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ATG Interviews Georgios Papadopoulos

Founder and CEO, Atypon Systems, Inc.

by **Katina Strauch** (Editor, *Against the Grain*, 209 Richardson Ave., MSC 98, The Citadel, Charleston, SC 29409; Phone or Fax: 843-723-3536) <kstrauch@comcast.com>
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owns Atypon? What is the philosophy behind your technology?

GP: I started **Atypon** in 1996 with \$800 in my pocket and a few brilliant software engineers. We started by doing content conversion work; getting content into HTML for the brand new World Wide Web. While this was good work at the time, it did not stay interesting for long and, as the team grew, we sought out new challenges.

Over the first few years in operation, we worked with scholarly publishers and several things became clear. The first was that the technology needs of publishers were going to get increasingly advanced and interesting as the first phase of the Internet drew to a close. The next was that it was difficult to predict what all of these needs would be. And finally, publishers would soon want to take control of their own online businesses. The **Atypon** philosophy that emerged from this understanding is to create the most innovative and flexible technology that will give content experts (publishers) a virtually endless set of possibilities to manage and grow their online offerings.

ATG: What does Atypon mean? Is it Greek? Are you Greek? Tell us about yourself.

GP: **Atypon** is a Greek word meaning "atypical" but most people thought it meant "not in print" which I found suitable for a company focused on electronic publishing. I am from Greece and came to the US in 1985 on a **Fulbright Scholarship** and then did my doctorate in Computer Science at NYU. I have been at **Informix** and **WAIS** before founding **Atypon**.

ATG: Who are your customers? How do libraries make use of your service? Do they register?

GP: Our customers are all scholarly publishers, with the exception of **CrossRef**, which is a membership organization of publishers founded originally to be the linking backbone for the scholarly publishing community. Our publisher customers include **Blackwell Publishing**, **Annual Reviews**, the **University of California Press**, **Lawrence Erlbaum**, **Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press**, **IEEE**, and **Mary Ann Liebert Publishers**. Unlike intermediaries and other aggregators, we do not have a branded portal or other site. All of our publishers have their own sites and can participate in any other aggregation or content repository they want.

Librarians use the **Institutional Administration** interface supplied to them by our publisher customers to manage their version of the

site. They are offered the ability to upload library banners or logos, manage IP and contact addresses, manage subscriptions and generate **COUNTER** compliant usage reports.

Atypon is eager to work with librarians to find new ways that publishers can serve their needs and the needs of their patrons. Publishing is expanding and the publishers, librarians and users are getting in ever closer and more interesting relationships. Because we are focused on technology, we are in a unique position to facilitate innovations in the relationships between publishers and libraries.

We do not sell to libraries and are not in competition with publishers in any way. **Atypon** believes that publishers need to be in a direct relationship with their customers — whether librarians, researchers, or society members. Our technology enables publishers to extend and enhance services to their end users.

ATG: Let's talk about your competition. There are more and more of you. Is the market going to settle down or are we just in a state of flux because we don't have the right (profitable?) model yet?

GP: It is an interesting time in the e-publishing technology landscape. Publishers have several options. One is to build their online system themselves; this is a costly and difficult-to-manage solution. Another is to host their content with an intermediary, which will control most aspects of subscription sales, access, and delivery of their content; this option worked for many publishers during the confusing early days of the Web, but we are seeing more and more of them eager to take back the reins at this point. A third option is to select a technology platform that offers some administrative control but keeps at bay the headache of managing everything in-house. That is where **Atypon** comes in. **Atypon** offers a great solution for publishers who want to experiment with new models of access, different delivery formats, and advanced online marketing ideas to grow readership, services.

ATG: Do you work with just journals or with eBooks, etc., also? Who do you see as your market? Is it exclusively scholarly publishers? Is it the academic market?

GP: The **Atypon** software platform, **Literatum**, can handle eBooks, major reference works, and other content. Because of the flexibility of our technology, we are able to serve many types of e-publishing needs. The question for publishers is how to offer non-journal content to users in a way that makes sense online and with a business model that works for everyone. Being able to mix and match content will mean that publishers, librarians or even the users themselves can create any combination of content, cutting across the traditional lines of print.

We don't define our market or our users as academic or non-academic. Scholarly work is done in many different types of organizations. Our roots are firmly in the scholarly publishing arena where we enjoy interacting with publishers and libraries to hone our offerings for all of their users.

ATG: You have just signed agreements with the University of California Press and a couple of other publishers like Mary Ann Liebert. Why do publishers, after having made a large financial commitment to one company, move to another company to provide this service? Doesn't this end up costing us (the library market) more money?

GP: In general, publishers make a move from one technology partner to another for a combination of reasons, some of which are financial. There is often a large cost savings in moving to another technology platform. Publishers may make the move to gain better control of their e-publishing business or to offer a better set of options or features to their users. **Atypon** also offers publishers many services that will enable publishers to deliver content in a standard format to third parties, link more effectively, and be easier to find using Internet resources. This means that their content will reach wider audiences and serve more scholars. Indeed, our publishers are seeing significant increases in usage after moving to the **Atypon** platform. For more information, please see a release about this on our Website at <http://www.atypon.com/120103b.htm>.

Some platforms are experiencing technological or financial difficulties which result in inconsistent or broken service to libraries. Having solid and reliable companies in the market such as **Atypon** keeps a healthy competition alive. This forces companies to continue to make improvements and also drives down prices for all publishers which could benefit libraries as well.

ATG: What do you think is the best technology/interface/site that you have designed?

GP: We like to say that between the sites of our publishers and the **CrossRef** links that our technology enabled, librarians and researchers interact with our technology every day. The best single aspect of this technology that **Atypon** has designed is the **Literatum** e-publishing system that runs many sites, such as **Blackwell Synergy**, **Annual Reviews**, **Caliber**, and **LEA Online**. **Literatum** operates behind the scenes and is not apparent to libraries or their patrons. It offers users a very rich set of features and offers publishers advanced tools to manage their online offerings. Each of the publisher's Website interfaces was designed by the publishers themselves or a design firm that they used, with our help and recommendations. That means that,

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with very little effort, publishers can have their own look and feel.

A key feature of the **Literatum** platform is that it tracks every aspect of usage on a publisher's online content site. This gives publishers access to very detailed reports on usage of all kinds, from the search terms people enter and the links they click on, to trends in subject interest and usage behavior patterns. I think that this level of detail will ultimately help publishers and librarians shape ever increasingly useful online environments for scholarly researchers.

ATG: *What does the future hold for this type of business? The market seems so fluid, unstable, and volatile, how do you decide what area to pursue and which area not to pursue? For example, what are you doing with the DOI technology, OA, etc., the current "hot buttons?" Is this something you leave to your publisher clients to determine?*

GP: There will be a lot of evolution in the online content world from the perspective of the users, content providers, and technology. I think that the patterns and methods of usage will help to determine what the next stages are. We may see shifts to more usage-based pricing, a mixed subscription model or at least versatile packaging and re-packaging of content to suit these needs. As DOI registrations continue to grow and expand into non-journal content, article level research will change how users view content. I invite you to read an article authored by **Kristen Fisher of Atypon** and **Amy Brand from CrossRef** about this topic. <http://www.researchinformation.info/rispring03linking.html>

ATG: *Do you have an overall advisory board of some sort? Does it include librarians?*

GP: We are beginning to assemble an advisory board and are very keen on including librarians. We feel that librarians are crucial in bridging our understanding of how users are accessing and utilizing content. So far we have only been gathering anecdotal help from librarians, but we would very much like to formalize this input.

ATG: *What predictions can you make about the future? What will libraries be like in five or ten years?*

GP: The popular story right now is that libraries are going away. We may indeed find that the buildings can be put to different uses. Are librarians becoming irrelevant? No. We are seeing the emergence of the "new librarians." What are they doing? What librarians have always been doing: selecting, organizing and preserving content. But now technology is enabling them to better focus on a particular scholarly area with a particular purpose to serve a global community. An example of this is the upcoming **AnthroSource** site from the **American Anthropological Association** which will be an electronic portal to full text anthropological resources. And the **DART** project, an anthropology portal specifically targeted for education,

undertaken in a collaboration of **Columbia University (EPIC)** and the **London School of Economics** and funded by NSF and JISC/UK. We are going to increasingly see projects like this, where the definition of community served by librarians is redefined from being local to being a targeted group on a global scale.

The library as a place in which literary and artistic materials are organized in a manner that inspires research and excites the learner has to find a new home in cyberspace. The Internet can facilitate distribution. What it can't do all by itself is give users the feeling of possibility that comes from walking through a library. The potential for not only finding what you want, but also having serendipitous discoveries is yet to be replicated in an online environment. Social interaction and collaboration are not yet established in the digital libraries of the present. The possibilities for librarians are presently hard

to see, because the current publishing systems are isolated monoliths. We need layered systems with open standards for each layer, where each player—publisher, librarian and end-users—adds value and shapes his or her own layer.

Librarians need to push the publishers to open their platforms with standards that enable knowledge management, collaboration, and learning across those platforms. Then librarians will be better equipped to integrate various sources and shape the services and navigation of their collections; to seamlessly add local resources on top of the publishers' systems and to judiciously integrate freely available content. Technologists can help librarians open up the whole realm of possibilities.

I think that this is the role for librarians in the future, taking charge of the online world in which users seek for and find knowledge. In the end, it will be better for all involved.

From the Reference Desk

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Polar exploration is often associated with names like Shackleton, Scott, Amunsen, and Peary. But our fascination with the Polar Regions stretches back farther than these early twentieth century explorers. Attesting to this is a recent two-volume encyclopedia that chronicles the full history of these often, heroic ventures. Published by **ABC-CLIO Exploring Polar Frontiers: A Historical Encyclopedia** (2003, 1576074226, \$185) takes the reader from the sub arctic travels of the Pytheas in the fourth century BCE to Borge Ousland's first solo crossing of the Arctic Ocean in 2001. In addition to the numerous articles on individual explorers, there are geographical entries describing the physical characteristics of each location, as well as the history, and importance of their discovery. There are also entries discussing cartography and mapping, expedition goals, means of transport, commercial interests, competing territorial claims, and the contributions of indigenous peoples. Written by **William James Mills**, librarian of the **Scott Polar Research Institute**, **Exploring Polar Frontiers** also has a number of helpful features aiding users of the encyclopedia. A set of twenty maps is in-

cluded in the first volume helping the reader to locate places referred to in the text. Beside the alphabetical list of entries, there is a welcomed listing by category, as well as a chronological listing of articles. This last listing is particularly helpful in tracing the evolution of Arctic and Antarctic discovery. There is significant use of "see also" references focusing on related articles, and of course, bibliographies for each entry. In addition, there is a glossary, a cumulative bibliography and a general index. Both volumes are visually enhanced with black and white photos and illustrations.

Exploring Polar Frontiers: A Historical Encyclopedia provides over 500 well researched and fact filled articles that will appeal to anyone interested in polar exploration. Appropriate for reference where there is strong demand, this is one of those sets that will also be welcomed in circulating collections, especially in larger libraries. In either case, both public and academic libraries will want to consider it for their shelves.

Another title worthy of consideration for either reference or circulation is **Routledge's African Folklore: An Encyclopedia** (2004, 041593933X, \$175). Although African peoples consist of a diversity of ethnic groups, they "share significant historical and cultural experiences" as presented in this reference.

Editors **Philip M. Peek** and **Kwesi Yankah**, employ an expanded view of folklore not limited to ancient myths and traditions. They wisely include articles on folklore as reflected in urban and contemporary life, as well as in the newer media like film and television. And while verbal art forms and the spoken word

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