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# ATG Interviews Sven Fund and Michiel Swormink of De Gruyter

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*Against the Grain*

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*projections as to how this will impact your bottom line? Do you see a time when you will forgo print altogether?*

**FG:** Syndication — selling ... to other media for regular inclusion in their periodicals. Yes, digital is where our growth has been for a decade. The **Book News** syndicate comprises 50 entities with more on the way. (Don't you think "syndicate" lends a compelling touch of dash and brigandage?) On the future of our paper edition — much as I personally hate screen-reading, the paper version of **Book News** is under assault. Ask in a year.

**ATG:** *What's your turnaround time?*

**FG:** Until the end of 2010 it ran from (rarely) four weeks from the book's receipt to sixteen weeks for the review that just missed a deadline. To shorten the maximum lag we've just rolled both review journals together under the *R&R* title and publish bimonthly, so, presently, four to twelve weeks.

**ATG:** *And the volume of reviews?*

**FG:** Eighteen to twenty thousand annually. The current year will comprise 18,500 reviews (at the present rate). My goal is to double the title count and put us in the league with ELAPs.

(Remember our initialism for English Language Approval Plan? Remember the wag that urged that we offer the Foreign University & College Unlimited Plan? Probably **AI May**.) We are already around three times the coverage of each of the main alternatives — *Booklist*, *CHOICE*, *Doody's*, *LJ*, *PW* (in **Book News** there are no overlaps). On 1 September '11 we've checked in our 379,000th review copy.

**ATG:** *These are all scholarly books?*

**FG:** None of the books we've covered would embarrass a university librarian; probably 10% would attract some use in a respectable secondary school library. Our migration to licensing (as against paper subscriptions) has encouraged/enabled review of more books for the serious lay reader. We know public library selection offices are now reading **Book News** content.

**ATG:** *You organize reviews by LC class?*

**FG:** Right; we sort by **LC** class to the decimal point and appreciate **LC's** **MARC** and **CIP** services to establish these classes. Many books reach us without pre-pub bibliographic data, requiring us to assign classes and author citations. (Remember the avalanche of catalogs from which you excavated books for the **Reed Co-op** back in the late '50s?). We are getting more review copies without cataloging as we pursue more English-language books from foreign countries — more work, but it

makes a notable contribution to the selectors' fodder.

**ATG:** *How are your subscriptions holding up?*

**FG:** Years ago we gave over hustling conventional subscriptions in favor of licensing reviews to entities needing online content. Large users are **Books in Print With Book Reviews Online**, **Majors** (medical), **Title Source (B&T)**, **EBSCO**. [I've sent **Amazon** packing "cause they wanted perpetual use upon licensing the database for a single year" — told 'em I didn't have to go all the way to Seattle if I wanted to be mugged.] We do have a few hundred subscriptions. Our recent issues are free at [www.booknews.com](http://www.booknews.com). Syndication is our future: vastly wider dissemination than one could dream of with a literal journal; one needs not deal with the USPS; renewal and collection are limited and more likely; and the growth in numbers and geographical origins of reviewed books attracts libraries (always our idealized clientele) whence the interest of the aggregators.

**ATG:** *Any coda?*

**FG:** Only that annotating books and assembling bibliographies are almost as old as writing itself. It is a crucial service to scholarship. I expect the sort of work **Book News** has done for decades will remain valuable in whatever form information and wisdom may be transmitted. 🌿

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**De Gruyter, [www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com)**

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by **John Long** (John Long Associates) <[JohnLong429@gmail.com](mailto:JohnLong429@gmail.com)>

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*To follow is a conversation (by phone and email) between John Long and Sven Fund and Michiel Klein Swormink of De Gruyter.*

**JL:** *De Gruyter encompasses a remarkable span of history beginning in 1749 to our contemporary e-everything environment (De Gruyter's innovative one platform, 500 paid and open access journals, 800 new eBooks published each year, 40 large d-bases). Could you take a few moments to comment on that?*

**SF:** It's true, **De Gruyter** and its preceding publishers have an impressive legacy. Today, we strive to live up to this tradition and work

hard to transform our traditional strengths into the digital age. Even if the medium changes more and more from print to electronic, values like quality of content, the ability to discover and broaden trends in research, and the international span of a publishing program prevail.

**JL:** *I am fascinated by the scope of your publishing program and, of course, you are a truly international publisher: humanities & natural sciences, theology & philosophy, biology & chemistry, linguistics, literature, mathematics, physics, history, archaeology, law and medicine — it all began in the humanities!*

**SF:** Yes, still today, **De Gruyter** is a universal academic publishing house. We virtually publish in all fields — from Algebra to Zoology — and in three product types: journals, books, and reference works. The breadth of our portfolio is not without the risk of overexpansion, and we constantly and carefully evaluate our publishing programs. Today we focus ever more on what we feel makes most sense to support science and research: important monographs and series, authoritative and state-

of-the-art reference content, and high-quality journals. And we have just added open access as an important publishing model.

**JL:** *I understand you have exciting news for our ATG readers regarding De Gruyter and Harvard University Press; in addition, could you talk about your partner, TriLiteral, and its 155K sq. ft. distribution center?*

**MKS:** Yes, exciting news, indeed. Beginning this year, **De Gruyter** will distribute **Harvard University Press'** eBooks to the institutional market worldwide. Our programs largely cover the same subject areas and are complementary in terms of content. We believe that the combined offering of both our lists on one and the same platform through **De Gruyter's** library-friendly and proven business model for eBooks will be a very attractive proposition to the market. We like to call this partnership an "alliance" the sum of which is larger than its parts; for libraries, end-users, authors, and **De Gruyter** and **HUP**. At the same time, we are moving our physical distribution and the invoicing of all our

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#### De Gruyter

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products in the Americas to **TriLiteral** starting January 2013. **TriLiteral**, as you may know, is a distribution company jointly owned by **Harvard University Press**, **Yale University Press**, and **MIT Press**. We are very happy to have found a distribution partner who understands our needs and has excellent customer service.

**JL:** I understand that **De Gruyter** moved its offices (about a year ago) from NYC to Boston and that this allows you to be much closer to many friends of **De Gruyter**, authors, editors, and scholars. Could you tell us a little about the very successful **Open House** reception at your **High Street** offices?

**MKS:** New York is, of course, a great city and it has outstanding universities, but — all in all — in the relatively short time that we have been in Boston, we have found that this is a better environment for us. We are certainly close to many of our authors and important customers here, but we have also succeeded in attracting very good and motivated employees. And Boston has certainly proven to be a very productive place to work from. The **Open House** we organized last fall was visual proof of that. I think it really marked for the first time our presence here as a full-fledged publishing company which is growing fast and is very active in marketing, selling, and acquisitions in the Americas.

**JL:** **De Gruyter** is doing very important work toward making your archive digitally available (some 60K books), and you make special efforts to find out-of-print titles (print copies and/or as eBooks) for your readers and customers.

**MKS:** I personally find this, as a publisher, a very exciting topic. We have made available for purchase in print and electronic format all our publications since 1749. This is not just re-commercialization of out-of-print or supposedly dead content; as a publisher we have taken active control again of our intellectual legacy. It inspires me in developing new products. This so-called e-dition program is so successful that we had to allocate extra staff to fill all the orders. Managing the order and reproduction process is sometimes very time-consuming, because we have to track down physical copies of books of which we don't have a copy in our archive.

**JL:** **De Gruyter** is listening to librarians, and working very hard to achieve a business-friendly model for the library community. Could you elaborate on that ongoing effort?

**SF:** We believe that the best guarantee to create and deliver products for our customers is to understand their needs. In past years, we have formed **Library Advisory Boards**, not to unduly influence librarians, but to listen and learn. This has shown great results, and many of the innovative business models we have launched over the years are a direct result of that. e-dition, the retrodigitization project for all titles of our backlist spanning back to 1749, is an example of this.

**JL:** Thanks so much for taking time out your hectic schedule so that **ATG** readers can be apprised of new developments and the dynamic work going on at **De Gruyter**. 🌻

## Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

**Column Editor's Note:** This year's **ALA Annual Conference** includes a content area dedicated to **Transforming: Teaching and Learning**. It is staggering to think about how much teaching and learning has changed since I entered the world of librarianship in 1998. These transformations in the last 1.5 decades, and the myriad of transformations to come, are largely predicated by the evolution of science and technology. It is therefore critical that our communication efforts, and those of our patrons, stay up-to-speed. **Stephanie Roberson Barnard** and **Deborah St. James'** new manual, **Listen. Write. Present. The Elements for Communicating Science and Technology**, is one of many recent publications to meet the information needs of students, professionals, librarians, and the like in this content area. Though this book is specific to communication in the fields of science and technology, it has tips that span many subject areas. Many thanks to veteran **MM** reviewer **Joey van Arnhem** for offering her review of this new title.

Happy reading and happy **ALA** conferencing, everyone! — **DV**

**Barnard, Stephanie Roberson, and Deborah St. James.** *Listen. Write. Present. The Elements for Communicating Science and Technology.* New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2012. 978-0300176278. 224 pages. \$22.00.

Reviewed by **Jolanda-Pieta (Joey) van Arnhem, MFA** (Instructor and Technology Coordinator, College of Charleston Libraries) <vanarnhemj@cofc.edu>

**Listen. Write. Present. The Elements for Communicating Science and Technology**, written by **Stephanie Roberson Barnard** and **Deborah St. James**, provides practical, to-the-point advice on every aspect of communication for scientists, healthcare providers, and information specialists. The authors provide proven methods, delivered succinctly in numbered lists and focused on six foundational skills required for professional success. Chapters include strategies and tips for professionals on how to “Plan, Listen, Write, Present, Meet, and Serve” based on their over 30 years of experience as communication consultants training biomedical, scientific, pharmaceutical, and technology professionals to communicate effectively.

**Listen. Write. Present. The Elements for Communicating Science and Technology** provides refreshing and much needed everyday common sense tips on how to “Plan, Listen, Write, Present, Meet, and Serve.” Each chapter is to-the-point, easy to read, and addresses key approaches for each topic. The numbered tips and lists make this book user-friendly and easy to remember. Chapters are constructed to provide readers with the opportunity to actively process information through “Skill Builder” activities that can be done in the car, during a break, or before you head in to work in the morning, providing immediate results.



**Barnard** and **St. James'** helpful index is organized and thoughtfully arranged, allowing readers to find helpful advice relevant to their needs quickly and efficiently. My favorite chapter is “Write,” which, as noted by the authors in the preface of the book, distills their years of writing and editing experience into one easy-to-read chapter, making this book one that you will want to read, keep, and re-read. All of the chapters clearly address the real-world challenges of today's multitasking professionals.

**Listen. Write. Present. The Elements for Communicating Science and Technology** provides a simple, modular approach to effective communication that can be implemented in its entirety or in parts as needed. This collection of best practices is a valuable practical aid for new and experienced science and technology professionals alike who are trying to improve and enhance their communication skills and increase their professional mobility. This handy reference is recommended for any library.

Authors invite readers to submit new tips and examples on their Website at [www.listenwritepresent.com](http://www.listenwritepresent.com). Readers can continue the discussion online by following **Listen. Write. Present.** on Facebook, **@StephRBarnard** on Twitter, and **Stephanie Roberson Barnard** on Pinterest or subscribing to the **Listen. Write. Present.** blog available at <http://listenwritepresent.blogspot.com/>. 🌻