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ATG Interviews Marcia Bartusiak

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international flags have been added recently. What is the significance of this? Will this help bring more foreign language titles to the U.S. market? Where are your international offices and where will BookSurge offices be opening in the next year or so?

BOOKSURGE: BookSurge has a significant international effort in progress. We now handle over 25 languages. We have over 200 Spanish language publishers. We have a partnership arrangement and mirrored facilities in the U.K., Spain, Canada, Australia, Netherlands, and our headquarters here in the U.S. so our flags have increased on our letterhead and outside on our building on our Charleston facility. The significance of these flags is that a publisher or an author can be assured that the same high quality of print for their works is delivered to end customers in the U.K., in Europe, on the Iberian peninsula, in Australia and New Zealand, satisfied within 48 hours and shipped locally as quickly and as easily as a book order placed here in Chicago, South Carolina, New York, or L.A.

BookSurge expects to open offices in Singapore and Japan in 2004.

ATG: I heard that good things were mentioned about BookSurge at the recent "Future of the Book" Conference in Cairns Australia, and I saw in the press that author Paul Evans, who has published with BookSurge, received an IPPY award for his work *an end* at the 2003 Book Expo. Now the Frankfurt Book Fair and other events are coming up. Will we see increased visibility from BookSurge?

The Frankfurt Book Fair is the premiere book event in the world of publishing. This year we had our first booth there. I think we had about 50 appointments with international publishers to explain our products and to increase the number of titles within our global distribution system. At the Frankfurt Book Fair we're supported by all of our organizations, so not only will there be a contingency from Charleston but from our partner relationships from BookSurge in Spain, the U.K., and the Netherlands. We were there in force to bring our services to the world of publishing through this historic event. We led two educational seminars at the Frankfurt Fair on global, inventory-free distribution and we held an educational seminar at ALA Midwinter in San Diego on a Sunday afternoon.

To promote our Spanish titles, we attended the Guadelajara Book Fair and will continue to participate globally and are planning more events now for 2004.

ATG: You have come a very long way in a very short time since May 2000. Any plans for staff expansion? Like many young Internet companies, BookSurge relies on venture capital. Since you are privately held, who are your investors? How much money did you raise to get started? Do you plan to sell or go public in the near future?

BOOKSURGE: BookSurge is internally funded. Our growth has been due to the company's success in creating an ongoing revenue stream. We are profitable because we live within our means. Because of the increase in our business to business market and addition of new products and services, we are increasing our B2B Sales operations.

The company is growing quickly because it is well managed and we have no loss leading products. In the world of global business, our type of company is often attractive to larger conglomerates but our mission from day to day is always to provide affordable cutting edge services to authors and publishers wherever we can and so that's our mission and we are sticking to it.

ATG: Thank you.

ATG Interviews Marcia Bartusiak

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by Katina Strauch (Editor, *Against the Grain*; Phone & Fax: 843-723-3536) <kstrauch@comcast.net>

ATG: Marcia, you are an accomplished science freelance writer. Tell us about yourself. How did you get into this and what's your training?

MB: From childhood I always had an intense interest in science—playing with models of atoms, taking my telescope out to the backyard during clear nights, or concocting weird and colorful brews with my chemistry set. But by the time I got to college in the late 1960's, I got diverted. It was at the height of the Vietnam war and politics was all-consuming, especially in Washington, D.C., where I was attending American University. I majored in broadcast communications, imagining myself as a future Walter Cronkite (the female version, that is). Women were only then entering television news, and upon my graduation in 1971, I joined WVEC-TV (the ABC affiliate) in Norfolk, Virginia, as the station's first female reporter and anchorwoman. I remember conducting a campaign to be allowed to wear pantsuits on the job!

After four years general reporting got routine, but I never tired of journeying to the nearby NASA Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia, to report on their latest projects, such as the plan to land a probe named Viking on the planet Mars in 1976. Those assignments re-

kinded my old love for science and encouraged me to leave my TV job to enter Old Dominion University in Norfolk for a master's degree in physics. My plan from the start was to combine my journalistic skills with an academic training in the topics I wanted to cover, physics and astronomy (influenced, perhaps, by the example set by scientist/authors Carl Sagan and Isaac Asimov). My graduate research at Old Dominion involved the effects of radiation on materials sent into space as parts of orbiting astronomical observatories, including the Hubble Space Telescope (then being planned) and the International Ultraviolet Explorer.

Upon receiving my master's degree in physics in 1979, I started my science-writing career as an intern at *Science News* magazine and then as a charter member of *Discover* magazine's writing staff. In 1982 I became a freelance writer and have never looked back, reporting on astronomy and physics for a variety of national publications, including *Astronomy*, *Sky & Telescope*, *Science*, *Popular Science*, *World Book Encyclopedia*, *Smithsonian*, *Technology Review*, and *The Sciences*. For many years I was a contributing editor at *Discover* but am now on the editorial advisory board of *Astronomy* magazine. I also regularly review science books for both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

For the 1994-95 academic year, I was a Knight Fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and for several years following was an adjunct professor of journalism in Boston University's graduate science-writing program. This fall I return to MIT for a year as a visiting professor in their graduate science-writing program. Students, I have discovered, keep you from getting stale or complacent about your writing.

ATG: How many books, articles, etc., have you published? What's your latest endeavor? Of special interest is your book "Einstein's Unfinished Symphony" published by Joseph Henry Press and winner of the American Institute of Physics science writing contest. Tell us about this.

MB: For most of my twenty years as a science writer, the bread and butter of my trade has been writing for magazines. My total output of feature articles, columns, and reviews probably runs in the hundreds by now. But more and more I am focusing on books, which gives me the opportunity to completely explore a topic over many months (even years). It enables me to dig deep and acquire a depth that magazine articles just can't provide.

I published my first book, *Thursday's Uni-*

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verse, in 1986. It was a layman's guide to the frontiers of astrophysics and cosmology. This was followed in 1993 with *Through a Universe Darkly*, a history of astronomers' centuries-long quest to discover the universe's composition. My latest book, published in 2000, is *Einstein's Unfinished Symphony*, about the on-going attempt to detect gravity waves, the last experimental test of Einstein's theory of general relativity. It was my most enjoyable book to research and write, because I was able to capture the excitement of a field just as it is emerging.

Einstein's Unfinished Symphony is a sneak preview of the first new astronomy of the twenty-first century. New observatories have just been built, in both the United States and Europe, which promise to provide a whole new sense with which to explore the heavens. Instead of collecting light waves, these novel instruments will allow astronomers to detect vibrations in the fabric of space-time, literally cosmic spacequakes created by the universe's most violent events, such as stars exploding or black holes and neutron stars colliding. Since gravity waves share the same frequencies as sound waves, when they are recorded they will be played back as sound waves. Hence, the title of my book: capturing these waves will complete Einstein's unfinished symphony. Detection is important to astronomy because gravity waves are the only means to obtain the first direct evidence that black holes exist and will eventually allow us to eavesdrop on the remnant echo of the Big Bang itself. My book chronicles the forty-year quest to reach this moment when observations are beginning.

ATG: You have been published by big commercial trade presses and by lesser presses. Tell us about your publishing experience with these various presses.

MB: My first two books were with two well-established New York publishers: First, **Times Books**, an imprint of **Random House**, and then **HarperCollins**. Big trade presses do have certain benefits for an author starting out. Their far-flung distribution networks get your book into the major outlets, and their connections help you get reviewed in major newspapers and magazines. But, unless you win the "book lottery" and get on the best-seller list, they don't provide much support for marketing and publicity. First-authors are often on their own in getting the word out and setting up lectures and signings through their own networking. This situation has only magnified in recent years as publishing houses merge and focus more attention on selected blockbuster projects, which have higher potential for big profits.

But I have discovered recently that there are alternate paths. Several academic and university presses are now broadening their mission to include works for the general public. Within the last few years the **National Academies Press**, for example, established the **Joseph Henry Press (JHP)** to publish books on science, technology, and health that are aimed for a wider audience. **Stephen Mautner**, the executive editor of **Joseph Henry** and an artful

persuader, convinced me to sign on with them for *Einstein's Unfinished Symphony*. It turned out to be my most delightful publishing experience. Since they bring out fewer books each publishing season than the larger presses, I became the bigger fish in the smaller pond. **Joseph Henry** not only sent me on book tours on both the East and West Coasts, they also ran advertisements in major media outlets, publicity that ultimately led to book sales that surpassed my numbers with the bigger trade presses. My experience with **JHP** was also a return to the publishing days of old, where the author knows everyone on staff personally. There was a "let's-put-on-a-show" atmosphere within the **JHP** offices that was exhilarating. Although I continue to work with commercial publishers (**Pantheon/Vintage** approached me to compile an anthology of the major discovery papers in astronomy, a book that will be out next year), I hope to maintain my relationship with **JHP** as well.

ATG: You have worked with libraries the span of your twenty year career. How have libraries changed? Do you use libraries and librarians as much as you used to? What has changed for the good? And for the bad?

MB: I grew up in an era—the fifties and sixties—when there was little education about library resources. In high school and college, I thought of librarians as the people who primarily rubber-stamped your books at the check-out. I had no idea the wealth of knowledge at their fingertips. I stumbled about the stacks learning about abstracts, indexes, and such on my own. This changed during my employment at *Discover* magazine, which was then part of the *Time-Life* magazine empire. There was an extensive library covering a whole floor of the *Time-Life* building in New York, and when getting background information on various stories I quickly learned how valuable it was to ask the librarians where to find the answers. After that, I never hesitated to seek out new "tricks of the trade" when visiting other archives and libraries. If only they told me back in high school! With these added skills, I probably use the li-

brary more now than in the past. Granted, today I download more journals and magazine articles right from the Internet (I'm in love with **JSTOR** for looking up old science papers), but nothing as yet has replaced the ability to spend all day in the library perusing the books. Until books, old and new, are completely digitized, I'll be a regular library visitor. The one thing I do miss is the old card catalog; a computerized index doesn't feel quite the same. I recall always finding something interesting by taking out one of the boxes and spending some time flipping through the cards in and around my topic of concern.

ATG: Do you publish in electronic format? In print? Can you tell us the pros and cons of each one from your standpoint as an author?

MB: Up to this point, I have always published the old-fashioned way: in print, although some of my articles have been posted on magazine Websites. Primarily, that's because of finances: a successful business model has not yet been established for freelance writers to receive as much compensation for an electronic article as one published the traditional way. If that ever changes, I would be eager to disseminate my writing more widely on the Web.

Einstein's Unfinished Symphony is available—free—to read on the Web, a situation that disconcerted me when first informed of this fact. The **National Academies Press** has a policy that most of their works be freely available to the public electronically. You can try for yourself at <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/9821.html>. Over time, I've come around to the **NAP** viewpoint: they see this service as equivalent to someone going into a bookstore and casually perusing a book to see if they want to buy it. The Web book cannot be downloaded in its entirety but only read one page at a time. So, it offers the public the opportunity to take a book out for a test-drive, viewing the pages exactly as they appear in print. Since it didn't seem to affect my book sales in any negative way (it may actually have helped), I'm now very supportive of this idea.

From the Reference Desk

by **Tom Gilson** (Head, Reference Services, Robert Scott Small Library, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29424; Phone: 843-953-8014; Fax: 843-953-8019) <gilsont@cofc.edu>

Protestantism, a dominant force in Western development since the early 1500's, has grown and spread worldwide. Now there is a comprehensive four-volume reference set that examines and informs its historic diversity and major traditions. Published by **Routledge** and edited by noted scholar **Hans J. Hillerbrand**, the *Encyclopedia of Protestantism* (2004, 0-415-92472-3, \$495) contains over 1,000 entries written by a team of international scholars.

As **Mr. Hillerbrand** notes in his introduction, "the historical dimension dominates" this encyclopedia. However, its coverage is rich and

complex. There are entries on Protestant development in places as different as Estonia and Zimbabwe, and Ulster and the Philippines. Specific movements are discussed ranging from the Awakenings in America and England to the Mass Movements, or conversions of the lower castes, in India. Theological issues from the hallmark teaching of justification to toleration and the acceptance of pluralism to the millennial notion of rapture are given equal consideration. There are also articles on particular creeds and individual religious works, as well as those on specific institutions and organizations. Darker

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