

2014

Neil Blair Christensen Profile

Follow this and additional works at: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2017) "Neil Blair Christensen Profile," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 26: Iss. 2, Article 28.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6713>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

ATG Interviews Neil Blair Christensen

Digital Business Development Director, University of California Press

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

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

ATG: Neil, can you give us a little information about your background?

NBC: I'm Danish-Jamaican, born in a small isolated Greenlandic settlement. We later moved to Denmark and I did my MA in Arctic studies with a focus on online anthropology. My work over the past 13 years includes roles in Europe, Asia, and the USA with **Munksgaard, Blackwell, Nature Publishing Group, and Wiley**. During this period, I worked in a range of areas, from digital business development, partnerships, health sciences, and journals to workflow solutions

ATG: What caused you to change your career path from anthropology and Arctic studies to publishing?

NBC: Back in the day, there was little funding available for my proposed research in networked education in the arctic. Once in publishing I was hooked.

ATG: What attracted you to join University of California Press as Digital Business Development Director?

NBC: Mission, meaning, and great ideas. In my mind, UC Press is extraordinarily well positioned to craft a digital "do-no-evil" ethos



around community, transparency, knowledge curation, and crediting. As part of the **University of California**, we belong to one of the greatest knowledge networks in the world and are located in a region with unrivalled digital expertise. If there were ever a time and a place to join a university press with a knowledge-based and non-profit digital mission, this would be it. So here I am.

ATG: What do you mean by a digital "do no evil" ethos? Why is that important to you?

NBC: I mean publishing that supports rather than exploits the academy. It is important because advancing the academy is core to our mission.

ATG: This is a new position for UC Press. What do you see as your first priority(ies) or objective(s) in this new role?

NBC: First priorities are to listen, digest, and ask questions of the team internally and our strong external network of partners, including authors and librarians. My colleagues have done amazing work in setting a strategic direction, and much of my initial work now is to tease out, test, and build digital product concepts that speak to the strategy.

ATG: Can you tell us what that "strategic direction" is? Broadly speaking, what type digital products fit that strategy?

NBC: Very broadly speaking, products that build and leverage our UC network, are extensible, and generate new revenues.

ATG: In a world where exclusive reliance on print is shifting, particularly in scholarly markets, how do you think UC Press can balance the needs of print publishing alongside the development of digital products?

NBC: Requirements are as complex as ever and require parallel business models that can change with technology adoption and publishing business models. We are addressing some of the complexities through an on-going strategic review of our product mix, and building efficiency in our traditional publishing business. Similar to other publishers, we eventually will change to a digital first model, but that doesn't mean that print books will disappear just yet. It simply means that a printed product becomes a version of our digital content, and not the other way around. We pay attention to the needs of the academy, and UC Press can benefit enormously from engaging its mission-driven relationships within the **University of California** network to understand and build need-driven solutions.

ATG: One potential route for UC Press in moving to more digital product development could simply be a scale digitization of the wealth of archive materials it holds to reach new audiences and markets. But, of course, any print-based publisher could do this and claim to be "digital" in their strategic thinking. What do you think will set UC Press apart from other UPs and traditional publishers in moving towards digital products? And why?

NBC: The very nature of some of the initiatives we are planning will set us apart. We are

continued on page 51

against the grain people profile

Neil Blair Christensen

Director, Digital Business Development
University of California Press
155 Grand Avenue, Suite 400, Oakland, CA 94612-3758
Phone: (510) 883-8301 • <nchristensen@ucpress.edu>
<http://www.ucpress.edu>

BORN AND LIVED: Born in Ittoqqortoormiit (Greenland). Lived in Uunarteq, Dundas, Nanortalik (Greenland), Copenhagen (Denmark), Aberdeen, London (UK), New York, San Francisco (USA), and Tokyo (Japan).

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: My work over the past 13 years includes roles in Europe, Asia, and the USA with **Munksgaard, Blackwell, Nature Publishing Group, and Wiley**. During this period, I worked in a range of areas, from digital business development, partnerships, health sciences, and journals to workflow solutions.

FAMILY: My fantastic wife, our dog, and our families scattered across the map.

IN MY SPARE TIME: I enjoy hanging out in San Francisco and its fantastic surroundings with family and friends. To counterbalance my digital focus, I produce physical products in my spare time: <http://www.christensenbags.com>.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Endurance, Mars Trilogy.*

PET PEEVES: I don't like wasting time.

PHILOSOPHY: Keep it simple and adapt to change.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Signing my first society journal from a competing publisher.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: As always, looking back with satisfaction. 🐾