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Interview with Michael Cooper

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Interview with Michael Cooper

President and Founder, BUSCA, Inc.

by Jack G. Montgomery (Editor, *ATG*) <jack.montgomery@wku.edu>

ATG: Michael, what exactly does the word *BUSCA* stand for?

MC: *BUSCA* means Search in several languages (Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese).

ATG: Can you tell us a little bit about the company's history and its overall philosophy?

MC: *BUSCA* was founded in 1997 with the intention of providing personalized focus to libraries seeking excellent fulfillment for conventional monographs, help with difficult titles, service for almost all formats from almost all sources. Increasingly we are providing video, DVD, etc.

ATG: What, if any, specialized training or education did you receive before getting into the book business?

MC: I have been in the book business continuously since 1979. Prior to that I worked with a literary publication project while enrolled in college.

ATG: Who do you see as primary customers of *BUSCA*? Are you organized to respond to a certain patron group?

MC: Primarily we work with college and research libraries. We seem well organized to respond to our customers because they tend to praise our service.

ATG: So far, what has been your experience in dealing with Libraries? Have there been any unexpected issues? What elements have been challenging?

MC: *BUSCA* has wonderful relationships with numerous libraries. We are grateful for them. Unexpected budget shortfalls this year for some of our clients have been a challenge to them and for us.

ATG: Can you tell us how pricing is structured for your services?

MC: Our pricing is structured to be competitive in the marketplace. *BUSCA* welcomes interested parties to contact us at info@buscainc.com for details.

ATG: Do you find it difficult to compete with large companies/vendors?

MC: I respect most of our competitors. Apparently we are all facing genuine bottom line financial concerns as are our customers. Big vendors do have their strengths, but they also have higher costs in their multi-layered organizational structures.

ATG: I've seen your Website and it looks great! Do you envision an on order interactive Website?

five or six times. He told us to regard ourselves as unpaid consultants. We don't have to come to a conclusion about what an ideal curriculum should be. He does. It was a stimulating exercise because he invited us to speculate on what an ideal curriculum ought to be, rather than to criticize what is.

ATG: Please tell us how you first learned about the Charleston Conference.

VN: I first heard about the **Charleston Conference** on the **Nation 2002** cruise. A publisher of scientific journals told us that it is the best conference in the world on these matters and he would not miss it. I then called **Teresa Stack** from the ship to see if she or someone else could attend, but on such short notice no one was able to. We arranged to de-brief him after the conference and he gave a fond description. We are going this November.

ATG: Victor, thank you so very much. And as Katina, whom you met at ALA mid-winter, would say, "See y'all in Charleston."

MC: Thanks! We are working on a Web-based office with interactive ordering features.

ATG: How many staff do you currently employ and how is *BUSCA* generally organized?

MC: *BUSCA* has averaged nine employees in the past few years. We also outsource some functions. *BUSCA* staff members tend to be cross-trained while still specializing in specific departments.

ATG: How do you balance your time between the publisher and the vendor aspects of your position?

MC: *BUSCA*'s publishing activities at this time are a modest part of our operation. Eventually we may need to develop greater resources to accommodate an enhanced publishing program. We can keep a balance.

ATG: I notice you publish a lot of regional histories. How did you get into that aspect of publishing? What themes are you going to pursue in the future?

MC: Yes, we started-out by publishing some regional history titles. Partly that is due to my own interest in that subject and partly due to the ease of working with local authors. *BUSCA*, though, has been moving into new subjects, while continuing to publish autobiographical, anthropological, and historical works. Expect to see some exciting titles relating to depth psychology, shamanism, and Kabbalistic teachings.

ATG: Tell us about *Devil Dogs & Jarheads*. Any new publications?

MC: In **Victor Pearn's** new book, *Devil Dogs & Jarheads* (0-9666196-3-3, Paper, \$14.95), the world of a U.S. Marine enlistee in 1969 comes to life in buzz cuts, reveille, drill sergeants, rifle ranges, and purple hearts. As *Southwest Book Views* (Spring 2003, Vol. 2 No. 2) noted, "The experiences shared in this collection are etched indelibly upon the heart of the writer and now the reader in words that the world can little afford to ignore. This is undeniably exquisite work." Look for a favorable book review later this year in *American Libraries*. Our next title release is due 9/30/03:

The Essence of a Universal Kabbalah—Dawn of a New Consciousness (Stoff, 0-9666196-5-X, Hardcover, Approx. 300 Pages, \$29.50). **Dr. Bernie S. Siegel**, author of *Love, Medicine, & Miracles* will have a front cover quote, "This book is a wonderful resource for all those who can open their minds and learn to accept the truth."

ATG: Do you see *BUSCA* taking a position in the whole e-books trade? Do you envision eBooks as part of your inventory?

MC: As a library reseller, we have not been doing e-book business. However, as a publisher, *BUSCA* will eventually offer some of its titles for sale in digital format

ATG: Where do you see *BUSCA* going within five years? What directions will it take?

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Lecture Series. One year we had magazine editors-in-chiefs such as **David Remnick** of the *New Yorker*, **Anna Wintour** of *Vogue*, and **Charlie Peters**, founding editor of the *Washington Monthly*. Another year we had people from every aspect of the magazine business with an editor-in-chief, copy editor, designer, and the publisher, a sort of oral textbook in magazine publishing. The lecture series is required of all students in the magazine concentration and is open to the public. Interestingly enough, more students take magazines as a concentration than any other. I think that they think that it is the best place to get training in narrative prose.

ATG: What do you think of the proposed changes in its Graduate School of Journalism?

VN: **Columbia** is undergoing a reconsideration of the journalism school. There is a taskforce of thirty-three people that the president named and I am one of them. We've met

Group Therapy

by **Rosann Bazirjian** (Assistant Dean for Technical & Access Services, University Libraries, The Pennsylvania State University, 507 Paterno Library, University Park, PA 16802-1812; Phone: 814-865-0404; Fax: 814-865-3665)
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GRIFE: Submitted Anonymously

We seem to be getting more and more journal titles mailed to us "free" because we have a subscription to another title by the publisher. Is this just a way of publishers "sneaking" a title into the collections? I am loathe to add these titles to our collections (though some of them are quite scholarly), because I am afraid that there will eventually be a charge for the subscription. If we add the title to our catalog, it will look like we subscribed to the title. My tendency is a) either to throw the issues away or b) route them to the library or departmental liaison for their input. But I would like other opinions from publishers, vendors, and librarians (why are publishers doing this? is the practice increasing or am I just off base?) How are other libraries handling this phenomenon?

RESPONSE: Frank Mapes (Vice President/General Manager, EBSCO Information Services Publisher Services/Publisher Relations)

I am not aware of this being a trend for publishers. It is possible that some of the consumer publishers, where the situation involves advertising, might do this type of thing to increase the circulation level and therefore increase advertising revenues. In regard to scholarly material, these types of publishers understand libraries and would be less likely to take an approach of providing a free subscription for one year and charge for it the next year. I can say that we have not seen this type of activity being done through EBSCO.

My suggestion should the library receive issues to unwanted material and are using a vendor, that they simply advise the vendor to contact the publisher and have him stop sending the issues. Any of the issues received should either be discarded or sent to the agent if they have a missing copy bank. A missing copy bank, if you are not aware, is a service provided by agents like EBSCO to inventory issues and supply these issues to help satisfy claims when publishers no longer have the issue. Some publishers extend their subscription term and, of course,

this does not satisfy the void as libraries archive and need the missed issue. Many libraries send their grace duplicates or just unwanted issues on to EBSCO to be stored in our missing copy bank so they can be used for other libraries that have a claim and the publisher is unable to provide the missed issue.

RESPONSE: Paul Canning (Director, Publication and Information Marketing, IEEE)

The IEEE has been introducing new journals, transactions and magazines at an important rate to keep pace with developments in science and technology. IEEE does not "sneak" new titles into collections. However, we do have a strong track record of introducing new journals, twenty-five new titles in the last seven years. This year, *IEEE Security and Privacy Magazine* was introduced after first appearing as a supplement to *IEEE Computer Magazine*. In 2004, *IEEE Distributed Systems Online*, offered with open access at no cost to subscribers.

Introducing a new journal is a costly venture, and as a not-for-profit society, IEEE must ensure that new journals make both scholarly and economic sense. Often editors perceive gaps in the current literature as part of the ongoing development of an existing journal. Journal supplements are a natural outgrowth of the process and are a smart first step before launching a new, independent journal from a variety of perspectives.

- **Authors:** Journal supplements are a means of introducing the journal concept to the community of potential authors. New areas of technology and science most often do not have a ready pool of suitable authors and the supplement is an efficient means of soliciting future papers for publication.

- **Readers:** The supplement allows IEEE to gauge reader feedback. Is the journal meeting the needs of its target readers? Is the technology adequately established that the subject is relevant and compelling to a core group of scholars? Would the possible new journal find interested readers from other areas of technology? By issuing a new journal prototype, IEEE learns how best to serve the new community of readers.
- **Librarians:** Is the new journal compelling from a librarian and collection development perspective? Is the material covered by existing, related titles? Can a technology librarian justify adding it to the collection?

The IEEE understands the quandary faced by library staff not only posed by cataloging the supplement but also the tentative nature of the venture. The IEEE understands that this may be new ground in supporting converging technologies and new methods of scholarly communication. IEEE endeavors to work in partnership with the library community in service of the scientists and engineers that we both serve.

RESPONSE: Robert Alan (Head of the Serials Department, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries)

I agree that "free" journal titles sent by publishers to gain new subscriptions are annoying and in most cases should not be added to the collection. At Penn State's University Park campus, the Serials Department receives and processes between 150,000-160,000 serial items per year. Of that total, an estimated 1,000-1,200 are unsolicited journal issues received in the mail from publishers. These "free" journal issues are not really free as the management of unsolicited journals requires a commitment of valuable staff time.

Penn State maintains bibliographic and serial control records in its SIRSI Unicorn system for unsolicited journal titles. At Penn State these records are called "tracking records" but many other libraries follow similar procedures and call the records "decision records." Staff members identify most of the unsolicited items at the time of check-in. If a title is not in Unicorn, check-in staff will check further to determine if the journal has possibly changed title. If check-in staff cannot resolve it, the title is referred to ordering staff as a problem. Ordering staff will review further to determine if the title is associated to an existing order, gift, exchange

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MC: BUSCA intends to further fortify its current range of activities. We like our independent corporate spirit while also acknowledging all the gracious support that has come our way. Hopefully, in five years we will be radiating lots of good energy.

ATG: *Where do you find your greatest sense of professional accomplishment?*

MC: In the expressions of appreciation from customers, employees, and suppliers.

ATG: *Finally, what do you do with your "copious free time?"*

MC: Connecting with family and friends, hiking near waterfalls and my own creative writing...

ATG: *Michael, thank you so much for your time. Is there anything else you'd like to add?*

MC: Please visit our new **BUSCA Book Outlet & Arts Store** in the heart of the Finger Lakes on Seneca Lake: 5930 Route 414; Hector, NY 14841; Telephone: 607-546-4247, located 25 miles west of Ithaca and 10 miles north of Watkins Glen. We are on the wine trail!