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## ATG Interviews Martha Sedgwick

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# ATG Interviews Martha Sedgwick

## Product Manager, ScholarlyStats, MPS Technologies

by Katina Strauch (Editor, *Against the Grain*) <kstrauch@comcast.net>

**ATG:** Tell us about ScholarlyStats? When did you launch the product? We understand that you have just released your first reports?

**MS:** ScholarlyStats customers received their first reports in January this year. Since then we have been providing updated usage reports on a monthly basis to our growing customer base.

Our launch at the ALA Conference in San Antonio followed a ten-month beta of the service where we worked with over 50 libraries across the world from New Zealand to New Mexico. We are delighted with the final service that has made the analysis of usage statistics across a large number of vendors possible for our users.

**ATG:** Where did the idea for ScholarlyStats come from?

**MS:** From information professionals themselves! Libraries have been impressed with the rich usage stats resource that they have access to from vendors, but the collection and analysis of these reports has been a real challenge for everyone.

Vendors deliver usage reports to libraries in a wide range of different formats. Some are available to download on the site, some need to be emailed by the vendor, some are available in .csv, others in .html or .txt formats. Even COUNTER compliant reports vary, sometimes significantly, between vendors making it very difficult to easily review statistics across different vendors.

We listened to librarians' complaints and frustration at conferences and over the listservs and thought: there must be a better way!

And the result is ScholarlyStats ([www.scholarlystats.com](http://www.scholarlystats.com)) — a service that takes away the administrative burden of the collection of usage data and standardization of reporting formats and delivers consolidated views of journal and database statistics through an easy to use Web portal.

We have found that ScholarlyStats has really helped libraries encourage all members of their staff to take more active use of these statistics.

**ATG:** Who owns ScholarlyStats? A company called MPS? What is the relation between MPS, ScholarlyStats, and Macmillan?

**MS:** Yes, that's right — ScholarlyStats has been developed and is provided by MPS Technologies. MPS provides a range of technology driven services to the publishing and library community. MPS is part of the Macmillan group of companies, but entirely independent from other parts of Macmillan.

**ATG:** What platforms do you collect usage reports from?



**MS:** We currently collect from 32 key vendors at the moment, and are adding new vendors all the time in response to customer demand. These 32 vendors cover usage statistics from over 14,000 publishers & societies, over 350 databases, and almost 60,000 journal titles.

**ATG:** What sort of customer base do you have? Are you working with public and special libraries or is your customer base largely academic?

**MS:** It is certainly true that the majority are academic customers, but we are also working with government, corporate, charity and public libraries to provide ScholarlyStats. The customer base is growing rapidly and within the first few months we have customers in Asia, Europe and North America.

**ATG:** Explain your working relationship with Project COUNTER? Are you working with others besides Project COUNTER?

**MS:** At MPS, one of our Directors is on the COUNTER executive committee. It is very important for ScholarlyStats that we keep up to date with the latest developments within COUNTER, and we are certainly in a very good position to pass on feedback and recommendations to COUNTER to help with the development of the code.

We embrace standards and would like to see additional standards developed in this area. SUSHI extends the usefulness of the work COUNTER has done by allowing COUNTER reports to be delivered through an automated process, and we welcome this initiative. Once SUSHI has become widely adopted, we intend to use it to further automate our processes, and pass the associated cost-savings on to our customers. The speed

of uptake will become clearer over time, but to be useful it needs to reach critical mass.

In the meantime we are looking at how we can use SUSHI to transfer usage information for our customers into their Electronic Resource Management systems and databases. We recently announced partnerships with Thomson Scientific who we are working with to integrate data into their Journal Use Reports, and Swets who we are working to integrate data into their forthcoming Data Swets Connect. We plan on shortly being able to announce new integration partnerships with some of the leading ERMs — so watch this space!!

**ATG:** Are you collecting statistics largely on journal use or are you also collecting statistics regarding eBook use?

**MS:** ScholarlyStats currently provides usage statistics for both journal and database use.

One of the key motivators behind developing ScholarlyStats was to provide usage reports that consolidated data from a number of different vendors into a single report. The current difficulty with eBook usage reports is that there is a large amount of variation in how these are reported on (from stats broken out by page, chapter, book, etc.) — making it difficult to compare. This is effectively the situation libraries were in with journals before the COUNTER Code of Practice was widely adopted.

In March this year COUNTER released a code of practice for eBooks, and we are hoping that vendors will begin to pick this up as a mode of reporting. As soon as vendors make eBook COUNTER reports available, ScholarlyStats will certainly be collecting and consolidating these statistics too!

**ATG:** What are your plans for future enhancements to the product?

**MS:** We are continually working with our users to understand their requirements and how we can develop our service for them. We have already added new functionality and reports to ScholarlyStats and have an active user-community who are making suggestions for new features. Top of the list at the moment is to add some graphing functionality to accompany our reports.

**ATG:** You are on the program for the upcoming 2006 Charleston Conference, November 8-11. What are you speaking about?

**MS:** It will be the first time I have spoken at the Charleston Conference and I am very excited!

I feel that there are a few libraries doing quite advanced stuff in the area of analysis and understanding of usage statistics, but many that don't know quite where to begin. I want to share

*continued on page 36*

# ATG Interviews Patrick Alexander

Vice President and Publishing Director, North America,  
De Gruyter/Mouton-De Gruyter, <palexander@degruyterny.com>

by Katina Strauch (Editor, *Against the Grain*) <kstrauch@comcast.net>

**ATG:** *The scholarly publishing house of Walter de Gruyter has for decades been synonymous with superior academic and scientific literature. Tell us about yourself and how you came to be in charge at Walter de Gruyter.*

**PA:** My publishing career started in the early '80s when I was freelance editing and working on professors' books as a graduate student. Laying aside — tossing aside, really — plans to pursue Ph.D. studies, I found in editing a natural balm for my obsessive-compulsive personality and started a career in publishing. For about fifteen years I served first as an academic editor and then as editorial director for **Hendrickson Publishers**, an academic/trade house specializing in religious studies. Along the way I made many friends (and a few enemies) in the publishing industry both here and abroad. I was always intrigued by the different kinds of publishing models and markets. Consequently, when the chance came to join **Brill Academic Publishers** as the publishing director in North America (Boston), I seized it. This was my first foray into publishing almost exclusively for libraries and institutions. After four and a half years with **Brill**, a new opportunity arose, this time with **De Gruyter/Mouton-De Gruyter**, where I've been since January of 2005.

**ATG:** *Eckart Scheffler was a long-time friend and colleague. In fact ATG interviewed him in both 1996 and 2005. Did you work with him before taking over De Gruyter?*

## Interview Martha Sedgwick from page 34

ideas about how some libraries are using usage statistics in their decision making, and to discuss practical ways that usage reports can be analyzed to help inform decision making within libraries, whether this is regarding budgets, identifying training issues or access difficulties.

**ATG:** *What do you like to do in your spare time?*

**MS:** I love going to the movies. I recently saw *Capote* which I thought was great! I rushed out to buy the book, *In Cold Blood*, straight away — it's certainly a page turner and I'm getting through it pretty quick.

Next up on my reading list is *The Sea* by **John Banville** which won the **Man Booker** prize last year — I'm looking forward to getting my teeth into that one!

For more information on **ScholarlyStats**, visit [www.scholarlystats.com](http://www.scholarlystats.com). 

**PA:** Of those many friends and colleagues I have made along the way, **Eckart Scheffler** is one. Besides seeing him at the odd conference and commiserating about work from time to time, during my first year at **Brill** I collaborated with **Eckart** to create a partnership between **Brill** and **De Gruyter/Mouton-De Gruyter** to share a North American accounts manager, a partnership that lasted until the end of 2005. We naturally stayed in regular touch after that, and joined forces at industry events occasionally. When **Eckart** retired in 2005 I was invited to fill his rather large shoes.

**ATG:** *De Gruyter publishes more than 250 new books, and over 60 academic journals each year. You also publish electronic media. Tell us about your publishing plans current and future.*

**PA:** Like most European publishers, **De Gruyter/Mouton-De Gruyter** recognizes that English is the language of choice in academia. Scholars and librarians around the world — whether in Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Namibia, Nicaragua, or Venezuela — realize that English, at least for the time being, is used by the largest number of researchers. In an effort to extend its international presence, **De Gruyter** determined to expand its presence in North America and to publish more in English. We will especially concentrate on giving broader marketing and exposure to its exceptional linguistics imprint, **Mouton-De Gruyter**. As far as my publishing plans, one of my priorities is to create new English-language print and digital content, especially in the humanities, and particularly in religious studies, for this worldwide marketplace. I am currently developing new journals, for example the *Journal of World Christianity* (2007), and books, and reference products. Future plans must recognize the shrinking demand for academic monographs and the growing call for content that serves multiple purposes, whether book, article, online, on-demand, downloadable, etc.

**ATG:** *Who owns de Gruyter?*

**PA:** **De Gruyter/Mouton-De Gruyter** is a privately owned, Berlin-based company.

**ATG:** *Who do you see as your competitors? Do you plan to continue to publish in print? What are your plans for electronic publications in the future?*

**PA:** Like most institutionally focused publishers, the number of our competitors is not as much an issue as the narrow little strip of ground we all occupy. Among our chief competitors I include **Brill**, **Oxford**, **Cambridge**, **Brepols**, **Peeters**, and quite a few American university presses, including the **University of Chicago**, **University of California**, **Columbia**, the **University of North Carolina**, and **Harvard**. My

thoughts about print? While I do not foresee print publishing disappearing entirely, I do think we will experience a shift — particularly among academic publishers — from print-runs of several hundred to more instances of on-demand printing. As the technology and quality of on-demand printing improve, its advantages will soon outweigh the benefits of even small print runs in the hundreds. Superpowers like **Google** and **Amazon** will almost certainly play a role in distributing on-demand volumes, as resources like **Amazon's Search Inside the Book** and **Google Book Search** morph into on-demand services. As far as plans for electronic publishing, we can only try to keep pace with the mercurial changes in end-user habits, the rising cry for 24x7 remote access, and the ever-changing delivery options. Fortunately, **De Gruyter/Mouton-De Gruyter** has in its backlist more than one hundred and fifty years' worth of content which can be digitally repurposed.

**ATG:** *Is the print book still viable in today's library market? How about the reference book or encyclopedia?*

**PA:** When it comes to the "print book" I sometimes feel like a manuscript illuminator in 1550, especially given the realities of academic publishing, the budgetary and space demands on libraries, and the growing options to deliver content. Books will always be around, but I suspect the combination of on-demand printing technology and the potential to deliver a book (or eBook) via the Internet to a handheld or to someone's computer will only further erode monograph sales. At the same time, the potential for electronic delivery and for on-demand editions means that getting the content to the end user can be easier rather than more difficult. The opportunity to reduce returns because of on-demand printing, for example, should put a gleam in every publisher's eye. Reference works must first and foremost be conceived as platforms for delivering online content; a "book" will be but one delivery option. We saw this clearly in our *Atlas of North American English*, by noted **University of Pennsylvania** linguist **William Labov**, **Sharon Ash**, and **Charles Boberg**. Users respond to multipurposed content in ways they could never respond to a one-dimensional book.

**ATG:** *Care to make some predictions about the future of scholarly publishing and communication?*

**PA:** Scholarly publishing faces obstacles and opportunities that differ from those of trade publishing. And within scholarly publishing STM and humanities publishers face different challenges. Pressures like Open Access, institutional repositories, shrinking library budgets, and ease of worldwide com-

*continued on page 38*