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ATG Interviews Buzzy Basch

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one of competing interests; students began to question the value of **ENGnetBASE** in lieu of what they considered more important resources. Their final recommendation was that librarians should figure out a way to get **ENGnetBASE** to substantially reduce their subscription cost if we are never going to own the material.

In some ways **ENGnetBASE** was a victim of the newfound knowledge the students gained during this evaluation process. Previously, I repeatedly heard from those I worked with that they wanted the library to convert our print material into electronic when possible. Now I hear from my more vocal users that we should prioritize what we convert to electronic from print and concentrate on purchasing more software-related resources that blend software and technology, material not traditionally purchased by libraries. The truth of the matter is that prior to evaluating **ENGnetBASE**, neither my patrons nor I seriously considered the appropriateness of the library purchasing electronic content that was more for manipulation purposes than content retrieval.

However, I have recently become a new convert, and agree with those who see the purchase of blended software as a legitimate

expense that should be covered by information resource budgets. Currently, I am working on a project with a colleague to coordinate the purchase of a campus site license for **ChemOffice Ultra**. **ChemOffice Ultra** includes **ChemDraw**, **Chem3D**, **BioDraw**, high level applications such as **E-Notebook**, **Inventory**, and **BioAssay**, and the databases **ChemACX**, **ChemINDEX & NCI**, and **Ashgate Drugs 2.1**. In this instance our library paid for a site license for **ChemOffice Ultra** for one year, with the understanding that we would use the year to collect usage statistics by colleges. Our expectation is that once the colleges see the usage numbers and cost savings of a campus site license they will be on board. Researchers and faculty often buy software directly from vendors using their grant funds and doing so can sometimes bypass their campus purchasing or procurement departments. Therefore campuses do not always have an accurate picture of the amount of money they are collectively spending on subject specific software. Typically, an accurate financial picture for the whole campus is only available from the vendor, as we discovered at my university.

Of course, deciding to aggressively pursue these types of products has considerable implications on libraries' information resource budgets as well as many of the current scholarly communication issues. Yet, I have noticed that students and faculty are a bit more ac-

commodating with pricing models for subject specific software packages that favor access over ownership. Why is that? Some say it is because these types of products add academic value and others point to the fact that students become more marketable by using the same subject specific software packages they will be using when they enter the workforce in their respective careers. One associate dean said having campus-wide access to certain subject specific software packages is an asset when trying to recruit new students.

It may be unfair to judge a book by its cover, but when it comes to format preferences for engineering reference material the jury is still out at the **University of Arizona**. When stacked side by side with other resources, the current pricing models are not enticing. Issues around the benefits of the portability of the information also received a lackluster reception. I will never be able to convince my users of the benefits of **ENGnetBASE** until we get a budget that can accommodate all of their other subject specific software requirements, and this may be a good thing. Now when I send out correspondence designed to solicit information on resources needed, I receive well thought-out replies rather than utopian statements. Engaging in intellectual exchange paves the path to mutual understanding and informed decision-making. 🐼

ATG Interviews Buzzy Basch

President, Basch Subscriptions

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

ATG: Buzzy, congratulations! But, why did you sell? And what is Prenax?

BB: **Prenax** is a Swedish-owned subscription service located in Stockholm with offices located in Stockholm, London, Paris, New York, San Francisco and now Concord, New Hampshire. For the past ten plus years their focus has been business-to-business subscription services. My reaching an agreement with them was based on a number of factors. First of all they are financially sound, their corporate and country culture give high priority to people, both employees and customers, a personal high priority for me and at **Basch Subscriptions**. They want to be more involved in the library community which makes **Basch** a natural fit. Also, my recognition should something unplanned happen to me, I wanted to insure my very loyal staff continued to have jobs.

ATG: Is the sale final? When was it final or when will it be final?

BB: Yes. The sale was finalized March 21st.

ATG: How many library clients does Prenax have? How about Basch's clients? Are they largely medical and corporate? Is this a good fit with Prenax?



BB: The **Prenax Group** is a global business-to-business subscription management company headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden. Founded in 1991, **Prenax** maintains operations in Sweden, the United States (New York, Boston, San Francisco), the United Kingdom, and France. Their acquisition of **Basch Subscriptions** will allow two successful businesses to grow into serious players in the

subscription business. I see in the international span and the size of the **Prenax Group**, opportunities to broaden and strengthen service options for our customers. The commonality of focus and service orientation were key to the decision to join. Both companies excel in providing premier service. **Prenax** and **Basch Subscriptions** have both been recognized for service excellence and each company is blessed with talented and motivated teams and a loyal customer base. State-of-the-art Customer Service will remain the premier focus for both operations.

ATG: What will you be doing? What will change at Basch Subscriptions? Will the name change?

BB: The name will not change. We plan on my running **Basch** as a separate division of **Prenax**. I am the President, **Judy McQueen** is Vice President, and **Mats Edlund**, **Prenax** CEO is director. **Mats** is a comfortable savvy young man with a sound understanding of publishing, library needs and issues, as well as technology. I will be on the **Prenax** board of directors. All of this was a significant factor in the acquisition decision.

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ATG Interviews Andrew Hutchings

CEO, Blackwell Book Services

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

ATG: Congratulations! We understand that Julian Blackwell has just appointed you CEO of Blackwell Book Services. You have been with Blackwell for twenty years. Can you tell us what different positions you have held at Blackwell's over that time period?

AH: I started work for the Blackwell organization in 1987 as a trainee Computer Programmer. Since then I have worked in IT, Product Development, Project Management and Distribution. Over the last 2 years I have been the Managing Director of Blackwell Book Services in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. I spent three years based in Lake Oswego, Oregon during the late 1990s leading the integration of the UK and US business units.

ATG: After years of very little if any turnover at BBS, we have noticed a high degree of turnover in the past five or so years. Why do you think this is?

AH: During the last decade the entire Library community has undergone some dramatic changes. Blackwell as part of the library community has not been immune to changes — in both our services and staff. I am very happy to be leading a company that has a great mix of long term employees, with such knowledge of the community we serve, and newer employees who bring valuable experience gained outside of Blackwell.

ATG: What happened to Susan Peterson? She was only CEO for six months?

AH: Susan led the US business through a transition period within Blackwell. We thank Susan for her contribution in moving Blackwell forward. As we continued to move forward and assess our business, it was decided that Blackwell Book Services needed a CEO coordinating strategy at a global level.

ATG: I understand that Celia Wagner is back at BBS after a brief hiatus. Can you tell us what Celia will be doing?

AH: Celia Wagner is leading the New Titles, Approvals and Acquisitions teams



within Blackwell. Celia is also spearheading the introduction of an exciting group of new services and features we will be introducing in the coming year.

ATG: What are your plans for BBS over the next five years?

AH: With the very rapid changes to how information is accessed, it is creating significant new challenges for libraries and it is Blackwell's job to deliver solutions that help Libraries overcome these challenges. In discussions with the Blackwell Board Members, my goal and mission is to manage this transition and ensure that Blackwell is providing the services Libraries need now and in the future. Our board backs Blackwell Book Services 100% and has made substantial funds available to me in support of this goal.

ATG: You have been based in England, though you have lived in the US for many years also. Where will you put your belongings these days?

AH: My home is 20 miles outside Oxford, in the Cotswolds. I live there with my wife and

two teenage daughters. I will be splitting my time between the UK and the US.

ATG: BBS just bought a Dutch bookseller a month or so ago. Does this mean you plan to expand? How will this affect your European sales team and library customers in that part of the world?

AH: The purchase of Houtschild International Booksellers will help us offer a more comprehensive range of books to libraries, everywhere. The financial pressures that all libraries are facing have led to an increased focus on workflow simplification. This acquisition will have many benefits for all Blackwell customers and we are very excited to have announced such an acquisition.

ATG: Can you talk about your partnership with ebrary and the ECHO product? Are eBooks going to go anywhere?

AH: The ECHO product, and our ebrary partnership, is a key strategic initiative for Blackwell. Blackwell ECHO is a hosting and distribution platform for eContent. It was built using the ebrary technology and integrates with Blackwell Collection Manager, providing an efficient and familiar way to simultaneously discover and order both print and electronic materials. eBooks will be a very significant part of both libraries and Blackwell's future. Blackwell is working on a number of initiatives that will make the collecting of eBooks a much simpler process in the future.

ATG: Ingram has entered the academic bookselling space with a high profile. Can you comment on them as a competitor?

AH: Ingram and Blackwell have enjoyed a positive relationship over many years. I do not expect this will change following their acquisition of Coutts. Competition within the library supply industry is good for libraries. It ensures that all the library supply companies are working hard to provide a quality service at a good price. 🌱

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ATG: You are a pretty independent person. Is this going to work for you? How long do you see it lasting? Do you have an exit strategy?

BB: My plan is to continue to move Basch forward for years to come. When asked what I plan on doing in my retirement, I tell them this is retirement. We should all be so fortunate to find something we enjoy doing with our time. Basically, this all should work for Prenax, Basch employees, and the library community. I plan to work at making it work

ATG: What's going to happen to the Reference Shelf? Is that part of the sale?

BB: The Reference Shelf is part of Basch Subscriptions and was part of the sale.

ATG: Where can we see you next? In Charleston?

BB: Judy and I are on our way to the Fiesole Retreat in Hong Kong in April along with many other conferences in the interim. Of course, we will be in Charleston in November.

ATG: Thanks, Buzzy. Good luck and have a great trip! 🌱

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and Circulation can have the organizational meetings they need. There are also times when the flu bug hits and we need everyone on the staff filling in the blanks to get the job done or when a crisis bears down, such as the recent tornado, to cover all of the extra bases needed in the recovery processes. We are all ready, willing and able to help in this venture and the patrons benefit from our extra experience and expertise. Coping is our best skill and finding the answers our best product. What better combination? Have you thought about this before? It is something to think about! 🌱