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ATG Interviews: Skip Prichard, President and CEO, OCLC

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ATG Interviews Skip Prichard

President and CEO, OCLC

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

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

ATG: *You have been at the helm of OCLC for nearly a year. What is the most surprising thing that you have learned about the organization? Currently, what are its biggest strengths? How about areas where you would like to see improvement?*

SP: Having worked in and around libraries for most of my career, I knew OCLC. Before joining, I had numerous discussions with our Board of Trustees and did extensive reading and research. Even after all of that due diligence, I did not realize how complex the organization is. The cooperative nature and governance structure is unique, and demanding, as are the research and advocacy arms. Then, we drive technology innovation and develop new services. And all of this is done in a global environment.

I'm not sure that 'surprised' is the right word, but I have been struck by the strength of the cooperative spirit at OCLC. I obviously knew OCLC was a nonprofit organization long before I joined, but being on campus and with members and the staff, it has really impressed me even beyond what I had anticipated. There is tremendous energy and enthusiasm among OCLC staff and members who are passionate about libraries, technology and the principles that guide the organization.

With this enthusiasm comes great expectation. Members expect OCLC to be responsive to their needs, and they are committed to helping us succeed. I have seen this during my travels and at meetings and in conferences. The receptions I got at ALA and at IFLA, for example, were wonderful, and different than other receptions I received in my earlier library experiences. Members support us, and they



expect us to strive to fulfill our mission. Our members understand that OCLC is invested in libraries for the long term.

OCLC's greatest strength is our members. When 20,000 libraries around the world come together to share resources, just about anything is possible. The WorldCat database, for example, would not be possible without a strong commitment to cooperation. WorldCat is an incredibly valuable asset for libraries and their users. Other strengths include a passionate staff and a strong foundation — financial, technical and library experience — to build on.

At the same time, we have our work cut out for us. We have to ensure that our programs and services address the most pressing needs of

our member libraries, and we have to strive for operational excellence. Our operations need to be even more member-centric, service-oriented and designed for maximum efficiency.

ATG: *You mentioned in another interview that "listening to our members is my highest priority." What have you been hearing from them?*

SP: I have been on a listening tour that so far has taken me to Bangkok to Singapore to Munich to Leiden to Sheffield, along with many stops in the United States. Libraries want to be sure that our priorities are in line with their needs.

Librarians tell me they are interested in more and better end-user services. They want more and better access to information in a variety of formats, from a variety of devices, where and when they need it and at a price they can afford. They like the research we're doing, and they would like to see more of that research incorporated in more of our services.

Libraries have many needs today. Part of my role at OCLC is to determine priorities for the cooperative — decide what we are going to do and what we aren't going to do. So, listening to the membership continues to be my highest priority.

ATG: *How would you describe the relationship between OCLC and its member libraries? Are there any specific areas where that relationship could be improved?*

SP: The membership is vocal and not shy about letting OCLC know what it expects. OCLC is fortunate to have a strong membership that includes librarians who are willing

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implications for our business. Concomitantly, our respondents made us aware of their growing sense of displacement as a result. One of the most common laments during these sessions was that publishers and aggregators are taking decisionmaking out of the hands of librarians. Other themes included the need to address information literacy issues among students, who more often than not discover information in a disaggregated form, stripped of its context. And of course, curation of open-access content and sources, including concerns about ensuring version integrity, was the subject of repeated comments. We are looking hard at these and other issues, but

again, it's premature to comment on specific initiatives at this point.

ATG: *We know that you must be incredibly busy with your responsibilities at Choice, but everyone needs some down time. What are your favorite activities when you can grab a little time off? Besides Charleston, what are your favorite places to visit and spend time?*

MC: At last, an easy one! We'll keep this short. In the summer I enjoy sailing our little Flying Scot on a local lake. I cook year-round, a tremendous source of relaxation. And my favorite places to visit, other than Charleston, of course, are the canyons of southern Utah. Cellular towers are pretty scarce out that way.

ATG: *Mark, we really appreciate your willingness to talk to ATG and keep our readers informed as to what is going on at*

Choice. And on behalf of those same readers, we also want to thank Choice's Ann Doherty who has contributed the "Collecting to the Core" column to Against the Grain for a number of years.

MC: I know I speak for Anne when I say that our contributions to ATG reflect our commitment to your mission and to the ways in which it dovetails with our own. So thank you for this opportunity to speak with your readers. I look forward to talking with you again as our plans mature. By the way, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention our email address for comments and questions: <TellChoice@ala-choice.org>. The address comes straight to my desk, so don't be shy! 🐾

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to get deeply involved in the organization, whether they're helping us as pilots or advisors in the development of new services, or getting involved in the governance of our organization. Their impact and influence are essential.

For example, libraries that stepped up as early adopters have been essential to helping guide the development and implementation of our WorldShare Management Services. The cooperative approach to this kind of innovation is critical to our success.

Since OCLC moved to the new governance structure of Global and Regional Councils, there has been a steady increase in involvement of libraries in OCLC governance. For example, 340 librarians from 14 countries attended the annual Asia Pacific Regional Council meeting in Bangkok this year, up from 100 four years ago.

One of the challenges we face as an organization is that, with thousands of member libraries around the world, it is difficult to meet regularly face-to-face. We are trying to find even more ways to connect and to use social tools to facilitate more member library interactions around the world.

Could the relationship be improved? Undoubtedly, I believe it is always possible to improve in any relationship. The historic relationship with member libraries in the U.S.,

for instance, was primarily through regional networks. In some cases, the transition went well and in others, I see the need for review and continued work.

ATG: *What are the key differences between running a non-profit like OCLC and a company like Ingram Content Group or ProQuest Information and Learning? Does it require a different set of leadership skills? If so, what are they?*

SP: I've been serving libraries in various capacities nearly my entire career. Leading OCLC is in some ways similar to, and in other ways completely different from my past experiences. It's similar in that there are organizational disciplines that are essential to all leadership positions — operational efficiency, technological innovation, or product development. It's different because OCLC is a nonprofit organization with a unique mission. This is an environment that demands collaborative leadership.

Member needs guide our actions and our investments. Profit achievement, quarterly financial results and growing shareholder value are not our drivers. We are driven to fulfill a public purpose for libraries and their users. It's this fundamental difference that attracted me to OCLC. Our only goal is to deliver for our members long-term.

ATG: *You have mentioned that while you were the CEO at Ingram one of your main goals was "repositioning the company to improve results and grow key parts of*

business significantly." Is OCLC in need of a similar repositioning? How would you currently rate OCLC in terms of serving library needs? What strategies will you pursue to keep up with the ever changing service needs of libraries?

SP: Every situation is unique, and OCLC's needs are different than others I have experienced. What matters is what our members think, what they need, and what they want us to do with our resources. Members are telling me that we need to strengthen our position in electronic materials, and we are doing that. Our research and advocacy work is important, and we have goals to increase the collective voice of libraries and share relevant library trends. We are also working in the area of analytics. Most importantly, I am working to simplify our message and provide clarity in terms of where we are going.

We know that users' expectations are continuing to grow and this will drive demand for new services and new approaches — through mobile technologies, through non-library applications, and social media. To support this, we have to continue to strengthen our position in metadata, not just for print, but for born-digital assets and other electronic materials. You will see more from us in these areas in the near future.

So our top priorities include delivering user-focused, community built services to support libraries and their users, relevant research, and library advocacy.

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ATG: On your LinkedIn summary page it says that OCLC's "goals include furthering access to the world's information and reducing library costs." Exactly how are you doing that now? What can we expect in the future, particularly in terms of reducing library costs?

SP: OCLC has a long history of providing services that further access to information and save libraries money by working together. For example, libraries that copy catalog using WorldCat enjoy a hit rate of 95 percent, which increases their efficiency and means they don't have to spend as much on original cataloging. Libraries use our ILL Fee Management to eliminate costs associated with invoice processing and payments between libraries. Libraries that use WorldCat Cataloging Partners last year added some 6.5 million records to their catalogs through machine-to-machine interactions that required minimal staff involvement. Our new WorldShare Management Services are designed to help libraries reduce their hardware and software costs and modify workflows to gain new efficiencies. We take our objective of reducing library costs seriously.

Furthering access to information is really interesting in today's electronic communications environment. One of the more unique ways OCLC is furthering access to information in libraries today is through syndication of WorldCat data. This data is used to help connect users to the unique, authoritative information collected and maintained by libraries in new ways. Through partnerships with Web services such as Google, Yahoo!, EasyBib, Goodreads and others, library users can find library materials through the sources they use for research, reading, homework and socializing. We will work to expand this type of access to help member libraries gain more visibility and discoverability on the Web.

ATG: OCLC's cloud-based WorldShare Management Services is a major initiative, and you are incrementally moving new and existing OCLC services to the WorldShare Platform. Can you give us a progress report? With any major new venture like this there are glitches. What have been the most serious for the WorldShare effort? How has OCLC overcome them?

SP: In March (2013), staff of the Criss Library at the University of Nebraska Omaha celebrated the launch of its OCLC WorldShare Management Services—the 100th implementation of WMS since the services went into production in 2011, a significant milestone. We have many more libraries in process, so we are seeing strong interest in this new approach to library management services.

Development of WorldShare Management Services is the result of careful long-term planning, and steady technological innovation. For example, last June, OCLC took a bold step into the cloud by converting the underlying technology for WorldCat to Apache HBase/Hadoop. This new structure is used by many

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OCLC Online Computer Library Center


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KEY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES: WorldCat is a set of databases that together comprise the most comprehensive global network of data about library collections and services. WorldCat data is contributed, maintained and shared by libraries around the world. It is managed and enhanced by OCLC. WorldCat data supports a range of OCLC and partner services, driving efficiency in library management, improving discovery of library collections and increasing the visibility of libraries on the Web.

WorldShare Management Services provide cloud-based library management and discovery applications in an integrated suite, offering librarians a comprehensive and cost-effective way to manage library workflows efficiently, and improve access to library collections and services.

CORE MARKETS/CLIENTELE: OCLC is a nonprofit, membership organization serving libraries worldwide.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 1,200 worldwide

HISTORY AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR COMPANY/PUBLISHING PROGRAM: Founded in 1967, OCLC is a nonprofit, membership, computer library service and research organization dedicated to the public purposes of furthering access to the world's information and reducing library costs. More than 74,000 libraries in 170 countries have used OCLC services to locate, acquire, catalog, lend, preserve and manage library materials. Researchers, students, faculty, scholars, professional librarians and other information seekers use OCLC services to obtain bibliographic, abstract and full-text information when and where they need it. OCLC and its member libraries cooperatively produce and maintain WorldCat, the world's largest online database for discovery of library resources. Search www.worldcat.org on the Web. For more information, visit the OCLC Website at www.oclc.org. 

organizations such as Facebook, Adobe and Salesforce.com. There are always glitches with these types of generational shifts in technology, but given our staged approach and library development partners, these moves have been very manageable. It has been an exciting endeavor.

Long term, the WorldShare platform will support cataloging, resource sharing and discovery as well as traditional ILS functions like circulation. Libraries can pick and choose from services on this new platform. It's a more flexible environment, which is what libraries tell us they need.

ATG: As you mentioned above, OCLC partners with Web services such as Google, Yahoo!, EasyBib, Goodreads and others to help serve the library community. What do those partnerships entail? How do libraries benefit specifically?

SP: OCLC has more than 300 development and commercial partners. Each partner brings its unique resources and strengths to the table for the benefit of the membership. Last year, some of these partners supplied over 450 million records that were used by OCLC members. They generated over 227 million Web referrals to libraries. These partners include EBSCO, Gale, ProQuest, Atlas Systems,

EasyBib, Ex Libris, Google Books, HathiTrust, and Sustainable Collection Services, among hundreds more.

Content providers contribute data, and in return they get exposure via OCLC services. They can also buy services from OCLC if they want. We continue to offer APIs through the WorldShare platform that make it possible for libraries to use data in new and different ways. Most important, OCLC members get the data they need at a low cost. Their collections are syndicated for broad exposure. And libraries get the benefit of improved applications.

In addition to content partners, we have service provider partners that fall into two categories: consumer Websites relating to education and research, and library/institutional service providers. Among the former are the world's largest social network for books (Goodreads), Google Books, Wikipedia, EasyBib (the world's most heavily used citation management site) and many others. Among the latter: all major ILS and resource sharing software vendors, of course; but also a number of Analytics providers (such as SCS and Plum Analytics); Blackboard, and many others. These partnerships focus on integrating library services into the services

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that libraries buy for their patrons and patrons choose for themselves.

ATG: *You wrote on your blog, **Leadership Insights**, that although you “own every digital device,” you also “still love to have printed books around.” As the information industry goes through an obvious digital transformation, what future do you think printed books have? Can they play a role in information delivery as library services move increasingly to the cloud? If so, what would that role be?*

SP: In the past few years, I have tried every device you can name from numerous types of Kindles to the Nook, the iPad, Kobo, and several phones. You can't beat the convenience of a digital reader, though I admittedly prefer to read a printed book. For several years, I have talked about the future of the book at conferences, written editorials, and argued that both will co-exist. The digital book will morph as we take advantage of new technologies. That will change the digital

book from just another container, and reinvent it into an entirely different experience. Currently, though the trend is strong, it is not just a steady march to digital. Interestingly, recent AAP statistics show hardcover growth outpacing eBook growth. That surprises some so early in the process.

Libraries will continue to collect and maintain the human record and pass it on to future generations, whether that human record is on a clay tablet, a scroll, a book, or the latest version of an eBook. That's been the role of libraries for the last 5,000 years, and it's an important role that must continue. We at OCLC intend to do our best to help libraries fulfill their vital mission into the future, whatever technology comes our way — print included.

ATG: *The last few months must have been incredibly hectic. How do you relax and recharge your batteries?*

SP: Relaxing and recharging simply has not been on the agenda of late, but in my dreams I would be on a beach somewhere. Normally, I find balance with family activities, reading, blogging, a few concerts sprinkled in for music and a few live sporting events.

ATG: *As a self-described “foodie” how would you rank the restaurants in Charleston? Do you have a particular favorite? What Charleston dish would you recommend to a friend who was visiting Charleston for the first time?*

SP: No visit to Charleston is complete without visiting a few of the city's fine restaurants. I wouldn't even know where to begin. **The Charleston Grill's** shrimp and grits are particularly memorable, but then they were also amazing at **Hank's Seafood** after she-crab soup. If you push me, I would comment on the **Peninsula Grill's** crème brûlée done the right way (it's chocolate!) and their lobster and corn chowder. Not to mention the swordfish at **McCrary's**, and their special homemade bread. Perhaps in another life I would be a food critic.

ATG: *We're impressed! You know more about the Charleston food scene than we do! In any case, we know how valuable your time is, so we really appreciate you talking to us. We learned a lot.*

SP: It's been my pleasure. And I learn from every issue of **ATG**. 🍷

ATG Interviews Kim Massana

CEO, Innovative Interfaces

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

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

ATG: *Prior to joining Innovative you spent a number of years in leadership positions with Thomson Elite. Can you tell us about that? What experiences at Thomson Elite helped prepare you for your current responsibilities? What is Thomson Elite's business model?*

KM: I actually had a couple of different positions with **Thomson Reuters**. I was originally based in London working with the Westlaw product, which brought me into contact with the library community since we were selling the product to both academic and law firm libraries. In this role, I got to know academic libraries throughout Europe, Africa and the Middle East. In 2008, I became President of **Thomson Reuters Elite**, which is based in Los Angeles and is a leading provider of enterprise resource planning software (known as ERP) to law firms.

(Editor's note: ERP software includes things like legal time and billing software, docketing software, legal calendar software, etc.)

So in coming to **Innovative** I thought it was a positive combination of my days with libraries and my software background with Elite — in a way the library systems that we're working with are like ERP for libraries. The Elite business is similar to **Innovative's** in terms of focusing on product with a big service component.



ATG: *According to the Innovative Website, you have been immersing yourself “in the library community, listening and talking to librarians at conferences, events, and library visits around the world.” What are the key takeaways from these conversations? What do libraries want from their ILS vendors and Discovery Services?*

KM: There have been a number of themes that have run through my conversations with librarians. Obviously, the library community is very open and I'm continually impressed by how much sharing goes on among libraries both in terms of resources and best practices. Librarians are also focused on changing technology, as well as the changing expectations of users. Users compare libraries to other places where they can get information, like Google, and to places where they can get books, like Amazon. So the expectations have changed and libraries need a library technology partner to help them take their offerings and services to the next level. This is a role we want to play — to be their technology partner of choice, making it easier for their users to find information through discovery and then access that information through the ILS (Integrated Library System) or LSP (Library Services Platform).

ATG: *At your first Innovative Users Group conference in May 2013 you admitted that Innovative had not been good in dealing with third parties and partnerships. You called for greater openness and collaboration. What changes have you implemented to make this happen? Are you satisfied with the progress so far?*

KM: We have made a number of changes that are focused on opening up to the commu-

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