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ATG Interviews Dr. Mehdi Khosrow-Pour

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President and CEO, IGI Global

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

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ATG: *It has been about three years since we last talked in the pages of ATG, so some of our new readers may not know much about you and your company, IGI Global. Can you fill them in?*

MK-P: **IGI Global** (formerly known as “**Idea Group Inc.**”) was founded in 1988. Over the last 20+ years, **IGI Global** has published an extensive list of scholarly publications (books, journals, teaching cases, and databases) on the utilization and management of information science and technology applied to multiple disciplines, such as education, social science, library science, healthcare, business management, public administration, and computer science.

In 2002, **IGI Global** started to look toward digital opportunities and began to build its first database offering and platform. Since that time, our database offerings and platform have evolved significantly. Our largest database, InfoSci-Books, now features over 1,800 titles covering 11 unique subject areas.

Our flagship database, InfoSci-Journals, features 145 peer-reviewed journals with more than 75,000 full-text articles available in PDF. The journals included in this innovative research collection have been indexed in the world’s most prestigious indices, including *Compendex*, *Thomson Reuters*, and *SciVerse SCOPUS*.

Our teaching case collection has also grown substantially over the last three years. The total number of teaching cases has exceeded 1,000 and focuses on 11 subject areas. They center on some of the most relevant and diverse real-life examples of IS&T applications in a variety of industries and settings.

The **IGI Global** Website, www.igi-global.com, provides more in-depth information about our publications.

ATG: *Since founding the company in 1988, what are the biggest challenges you have faced? What are the keys to your success in meeting and overcoming those challenges? Is there any advice you would offer to someone who is thinking of getting into the publishing business today?*

MK-P: One of the biggest challenges we’ve faced, and one that faces everyone publishing in the area of information science and technology, is the ever-changing nature of technological innovations. In order to continue to offer the best possible publications and services to our customers, it is vitally important for us to stay on top of these innovations and to continually review new technologies and how they can both affect and support our customers’ needs.

For **IGI Global**, particularly, it has been a big challenge to continuously produce the highest-quality publications to serve the areas of study in which we publish. As a technology publisher, we face a constantly changing landscape where new fields of technology are regularly created and familiar fields are constantly revised. It has always been our goal to provide cutting-edge publications in some of the most innovative subject areas and to offer them in a format that meets the needs of our customers.

Much of the company’s growth would not have been possible without our strong collaborations with our valued authors and editors. We have been very fortunate to establish a strong rapport with these esteemed researchers. Without them, we would not have the diverse title listings our customers see today. We welcome any feedback our editors, authors, and customers have to offer, and then we strive to act on that feedback. We pride ourselves on being flexible and agile in order to provide the best publications and services possible. We really take a hands-on approach to the acquisition, development, production, and marketing of our books. In short, we put the needs of our authors, editors, and customers above corporate profits and net bottoms. If we satisfy our customer needs first, then the profits will follow.

My advice to someone considering getting into the business of publishing today would be to be innovative and understand that in this very competitive market, and with the current state of the economy worldwide, one needs to be very patient and understand that it takes a long period of time before one can see positive returns in the initial investment.

ATG: *We were looking at your Website and were impressed with the diversity of your book, journal, and database offerings, not to mention the various collections and packages that are now available. Can you talk about the business plan or strategy that you’ve followed to get to this point?*

MK-P: We make an effort to know our customers and to understand the shifting nature of the libraries’ budgets. A diverse understanding of our customers allows us to provide diverse products. For example, our Topic Collections are designed for libraries to obtain a large list of titles related to a particular topic or theme. In the collection, each title is priced at a fraction of the individual list price.

ATG: *IGI Global offers a pay-per-view service called InfoSci-OnDemand. How does this service work? How does it fit into your service mix? Does it make up a significant part of your business, or is it more an added option for the convenience of your customers?*

MK-P: InfoSci-OnDemand (Pay-Per-View) allows individuals to pick and choose articles and chapters from our publications that they want to purchase. InfoSci-OnDemand gives customers access to all of our content through an advanced search engine, enabling them to quickly and easily identify specific research that meets their needs. It offers full bibliographic information, the complete abstract, and a sample PDF. When they find what they want, they can simply purchase that one document on a perpetual basis, as opposed to buying the entire book or journal issue. You can think of this service as comparable to iTunes, where you can purchase just one track, as opposed to an entire album. InfoSci-OnDemand is a fast growing portion of our business, designed to complement, not replace, our other offerings. Ultimately, it serves the convenience of our customers.

ATG: *How are you positioning IGI Global to take advantage of the ever growing world of mobile access and social media?*

MK-P: **IGI Global** is very active in social media. We, of course, have our own blog site, as well as Facebook (**IGI Global**), Twitter (@**igiglobal**), and YouTube (**IGIGlobal**) accounts.

Participation in social networking is essential for publishers who publish on the subject. For example, we recently released the following publications on social media:

Social Networking and Community Behavior Modeling: Qualitative and Quantitative Measures. Editors: **Maytham Safar** (Kuwait University, Kuwait) and **Khaled Mahdi** (Kuwait University, Kuwait). 2012 Release.

Social and Organizational Impacts of Emerging Mobile Devices: Evaluating Use. Editor: **Joanna Lumsden** (Aston University, UK). 2012 Release.

Over the last few years, we have invested several million dollars to revamp our platform, allowing for mobile access to our content. Not only is our content more accessible, but it’s also available in more formats. Our InfoSci-Platform is actually designed with mobile access in mind so that customers can access our content from anywhere in the world.

ATG: *We assume that libraries are still a major market for you, but library budgets are shrinking. Where else do you see growth coming from? What role does expanding your subject coverage and product line play in IGI Global’s future?*

MK-P: We see growth coming from our value-added services for libraries. As I men-

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tioned earlier, it is our goal to give librarians what they need in light of their shrinking budgets. We want to accommodate them as much as possible. Again, we began releasing Topic Collections and Subject Subscription Packages that include a targeted selection of books or journals on key areas and at a reduced cost to buy as a set.

ATG: *How do you see the growing availability of open access resources impacting IGI Global? Have you noticed any effects so far? Do you still offer electronic access to your title free-of-charge for those who purchase the print as a response to the issues raised by open access?*

MK-P: Knowing the volume of research carried out by researchers worldwide, open access is a natural phenomena. **IGI Global** has always embraced this movement and views it as one more way of sharing research findings. We have a strong partnership with the **Information Resources Management Association (IRMA)**, a professional association offering nearly 2,000 documents from previously-published research free-of-charge. Unlike other publishers that redirect the cost of publishing to researchers or institutions, we help with such contributions. From April to October 2012, **IGI Global** will be adding more than 750 previously-published articles and chapters to the **IRMA** research community free-of-charge, and is planning even more initiatives for 2013. To learn more about **IRMA**, I would encourage readers to visit www.irma-international.org.

In terms of any effects of open access on **IGI Global**, in general, we haven't noticed any effects of the open access movement on our business due to the fact that we never viewed open access as a threat, but rather a complement to the current publishing industry.

In regard to offering complimentary electronic access to libraries when they purchase **IGI Global** print books, we still offer complimentary access, but we've made some adjustments to the program in order to address the recent needs of our library customers.

ATG: *When we spoke to you a few years ago, you said that you "had trouble with the prediction that within the next ten years everything will be in electronic format. The truth of the matter*

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against the grain publisher profile



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ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS, ETC.: **Information Resources Management Association (IRMA)**. Corporate Members of **ALA/ACRL**.

VITAL INFORMATION: **IGI Global** has grown from a company of two employees in 1988 to a company of more than 55 today. Over the last 20+ years, **IGI Global** has established a rapport with hundreds of journal editors, not to mention thousands of book authors and editors.

IGI Global is partnered with the **Information Resources Management Association (IRMA)**, an organization that supports the advancement of technology by publishing scholarly journals and organizing various educational and award programs. Through several non-profit and open access programs such as the Library Technology Collaborative, the organization promotes the sharing of technology-related research and academic collaboration.

KEY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES: **Books** – More than 1,800 reference publications, centering on 11 subject areas, available in print and digital formats. **Journals** – More than 145 journals, centering on 11 subject areas, available in print and digital formats. **Electronic Resources** – InfoSci-Journals, InfoSci-Books, InfoSci-Cases, InfoSci-Subject Databases, InfoSci-Dictionary, E-Access, InfoSci-ON-Demand allowing individual purchases of chapters and articles, and Topic Collections containing as many as 20 scholarly book titles at a fraction of the individual cost. **Teaching Cases** – Available for individual sale. Free teaching notes supplied to instructors upon request. Designed for professional development and instruction. **Course Adoption** – Complimentary 60-day examination eBook to any professor teaching within the United States or Canada considering an **IGI Global** title for course adoption. Special course adoption discounts and complimentary print desk copies. **Open Access** – In collaboration with the Information Resources Management Association (IRMA) and through the www.irma-international.org Website, **IGI Global** already offers open access to more than 2,000 free articles and will offer 250 free additional papers beginning April 1, 2012 and will continue to release 250 papers at a time up through January 2013. **Webinars** – **IGI Global's** Online Educational Symposium Series - Free to sign-up. Attendees can connect with recognized leaders and share their knowledge and experiences on a variety of timely topics and issues. **Awards** – Academic Librarian Sponsorship Program, InfoSci-Journals Distinguished Fellowship Award, InfoSci-Journals Excellence in Research Awards, and Library Technology Excellence Award.

CORE MARKETS/CLIENTELE: Academic, government, and corporate research libraries with a focus on research publications whose primary audience is post-graduate and upper-level researchers.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 55+

NUMBER OF BOOKS PUBLISHED ANNUALLY: 350+

NUMBER OF JOURNALS PUBLISHED ANNUALLY: 145+ released quarterly

TOTAL NUMBER OF BOOKS ON YOUR BACKLIST: Since 2000, **IGI Global** has published more than 1,830 book publications

ADDITIONAL ITEMS OF INTEREST FOR ATG READERS:

- **IGI Global** has recently been approved as a FEDLINK vendor. As a FEDLINK vendor, they are able to provide their premier research in Information Science & Technology to federal libraries and information centers.
- **IGI Global** publications have been cited in more than 75 indices. Also, the editorial process at **IGI Global** is extremely expeditious with the Acquisitions, Development, and Production processes all maintained in-house.
- **IGI Global** is now partnered with the CLOCKSS Archive to preserve their e-journals and eBooks, making their content freely available to everyone after a "trigger event" and ensuring that an author's work will be maximally accessible and useful over time. 🌱

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is that both print and electronic format will continue to be in demand.” Do you still feel the same? Why?

MK-P: My position has not changed when it comes to demand for print vs. electronic. There will always be a demand and a desire for print. That format has been around for hundreds of years. Obviously, the demand for electronic content has also increased significantly and we have noticed this increase for IGI Global electronic content, but it would be an oversimplification to assume that the print market will disappear in ten years. The customers will always decide what format is the most suitable for their particular needs.

ATG: *We've spent a good bit of time asking some serious questions, but we have to ask, did you ever get that Kindle you mentioned the last time we spoke? You had just finished Thomas Friedman's "The World is Flat" and made a point to say that it was the print version and that you hadn't gotten a Kindle yet. We also know of your deep love of music and were hoping that you had some recommendations for our iPods.*

MK-P: I do have a Kindle now, two in fact. I also have an iPad 2. Interestingly enough, I

just finished *Steve Jobs* by Walter Isaacson on audio. I listened to it while travelling on the train, planes, or in my car. So you see, format has to be up to the customer. I understand my customers because I am a customer.

As far as recommendations for your iPods, I would suggest the following:

Drumming Song by Florence + The Machine

The Day Before The Day by Dido

Say Goodbye by Dave Matthews Band

Otis by Jay-Z and Kanye West

ATG: *Dr. Khosrow-Pour thank you very much for taking the time to talk with us.*

MK-P: Thank you for allowing me to share my experience with your readership. It should be noted that although running a business in this industry can be very challenging, it is also very rewarding. 🌱

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Charleston Conference. Anyway, I couldn't help but notice that Lynne Rieenner Publishers is celebrating 28 years of independent publishing of books in politics and the social sciences to the general market. The press release brought back fond memories. I remember when the vivacious Lynne came to Charleston for another meeting (it was in the summer and it was hot). We had lunch at the Pinckney Café (right off the market). The Pinckney used to have the most fantastic pimiento cheese sandwiches. Now it's the Cru Café with great food but no pimiento cheese sandwiches. ☹️ Anyway, returning to Lynne, she just has published *Women and Congressional Elections: A Century of Change*, colorful stories from the campaign trail of women's performance in House and Senate elections.

Moving back to the Brit lane, was having a delightful conversation with Richard Gedye (once of OUP, now at STM) who was in Winchester, England, where he says

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