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ATG Interviews: Mark Gross, President, CEO and Founder Data Conversion Laboratory

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President, CEO, and Founder, Data Conversion Laboratory

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ATG: Data Conversion Laboratory (DCL) sees itself as a leader in future proofing content for eBooks, online training manuals, archived documents, etc. What is future proofing exactly? What does it entail?

MG: Future proofing is making sure that when you convert your content, you also prepare for future uses. We're trying to prevent situations where a customer would convert his content for one specific purpose — like for an eBook — and then find out later that he can use the same content for a specialized database but he doesn't have the right tagging and needs to reconvert the content. Very often, by thinking ahead, one can add at low cost the coding that might be needed for future applications. More and more people are realizing that their content collections are major assets that can be used for many purposes. An example might be how to handle math in an eBook. Full math in the form of MathML isn't supported today by most e-readers, so the lower-cost solution is not to worry about the math and just maintain images of the formulas. But if that's what you do, you could find yourself limited when full math becomes supported, and you might find that the math would be useful for other online applications — and you'll find yourself limited at that point.

ATG: We've heard that DCL is now teaming with Bowker Identifier Services to offer DCL's EPUB on Demand eBook Product Service to self-publishers. How did that deal come about? What does it require from both parties? Are DCL and Bowker still two separate companies? What is your exact relationship?

MG: We had been talking with each other for several years about the possibility of working together — and as the market started heating up for individual authors to publish more easily, we decided it was time to get together. **Bowker** has a very strong brand with authors, especially when they come to get their ISBNs, and it's clear that it would be an excellent addition for authors to have other services, such as creating eBooks for various formats, and possibly conversion of other contents. That's how it started, and it's gotten a wonderful reception. We're still separate companies; the relationship is contractual for this work, but we've built a seamless process between us so that the customer has one point of contact.

ATG: Bowker Identifier Services sells ISBNs, and other services to help make books more discoverable. What part of your services helps promote this goal? How will it tie into other Bowker services like Books in Print?

MG: Bowker's services make content more discoverable — we don't have a direct role there; rather, our role is to help an author create a quality product in various eBook formats, so that there is a quality product to discover. Independent authors can easily be lured into unrealistic expectations of the eBook conversion process or swayed to think all eBooks are created equal, with poor user experiences often being the outcome. So, we also spend time educating them on what they need to consider and how important it is to have a professional on their side.

ATG: Given Bowker's experience in providing bibliographic information, is part of the plan to help market the self-published content created using EPUB on Demand to libraries and other interested customers?

MG: If self-published authors are registering for ISBNs through **Bowker** and giving them their metadata, it will be included in the regular Books in Print subscription to which the library already subscribes.

ATG: Are you planning similar arrangement with Amazon and other providers of self-publishing services? Do you work with other formats like MOBI or Amazon's AZW? Or is your primary concentration on EPUB solutions?

MG: We already work with a number of major, as well as smaller, providers of self-publishing services, and we hope to increase that business. We support all eBook formats, and there are major savings in doing multiple eBook versions at one time.

ATG: What does EPUB on Demand do for the self-publisher? How does it work? Does it include the full-service editorial team providing composition, quality assurance, copy-editing, indexing, and proofreading you talk about on your Website?

MG: The basic service takes a completed manuscript and creates an eBook, or multiple versions of eBooks. But we also provide all the others services listed on our site — we can work with an author from his initial manuscript, providing editing, proofreading, composition, layout and other book production services. We can provide as much or as little as an author wants.

ATG: Does the main demand for the service come from authors of popular fiction and non-fiction? Do academic and scholarly authors use your services? If so, what type works are they self-publishing?

MG: Most of the demand for this service is popular fiction and nonfiction. While we do very large quantities of academic, scholarly, and technical material, most of that comes through publishers or various institutions.

ATG: Have any libraries expressed interest in the signing on to make the service available to their patrons or is this solely intended for individuals?

MG: We haven't been approached yet, but it certainly sounds like a good idea we should explore.

ATG: How much should aspiring self-publishers budget to use the EPUB on Demand service being offered through Bowker? What fees can they expect to pay?

MG: Unfortunately, this is not an easy question to answer as each book has its own unique issues that can affect the pricing. Poetry and children's books are great examples. Highly stylized books also need special handling that affects the cost. We quote each project individually and include full turnkey production into the pricing versus the *à la carte* menu of many vendors. Generally speaking, eBook conversion runs between $200 and $300 per book for a typical 250-page nonfiction and trade book, but it varies widely depending on the number of pages and complexity level.

ATG: In a recent press release you were quoted as saying "Not too far in the future I believe we'll drop the "e" and we'll just have books." What did you mean by that? What kind of publishing future are you describing?

MG: I've been observing that many new books are coming out in both print and electronic versions, and in some technical areas, just the eBooks come out, without print. And that scale is shifting every day, more and more toward electronic versions. I don't predict that paper will ever totally disappear, but I can see where five years from now, "book" will refer to the far more common e-version, and we may be adding a "p-*"* to the print versions.

ATG: Staying on the cutting edge of econtent technology must be essential to DCL. Looking in your crystal ball what breakthroughs do you anticipate in the coming year? In the coming five years?

MG: Staying at the leading edge of technology has been critical to our success, and there certainly have been many changes in the 33 years we've been in business — in both the kinds of content that get converted and the technology. We've been successful in adding more and more automation and automated learning into our processes, which have been successful in letting us produce a more reliable product, faster and at lower cost. Looking ahead, I see new frontiers as "big data" becomes a more important part of the landscape and we develop even more and faster automation to deal with the much larger volumes of information. There is also the challenge of adding more granular and precise tagging to content that had previously been converted at a basic level; this is happening as content owners realize the value that's buried deep in the content. There is also semantic tagging — where we apply more intelligence to content than was ever possible.

ATG: The world of econtent must be exciting, but it must also take a lot of energy. What do you do to relax and recharge? Do you have any favorite activities or interests?

MG: I'm an avid skier though I don't get away nearly as much as I'd like, and I play the saxophone — not well, but I enjoy doing so and try to get time to play at least three or four times a week when I'm not traveling. They don't appreciate saxophones much in hotel rooms.

ATG: It's been great talking to you. We appreciate your making the time in your busy schedule. 🌲

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against the grain
publisher profile

Data Conversion Laboratory

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OFFICERS: Mark Gross, President and CEO; **Judy Gross**, Chief Financial Officer; **Mike Gross**, Chief Technology Officer and Director of Research; **Amy Williams**, Chief Operating Officer; **Tammy Bilitzky**, Chief Information Officer; **Linda Cassola**, Senior Vice President, Sales & Marketing.

KEY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES:

Document & Data Conversion: Experts in converting complex content from any format to any format tailored to discriminating clients spanning all industries.

eBook Production: eBook production services to support complex materials, serving the needs of both individual authors and the largest publishing houses.

Editorial Support: Full-service editorial team providing composition, quality assurance, copy-editing, indexing, proofreading and more.

Conversion Management: Consulting and project management, pre/post conversion support, hosted solutions, automation options and software development.

Harmonizer: Software and services to analyze large document sets identifying and facilitating content-reuse and data harmonization.

DCL On Demand: Easy online access to **DCL's** time-tested conversion process, rapid service and high accuracy level guarantee for smaller projects.

CORE MARKETS/CLIENTELE:

- Education
- Reference
- Libraries
- Life Sciences
- Manufacturing

- Periodicals
- Research
- Museums
- Universities
- Professional Services

- Publishers and Authors
- Societies and Associations
- Scientific and Technical Manuals (STM)
- Hospitals and Medical
- Government and Defense

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 50-75

HISTORY AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR COMPANY/PUBLISHING PROGRAM:

Since its founding in 1981, **Data Conversion Laboratory (DCL)** has remained faithful to its guarantee to construct unparalleled electronic document conversion services based on a rich legacy of superior customization and exceptional quality. **DCL** is a leading US-based organization that currently operates one of the most advanced facilities of its kind, with extensive capabilities to capture data from text from virtually any medium and reformat it to fit a client's emergent needs.

COMPANY ORGANIZATIONAL CHART: *http://www.dclab.com/expertise/dcl-executive-management-team.* 🌲

Doody's Digital Workshop for Publishing Staff: Books and the New Learner

by **Ramune K. Kubilius** (Northwestern University, Galter Health Sciences Library) <r-kubilius@northwestern.edu>

In the fall of 2013, as an outgrowth of the consulting arm of **Doody Publishing** (Publishing Services Division of **Doody Enterprises, Inc.**), an inaugural workshop was offered with a focus on the migration of publishers from a print-first to a digital-first framework. Teaming up with some of the first workshops' participants, a second workshop was planned and held April 8, 2014 at **Roosevelt University's Schaumburg, IL** campus. A third workshop, for society executives, is scheduled for September 29/30, 2014, to be held in the suburbs of Chicago.

Thirty-five persons (and seven speakers) attended the second workshop that was entitled "Books and the New Learner." Most attendees were publishing and editorial staffs from health-related associations headquartered in the greater Chicagoland area (as many health associations are), with a small number of participants who travelled from out of state. There were some attendees also from the commercial publishing and service provision sectors (sales, eBook platforms and consulting, etc.). Although the workshop wasn't designed with librarian attendees in mind, it turned out

that two librarians were in attendance — one who works for a book jobber, and one from an academic medical library.

Billed as a half-day workshop, the program actually ran from 11 am to 5 pm, with a few breaks. In the morning session, after initial greetings, the two organizers, conductors and hosts of the workshop, publishing field veterans and consultants, **Dan Doody** and **Rich Lampert**, presented an update on eBook publishing and trends in health sciences publishing. In the afternoon session, a panel of educators