November 2010

ATG Interviews Dave Kochalko, ORCID Director, Vice President, Strategy & Business Development, Thomson Reuters

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Recommended Citation

Strauch, Katina (2010) "ATG Interviews Dave Kochalko, ORCID Director, Vice President, Strategy & Business Development, Thomson Reuters," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 22: Iss. 5, Article 16.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5649>

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ATG: *We were very interested when we received your proposal for a concurrent session at the 2010 Charleston Conference. Tell us about ORCID — The Open Researcher & Contributor ID. What is it? When did it begin?*

DK: ORCID is both a vision and a collaboration among stakeholders in the broader scientific and scholarly research community. The vision of ORCID is to deliver an identity service for researchers globally that addresses the problem of name ambiguity in scholarly communication. The experience we have had with **ResearcherID** since its introduction in 2008 confirms the value of a registry enabling disambiguation. An important lesson learned is that to achieve global adoption the solution requires broad support from the scholarly community at large. In January 2009, **Nature Publishing Group** and **Thomson Reuters** met to explore this; we came away believing a persistent registry, placed in the hands of the community and fueled by core services from **ResearcherID**, held the promise of catalyzing broad support. ORCID emerged from a conference organized by **Nature Publishing Group** and **Thomson Reuters** held on November 9, 2009 in Cambridge, MA, USA. This “Summit,” which included representatives from a cross-section of organizations involved in research and scholarly communications, created the energy and enthusiasm which have brought ORCID to where it is today.

ATG: *We notice from your Website that you have several participant organizations and a Board of Directors. Can you give us some specifics?*

DK: ORCID was recently incorporated as a non-profit organization — **ORCID, Inc.** — an important milestone in establishing this as an independent initiative. The Board is comprised of 14 organizations, ten of which are non-profits and eight of which are outside of publishing. All together, the organizations represented on the Board include universities, libraries, funders of research, societies, publishers, and research institutes.

ATG: *Librarians, especially catalogers, know all about name ambiguity and attribution. We have been working on this a long time. Why are you starting another such initiative?*

Dave Kochalko has worked in the information world for over 20 years, beginning with Victor Rosenberg’s ProCite start-up in Ann Arbor, Michigan and later acquiring EndNote and leading the ResearchSoft business for Thomson. Currently, he is Vice President of Strategy and Business Development at Thomson Reuters Healthcare & Science. Dave enjoys growing businesses and exploring ways to partner and collaborate. Ask him about what’s happening in digital scholarship or, better yet, introduce yourself and your ideas of how Thomson Reuters might partner with you. 🐼

DK: Indeed, and all of us in the scholarly ecosystem for many years have worked on solving the name ambiguity in our own environments. We have pushed curation and algorithms about as far as they will take us. But, the problem is greater than any one organization, and we need to go “the last mile” to address the remaining noise in the system. We believe ORCID will be the key to driving out the remaining ambiguity that exists in our library catalogs, bibliographic databases, publisher manuscript tracking systems, and research repositories, among others. The characteristics which we hope will make ORCID successful include its independence, persistence, and accommodation of related services and registries, some public and others proprietary.

ATG: *How does this track with what OCLC, LC, IFLA and other library organizations are doing?*

DK: Great question. Both OCLC and LC are Participants in ORCID and OCLC holds a position on the ORCID Board. We have held a number of discussions with the **ISNI (International Standard Name Identifier)** team. Together, we have identified a number of ways ORCID may operate with ISNI and continue to explore the best approach.

ATG: *You are focusing on journal article authors rather than book authors? How will this be supported? Are you going to charge some fee for access to the database?*

DK: Actually, ORCID is intended to support the “Contributor” in the broadest sense — anyone participating in scientific or scholarly communication, and will relate the Contributor unambiguously to the creative scholarly work. Of course, these include journal articles, books, conference papers and extend to new scholarly forms or contributions including algorithms, databases, video, and other forms.

Clearly, delivering registry and disambiguation services will require financial resources. As we work to define those services ORCID will deliver, we are exploring alternative ways of funding this initiative, including access or use fees, while remaining as open as financially viable. We have made no final decisions and are seeking input from the community to scope the services ORCID will deliver as well as how they will be supported.

ATG: *How will the “central registry of unique identifiers” and other author ID schemes work? How will they link and prevent duplication? Or do you want to prevent duplication?*

DK: Beginning with the last question, yes, we absolutely want to prevent duplication. At the same time, we recognize that ORCID must co-exist with other identity services and does not seek to replace or obsolete them. A first place to start with preventing duplication is how ORCID will handle uploads of data from two or more organizations which have some overlap in their data. For example, a university and a publisher each have some individuals in common. ORCID must be able to flag such duplicates and present the “provenance” of where the alleged duplicate came from and provide a mechanism for resolving such collisions. A related challenge is connecting with the multiple identity services in a coherent way. For example, we are exploring ways of capturing IDs from partner registry systems thereby enabling researchers and their systems to exchange or traverse these silos in a complementary fashion. We are working on each of these challenges and, while we have some great ideas, still have more work to do.

ATG: *When do you expect to roll this out and at what point will you have a database that can be accessed?*

DK: We are very much on schedule with plans mapped out this spring. We have a prototype or alpha system already built which serves in part as a proof of concept as well as a valuable illustration of use cases. Our goal is to complete specification work this year, begin building a version 1 service, and introduce it for testing and live release as early as possible in 2011.

ATG: *More power to you and good luck!* 🐼