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## ATG Interviews David Burleigh

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**Interview — John G. Dove**  
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interview begins. Good online reference tools need to find ways to capture and present such local context. Another avenue of inquiry towards dramatically better use of reference content in an online world is revealed by recognizing the role reference works and reference librarianship can have to serve the larger goals of the library: to enhance the life-long information literacy of learners who pass their way.

**ATG:** *Are there any other new Credo initiatives in the pipeline that you can discuss without giving away company secrets?*

**JD:** I'm very excited about the various initiatives we have undertaken in recent months to build momentum as we enter a new era for **Credo Reference**. We are very well-positioned, perhaps much better than most, to serve as a strategic partner that can help libraries manage these unpredictable times and capitalize on the opportunities that arise from the evolving teaching and learning environment. For example, we have dedicated significant attention and resources to updating and increasing our product portfolio — including the upcoming launch of a new product in the works that is pointed squarely at improving information literacy. I won't give away too much! I can say that as we

move ever closer to a world that demands true information literacy — which I believe to be inevitable at this point — we at **Credo** think it behooves us to listen very carefully to the various issues being discussed, particularly the most critical ones. When we do this our products do not become merely products, but solutions.

**ATG:** *John, we appreciate you taking the time to talk to us about Credo Reference. We have learned a lot, not only about the company and the products you provide, but we have also gotten a sense of how you and Credo view reference and its future.*

**JD:** It was my pleasure. 🌻

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## ATG Interviews David Burleigh

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### Director of Marketing, OverDrive

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by **Tom Gilson** (Associate Editor, *Against the Grain*) <gilson@cofc.edu>

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

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**ATG:** *Can you tell us something about yourself? How long have you been with OverDrive? What other experience have you had working in the library market?*

**DB:** I have been with **OverDrive** since 2006 as Director of Marketing. My background is in healthcare, professional services, and high-tech manufacturing. This was my first foray in the library channel. I have a masters degree from **Northwestern University** in Integrated Marketing Communications.

**ATG:** *Although OverDrive was founded in 1986 as a distributor of interactive diskettes and CD-ROMs, the company is now a major provider of downloadable digital and audio content to libraries. What are the main factors contributing to this successful evolution? How were you able to anticipate the growing demand for this type of content and then tap into the market?*

**DB:** We've always believed in digital media, which we define as digital books, eBooks and audiobooks, music and video, now moving into interactive books, streaming media, etc. It's all we've done since our founding. There are many factors that have contributed to the evolution, including publishers' ability to provide their popular content in popular formats, which has been largely driven by agreement within the industry on standard formats, and improved hardware and software. As a leading distributor in this space, we work with our partners closely to determine which new models and features will best serve the growing numbers of users.

**ATG:** *You mention that OverDrive is a leading distributor in this space. Who are your main competitors and what do you bring to the table that they don't?*

**DB:** I'd rather not have attribution about who our main competitors are, but you can



undoubtedly name them. Our competitive advantages are that digital distribution is all we do, and we have long-term relationships with more than 1,000 publishers and 15,000 public and school libraries worldwide. Feature-wise, we are known to have the best selection (largest catalog), best service (training, support), and best user experience (apps/compatibility, all formats on one Website, and integration with library's ILS and OPAC).

**ATG:** *Up until now, OverDrive's main market has been public libraries, but recently you announced that you were expanding your delivery network to school and academic libraries. Can you tell us a little about that? Is this in the pilot phase, or is this a fully developed service? Does it differ in any way from your public library delivery network?*

**DB:** **OverDrive's** eBook & audiobook services for schools (including K-12 and academic, not to mention corporate libraries) are based on a similar platform serving more than

15,000 public libraries worldwide. We're now up to a few hundred schools who are lending eBooks & audiobooks to their students. It's a logical extension of the public library platform, specific to schools, serving a growing need. It's a fully-developed service with more than 100,000 eBooks & audiobooks for children and young adults covering popular bestsellers to a variety of subjects including foreign language learning, study guides, history, and more.

**ATG:** *How many total books does OverDrive offer access to? Aside from fiction titles are there subject categories that OverDrive is particularly strong in?*

**DB:** Our title count is now upwards of 600,000 across all subjects and genres. This includes music and video, but the vast majority are eBooks and audiobooks. Our catalog includes titles in 52 languages.

**ATG:** *Will you be providing textbooks, or is the emphasis on eBooks that support curriculum and research goals? Is this primarily a K-12 effort or will you be making a big push into the academic library market? Will consortia pricing be available?*

**DB:** We offer many eBooks and audiobooks that support curriculum and research goals in both K-12 and academic settings, as well as popular eBooks and audiobooks for recreational reading, but not textbooks at this time. We currently provide services for districts and for individual school buildings.

**ATG:** *When you say academic settings you appear to be focused on K-12. Are there any specific collections/services intended for the college and university market?*

**DB:** We do supply the libraries of **McGill University** in Montreal and **University of Pittsburgh**, as well as a number of smaller state and private two- and four-year colleges,

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community colleges, etc. Our strength is in popular fiction and nonfiction, but we also have a wide selection of academic-oriented titles from many University Presses, Taylor & Francis, John Wiley & Sons, as well as study guides, test prep, foreign language learning, and career development.

**ATG:** *In another recent announcement you noted that Overdrive users “can now download eBooks and audiobooks directly to their Windows Phone with the free OverDrive Media Console app.” What other apps are available to enable users to download OverDrive content to their hand-held devices? Are all of these apps part of your recently-announced plan to eliminate the need for librarians and readers to deal with various eBook file formats?*

**DB:** We also offer the ability for users to download eBooks & audiobooks from the library directly to iPhone, iPad, Android phones and tablets, and BlackBerry. Because we now support all major desktop and mobile platforms, and in response to librarian suggestions, we announced a plan to simplify the eBook lending process by eliminating the need for the user (and librarian) to select specific formats (e.g., PDF, EPUB) and instead will just show “eBooks” and match device and content “behind the scenes.”

**ATG:** *This sounds very ambitious and dependent on advanced technology. Have there been any glitches in its implementation? Do you offer 24/7 customer service in case patrons have problems downloading eBooks or audiobooks?*

**DB:** The first level of support is usually the library, and then OverDrive provides support via email or phone. We aren’t staffed 24/7 yet, but as we move into new markets, we are beginning to plan for it.

**ATG:** *You also announced “new, always available” eBook collections for simultaneous access of romance, self-help, young adult, children, and other fiction materials. What will the price differential be for such access? Do you anticipate similar arrangements for non-fiction titles, especially as you expand into the school and academic markets?*

**DB:** We are working with many publishers to provide new models that libraries and schools are seeking. Each publisher sets their own price points, but in general the “always available” packages include a set of titles and a 12-month “subscription” based on population served.

**ATG:** *How are the “always available” packages different from the regular OverDrive collection? And the annual subscription is an additional cost, correct?*

**DB:** Always available packages are purchased in 25-50-75 title packages (or more) for increments of 12 months. The titles vary by publisher, but some publishers do offer both choices; always available and one copy per user.

**ATG:** *On your Website you note that Overdrive delivers “secure management, DRM protection,” as well as “download fulfillment services.” Isn’t there a conflict in offering digital rights management protection to publishers while at the same time providing e-content to libraries who want to provide as much access as possible to their users?*

**DB:** There is certainly a balance as the distributor working with 1,000 publishers and thousands of channel partners in libraries and schools. We have always advocated for libraries to provide more content with more flexibility and more compatibility all to increase reading.

**ATG:** *There was quite a bit of concern among librarians when it was learned that HarperCollins was requiring a lifetime use limitation of 26 circulations for their eBooks. Did that blow over or is it still an issue? We notice that you are launching “Open eBook” titles, free of DRM. Is this in response to this issue? How will it work, and what titles will be included?*

**DB:** You can find out our response to the HarperCollins decision on our blog at <http://overdriveblogs.com/library/2011/03/01/a-message-from-overdrive-on-harpercollins-new-ebook-licensing-terms/>. Offering “Open eBooks” along with DRM-free MP3 audiobooks are examples of providing a broad marketplace for our libraries and schools to meet their needs with different models and content for their users.

**ATG:** *According to the HarperCollins response you just noted, “OverDrive did not invite, recommend, or suggest the need for any changes in terms.” You also indicate that as a library advocates, “we are prompting publishers to consider less restrictive licensing for eBook and digital media lending.” Other than offering “Open eBooks” have there been any concrete results of that prompting?*

**DB:** Yes — for the increase in “always available” titles and many of the OverDrive WIN features that we’re planning to roll out (and have already begun) — please see this release. <http://www.overdrive.com/News/OverDrive%20WIN%20Library%20eBook%20Platform%20Enhancements>.

**ATG:** *A key concern for collection development librarians is the difference between licensing and owning content. Do libraries own the eBooks and audiobooks that they get from OverDrive, or are they licensed? Will books obtained via OverDrive ever self-destruct or go away and no longer be accessible to patrons?*

**DB:** Publishers provide a license to libraries to lend their digital books, and these include one copy per user and always available, as mentioned before. They are licensed as part of OverDrive’s secure download platform and will continue to be available as part of that platform (as mentioned before, the “always available” subscriptions are for 12 months at a time).

**ATG:** *Just for clarification, by “always available” you mean simultaneous access, not perpetual access, correct?*

**DB:** Yes, simultaneous access.

**ATG:** *Evidently, the Kansas Digital Library Consortium has a different interpretation of their contract with OverDrive. If we are reading the reports correctly, they claim that they own the content “purchased” from OverDrive and have the right to transfer it to another service provider. Does their claim have any merit? And what impact will this have on the debate about the ownership and licensing of content?*

**DB:** I’d rather not comment on this, as we are continuing to work with them on this issue.

**ATG:** *What do you advise your library customers if they express reservations about the pitfalls of licensing? Is there a link on your Website where prospective public, school, and academic library customers can see samples of your licensing agreements?*

**DB:** Most seem to understand the nature of their relationship with copyrighted material that they are lending and the protections that are built in. As we speak with prospective partners and discuss a formal relationship, the agreements are available for their review and discussion.

**ATG:** *We understand that Overdrive wants “our library partners to cooperate to honor geographic and territorial rights for digital book lending, as well as to review and audit policies regarding an eBook borrower’s relationship to the library.” On the surface, it appears that this could impede long-established policies regarding interlibrary cooperation, a keystone of library service. How will issues like the interlibrary loaning of OverDrive eBooks be handled? Or will libraries have to purchase print copies to provide interlibrary loan service?*

**DB:** This is a currently unsupported feature.

**ATG:** *So as of now, your customers are unable to interlibrary loan OverDrive eBooks. Have they expressed concern over this limitation? Have you discussed this issue with your publishers? What has been the response?*

**DB:** I’ve heard this question from a few libraries, but I wouldn’t characterize them as concerns.

**ATG:** *OverDrive has managed to stay on the cutting edge of technology and the digital distribution of e-content. Can you look into your crystal ball and tell us what the next big breakthrough will be?*

**DB:** The entire digital media ecosystem is changing rapidly and, as mentioned earlier, depends on a number of factors including publishers’ content, hardware and software, and channel partners including libraries and schools. As a distributor in this space, we’re constantly working with our partners to determine which new models and features will best serve the growing numbers of users. Kindle compatibility was a big breakthrough for the industry, and we’ve seen a corresponding increase in demand and traffic because of it.

**ATG:** *David, thank you for taking the time to talk to us about OverDrive and your various digital media collections and services.*

**DB:** It was my pleasure. 🌻