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ATG Interviews Jonathan Dahl

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ATG: First off, what's a "staff director"?

JD: It's society-speak for a vice-president, I think. It was my job title when I first came to the IEEE 18 years ago, and it's still my title now. My career hasn't advanced very much in 18 years.

ATG: Why does a scholarly society need a sales & marketing department?

JD: The IEEE is not a "business" exactly but we need to conduct ourselves in a business-like way. Our revenue was about \$350 million last year, which makes us tiny indeed next to the major STM commercial publishers, but big in the society world. About half of our revenue comes from our publishing business, which is the main activity my department is responsible for, but we also have a large conference business (we conduct over 600 conferences around the world each year) and, of course, we are a membership organization.

ATG: Anything else?

JD: Yes, we also develop technical standards, an activity that is fairly unknown in the STM publishing world, but carries a big stick if you are a technology company. Standards like Wi-fi and WiMax — and hundreds of others — are based on IEEE standards.

ATG: The IEEE was founded in 1884 as the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, yes?

JD: Yes, which means our 125th anniversary is coming up in 2009. We are planning some major events that I hope ATG and its readers can participate in.

But as you say, the Institute was formed in 1884 — just in time for an exhibition in Philadelphia of a new technology called electricity. With distinguished European scientists and inventors coming to America, which was still a new country, a country thought of as primitive by Old World Europe, four men (two of whom were Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell) formed an "institute" to receive them. Although this was the first time that an international technology exhibition was ever held in the US, Congress had appropriated only \$7,500 to host it. Even then, that wasn't much. So they had to do something more, and the AIEE was the result.

ATG: And in 1912 the Institute of Radio Engineers was formed, eventually merging with the AIEE?

JD: That's an interesting story too. One month prior to the IRE's formation, on the night of April 12, 1912, one of history's worst maritime disasters occurred. On its maiden voyage, as we all know, the great ocean liner "Titanic" hit an iceberg with over 2,200 people aboard, and began to sink rapidly. What most of us don't know is this: the ship's wireless operator started to send out distress signals, which — although this technology was not

yet widely used, and although it was late at night — a few other ships were able to pick up. They relayed the message to the American mainland, and rescue ships were launched. The fact that over 700 people were saved that night was due completely to radio technology. Over the next days the entire world became engrossed in the drama of tragedy and survival that night. Within months governments around the world began to mandate the appointment of radio operators aboard all ships at sea — and radio and its operators became indispensable to world commerce.

So these two organizations joined to form what we now know as the IEEE in 1963. A pretty dramatic beginning!

ATG: What is your niche compared to, say, ACM? Are there other or competing societies? Do societies compete?

JD: Yes and no, but mostly no, societies don't compete. We see other scientific societies as our sisters and brothers, operating with a similar purpose. The IEEE is legally a 501(c)(3) organization, which essentially means we are run for the benefit of humanity. We don't exist to make money, we even don't exist for our own members' benefit, or for Americans, but for humanity itself. Most societies are run for similar reasons. So we mostly feel a kinship with other societies, not a sense of competition, although we occasionally do compete to publish a journal, say, or a conference. But much more often we co-publish a journal, or co-sponsor a conference, so scientific societies are more often "cooperators" than competitors.

ATG: So what about ACM?

JD: That's probably the closest society "co-opetition" in our space we could identify. ACM is a distinguished society. We publish two important journals together, and co-sponsor many conferences, but we also compete for papers, conferences and members. There is roughly a 20% overlap between ACM and the IEEE Computer Society memberships. In

my perhaps amateurish way of describing our niches, the IEEE publishes more toward the hardware side of computer science; the ACM represents more of the software side. But that's not always strictly true either. Have I cleared that up for you?

ATG: No, but let's move on. Why should we, your customers, care about whether a society or a commercial publisher publishes a journal?

JD: Ah, my favorite topic! If you look at all the standard quality indices, like the *Journal Citation Report*, journals published by societies usually rank significantly higher than journals published by commercial publishers, at least in our space. I don't hear that being remarked on as much as it should be. What we are also finding out is that some of the less-standard indicators, like the generation of important new patents, strongly show the dominant influence of society journals.

Let me give you an example, and we're very proud of this: Last year, in 2006, there were over 250,000 patents approved in the U.S. for the top 25 patent companies — companies like IBM, Hitachi, Samsung, HP, Sony, Intel, etc... That's not just their patents in technology, its all patents — chemistry patents, nano patents, mousetrap patents, all patents. Of these 250,000 patents, 38% of them were based on an IEEE journal article. That's a phenomenal result! In second place, with 9% of patents, was Elsevier Science. Virtually all the other patents by these top 25 patent companies were based on papers published by scientific societies — the American Institute of Physics, the American Chemical Society, the American Vacuum Society, and so on.

So you can make a strong case that the intellectual property published by the scientific societies is driving R&D discovery and, ultimately, the economy itself. Moreover, if you look at the big commercial STM publishers, many of the journals they publish are on behalf of scientific societies that are too small to publish themselves.

So that's why you should care if you're subscribing to a society journal or a commercial journal. University libraries can and should be discriminating customers. And I won't even begin to talk about price!

ATG: So what are the hot topics in technology?

JD: A good way to find out is to get your hands on the March/April issue of MIT's "Technology Review" magazine each year. In this issue they talk about ten new emerging technologies to watch — medicine, nanotechnology, software, energy, biotechnology, telecommunications, and so on. Very interesting, bleeding-edge stuff that these ten scientists and engineers are working on.

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ATG Interviews Dr. Mehdi Khosrow-Pour

President and Publisher, IGI-Global

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

Now what I like to do, as a marketing guy, is to research how many of these ten individuals have published papers in **IEEE** journals or given talks at **IEEE** conferences. Always, it's most of them — I've been doing this for five or so years now — and sometimes it's all of them. Then we talk about this at customer breakfast meetings at library and trade shows we go to. It's a way of dramatically illustrating how, just as in the case of patents, **IEEE** research is changing the world.

So to step back a little, when it began **IEEE** was devoted to electrical engineering. Then it was joined by radio engineering. And now in the 21st Century we've gone way beyond these disciplines to influencing all of technology itself, even medicine. In fact, a few years ago, in 2003, an **IEEE** member named **Paul Lauterbur** won the **Nobel Prize in Medicine** for inventing the **MRI machine**.

ATG: What should librarians know about **IEEE**?

JD: We hire them! We have a team of four Client Service Managers that literally travel the world — almost 60% of our business is outside North America — to train users on **IEEE** products, to tell them about the latest developments, and generally to be good ambassadors for the **IEEE**. Each one of these individuals, and to a person they are outstanding, also a librarian. Now they are working inside the biggest technology corporations, and the finest universities, in the US, Germany, Italy, China, Japan, India, Korea — you name the country, or the company, or the university, and they've been there.

In fact, I'll conclude with a great story about one of our librarian/CSMs. Her name is **Rachel Berrington** and she was at the **Jet Propulsion Lab** at **Caltech** doing a training session there a few years ago. **Rachel**'s a great person and so are the people at **JPL**. This training session happened to occur during the final weeks before they were shipping the **Mars Rover** out for launch. They had created a gold disc they were all going to sign and bolt onto the **Rover**. Since **Rachel** was there and they liked her and enjoyed the session, they asked her if she wanted to sign the disc too. She said, of course, yes, and she did. So **Rachel**'s signature is on **Rover** on Mars. Pretty cool! Not many can say that.

ATG: Finally, tell us about yourself. Family? Hobbies?

JD: I'm not an engineer, although everybody asks me that. My degree was in literature and philosophy, so you can see I've put it to good use. I have a publishing background, having worked for companies like **McGraw-Hill**, **Prentice-Hall** (remember **Prentice-Hall**?), **Pergamon** (remember **Pergamon**?) and others. I'm an old guy but I have two young kids, 11 and 14, so I'm trying to hang around to see how they turn out. I have a trophy wife (I hope she's reading this!) and I like music a lot. I now have 2,467 songs, including symphonies, on my **iPod**, and I'm trying to figure out what order to listen to them in. 🐼

ATG: Tell us about yourself. You were a faculty member at Penn State University for over twenty years, I believe. Tell us about your name. Where are you from originally?

MK: I was born in 1951 in a small town up in the Northern part of Iran called Langrood (translation: along the river) and I am one of 11 children in my family. My dad was a shopkeeper and could not afford to pay for my schooling, so at age 13, I quit high school and went to work to support the family financially. I worked from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. six days a week and also managed to attend the local night school in order to receive my high school diploma. After serving two years in the **Iranian Army**, I came to the States in 1973 as a student where I lived in Washington, D.C. for a short time and then moved to Florida where I lived for the next nine years. During my educational career, I managed to obtain a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from the **University of Miami**, an M.B.A from **Florida Institute of Technology**, a Master in Computer Information Systems from **University of Miami**, and a Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) from **Nova Southeastern University (NSU)** with dissertation emphasis on Management Information Systems. Throughout my college years, I worked many odd jobs, such as waiting tables, driving a taxi, serving as a security guard, tutoring and computer programming to pay for my education. Upon graduation from **NSU**, I taught as an adjunct faculty member for the **Florida International University** and **Broward County Community College**, and joined the faculty of the **School of Business Administration** at **Penn State Harrisburg** in 1982 as an Assistant Professor. There I taught undergraduate and graduate courses in Information Systems for the next 18 years and also chaired the **Information Systems Program** during most of those years. In 2000, after 20 years of teaching, I left my tenured faculty position at **Penn State** to run **IGI Global** on a full-time basis. I had a very productive and rewarding career during my years in academia and was able to be very active in many research circles. Through my research, I authored/edited more than 30 scholarly books and journals, over 50 research articles, and chaired many professional conferences and edited their proceedings. During the same time, particularly during the past seven years, I have been able to learn tremendously through my leadership

of an innovative publishing house currently playing a major role in changing the landscape of the publishing industry.

ATG: When and why did you start **IGI-Global**?

MK: While I was focusing much of my time during my tenure at **Penn State** on teaching and research, I also had a tremendous desire to become involved

in the practical business side of my training. Utilizing my eastern and western values of hard work, determination and commitment, combined with intelligence (my equation for succeeding in anything in life is: Success = Hard Work + Determination + Commitment + Intelligence), in 1988 the same year that I became a U.S citizen, I started **IGI Global** (formerly "**Idea Group Inc**") in the **Commonwealth of Pennsylvania** with less than \$5,000 of my own savings. As a scholarly academic publisher of books, journals, reference publications, case studies, and conference proceedings in the areas related to the utilization and management of information technology resources, I aimed for the company to uncover concept-driven publications not yet produced by large STM (Scientific, Technical, and Medical) publishers whose investments at the time weighed heavily on hardware technologies and the technical side of computer science. During the next twenty years, **IGI Global** managed to publish vast volumes of research and innovations related to issues revolving around the applied side of technology, as well as organizational, managerial, and societal aspects of information technologies in modern organizations worldwide. The primary mission of the company from conception was to expand the body of research in all academic programs, tagging information science as an interdisciplinary field. I always believed that information technology is not the domain of computer science or accounting fields, rather it is the domain of all academic disciplines including education, social science, and humanities, as well as business, engineering, and natural science programs.

With this rooted initiative, it has been the ongoing business motto of **IGI Global** to further this endeavor and base this objective to expand research on "Highest Quality," "Excellent Service," and "Positive Image." Every employee of **IGI Global** has pledged to these commitments and a plaque indicating their commitment sits on each employee's desk.

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