restrictions on undergraduates. So, while I would like to believe that there will be a rush for institutions to work together, I won't hold my breath much longer than 60 seconds or so.

"Open Access" is another wonderful idea. It begins with the suggestion that authors and other copyright holders will agree to share with the world access to their work by depositing an electronic copy on a publicly accessible Website forever.⁴ Since these idealists recognize that commercial publishers — albeit library-friendly ones — won't survive unless someone pays their bills, open access also means that the authors or their sponsors must pay fees before their research can be published and so libraries won't have to pay so much. This piece of genius requires one to ignore the possibility that once research universities finish paying the fees to these welfare publishers, their pockets may be empty. It also assumes that quality, not the availability of the needed subsidies, will dictate what gets published.

Another member of the current generation of opens is the "Open Archive" movement. An open archive is one "for which metadata is pub-

licly available (i.e., 'exposed') to researchers via a service provider. The 'open' part of this technical term refers to the architectural aspect of the open archives idea — the definition and promotion of machine interfaces which facilitate the availability of content from a variety of providers."⁵ This relative of open access is another wonderful idea and one I have championed myself. The only problem is it requires people to freely deposit their intellectual output in the electronic input box. This does not, unfortunately, seem to automatically happen. The "build it and they will come" theology doesn't seem to apply here too well. Perhaps, like the cathedrals of Europe that are under eternal construction waiting for funds to appear, this may be a work of centuries, not weeks or months. The open archive movement assumes a culture change. Researchers who want to share their findings have to worry about securing funding. Well-received articles in internationally recognized journals can be parlayed for needed grant funding, released time, or lower teaching loads. What are the rewards for depositing articles in open archives?

An examination of the open source, open access, and open archive movements causes one to question the meaning of the word "open." Open is supposed to mean "affording unobstructed entrance and exit; not shut or closed."⁶ But in these cases what is it that one has access to because the gate is open? If open source means universities are free to develop mutually beneficial software, but the costs rival those of commercial products, can that mean that too much time is spent on getting ready to do a good thing instead of doing the good thing? Twenty years ago libraries were involved in the community development of integrated library systems. We were supposed to be buying turnkey systems but we all made so many conflicting demands upon the commercial developers that

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use them. And if you must buy and sell titles like baseball cards, for goodness sake, give us a heads up. Give us a grace period like we used to get in the old days of print journals. And I hope the **Duke UP / Project Muse** situation is an exception and not a trend. Otherwise, we suffer a betrayal at the hands of those who promised us the online world. We all have enough to worry about with shrinking budgets, terrorists threatening the end of the world as we know it, profound obesity from eating too much fast food, global warming, and everything being made in China. By the time this comes to print, the election will be over, so I won't even go there. 🐸

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