2014

ATG Interviews: Gilles de La Rouchefoucauld

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Recommended Citation

Strauch, Katina and Gilson, Tom (2014) "ATG Interviews: Gilles de La Rouchefoucauld," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 26: Iss. 5, Article 20.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6854>

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Director of AMALIVRE

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

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

ATG: *The merger of Aux Amateurs de Livres and Librairie Internationale Touzot first announced in July of 2012 is near completion. Can you give us some background on how these two venerable companies came to this decision? What strengths does Aux Amateurs de Livres bring to the new company? How about Librairie Internationale Touzot?*

GLR: The two companies have been in operation since the Second World War. They have often served the same clients, worked in much the same way, and generally offered the same services, monographic order fulfillment, new title services, subscription management, and shelf-ready services. If I had to note a distinction, a small one, between the two companies, it would be that **Aux Amateurs de Livres** put more emphasis on approval plan services in support of library collection development profiles, whereas **Touzot** developed a remarkable offer service for new titles that clients then confirmed as orders. Of course, we want to preserve both these traditions without favoring one over the other.

ATG: *We noticed that as of July 1 you have a new corporate identity for the combined bookshops. AMALIVRE will unite the long histories of Librairie Touzot and Aux Amateurs de Livres into one company. Where did the new name come from? Does it have a particular significance?*

GLR: I wanted the merger to be expressed through the new identity. Rather than create an entirely new name, breaking with the identities of the two former organizations, we wanted to hold on to the word "livre." We also needed a short and easily recognized name. We thought of having the three letters "AMA" precede "LIVRE" as they are the three initial letters of "Amare," to love in Latin, a good reflection of our identity and our undertaking.

ATG: *Now that you are completing the integration of data from the Touzot database at www.touzot.fr into the unified database at www.amalivre.fr, what differences will customers see when using the new database? How does the new database enhance the user experience?*

GLR: Firstly, the new database at www.amalivre.fr will be expanded by comparison to the two pre-existing databases. We estimate that this expansion will represent a 20% growth over the existing data. It will continue to grow more rapidly than the old **Touzot** and **Aux Amateurs** databases because the new bibliographic team simply has more human and technical resources.

Additionally, the functionality and ease of use of the new site will continue to be actively developed.

ATG: *Besides integrating the databases what other improvements, completed and yet to be done, are being added to the online platform?*

GLR: The management of monographic standing orders which was possible on the **Touzot** Website but not on the **Aux Amateurs'** has just been added to the **AMALIVRE** site. Search, sort, order, and claim functions have all been added to this module. In the same way, the management and review of serial subscriptions will be put in place between now and the end of the year. Finally, account management, with detailed statistics by subject and funds, which already exists in large part on the **AMALIVRE** site, will be enhanced.

We plan also to offer mutual access to libraries with reciprocal or cooperative arrangements so that they can better manage their collections.

ATG: *Looking back on it, what were the most difficult challenges in making the merger work? Not only have you merged businesses but you've combined physical operations as well. What led to that decision? How has it worked? What about your staffs? How have they adjusted?*

GLR: The challenge was double. First we had to find a location sufficiently large to accommodate 35 people while still remaining in the heart of Paris. Second, we had to integrate the information systems and capture historic data, if not from 70 years, at least from the last 10 even 20 years' activity. The scope of the difficulty posed by the IT issue turned out to be greater than foreseen. We finally came to completing the integration towards the end of June after some 18 months of work.

For the offices, as I said, I wanted us to remain in Paris proper, here where 75% of French publishing activity takes place. Trying to find a

space of 500 sq. meters in the heart of Paris at a reasonable cost was a bit of a gamble. We had the good fortune to find, immediately adjacent to the **Aux Amateurs'** offices, the additional space that we were lacking.

My surprise and satisfaction came from seeing how the two teams have come together rapidly and effectively. However, for the **Touzot** team, there was the shock of having to move, and for the **Aux Amateurs'** team, the need to find working space for 15 new arrivals. Mixed teams organized by service were planned and put in place from the first day and have worked well from the start. As of the 1st of July, all our staff members have felt comfortable working under the new identity **AMALIVRE** even as they remain proud of their respective histories.

ATG: *In the original letter to your customers you claimed that the merger was "a terrific opportunity to expand our service offerings and strengthen our promotion of French culture and French language collections abroad." Now that the merger is nearly complete what evidence of this will current and potential overseas customers see? What new services are being offered?*

GLR: I would like to insist on the fact that the merger was not initiated to save money but to strengthen our operations. This is true for each department, notably for the bibliographic and cataloging services, where the teams have been doubled. It's true as well for the Website, which we are working on to make more responsive and in line with the needs of libraries by joining our resources rather than working separately on development projects each on his own side. It's true at last from a business perspective as we will have greater resources to apply to customer service and to meet with clients, whether at conferences and professional meetings or onsite at their libraries.

I'd add that we are going to devote a great amount of time and resources to develop our title offerings from Francophone regions and notably from the southern areas of the Francophone world. There are some terrific books published in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as the Caribbean, but these are difficult to obtain. We want to put in place regular and reliable collection and supply networks.

ATG: *Will the merger allow you to better address the demand for eBooks and other digital formats? If so, in what ways?*

GLR: The development of eBook sales depends not so much on our efforts and the resources we commit to it but more on the timid and conservative attitude of publishers. Under the pretext of safeguarding their rights, they are putting in place models that are ill-suited to academic libraries.

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We have recently signed with a large publisher a partnership agreement, and we will be marketing 80 titles each month from their catalogue. This is a first initiative, and we hope that it will catch on with other publishers.

ATG: *Given the dramatic changes the publishing industry is experiencing, mergers like yours may become commonplace. Do you have any words of wisdom for other companies considering such a merger?*

GLR: You're right. When I attended my first ALA meeting, 25 years ago next year, there was an entire aisle devoted to foreign vendors. In Las Vegas last June, we were five or six gathered together at the end of one aisle. The movement towards consolidation is thus clearly visible.

As concerns business mergers, people often say that the human element is the most delicate. In our case, this was the easiest. By contrast, I understand better the difficulties that libraries face when they undertake a system change. Based on our experience, the advice I'd give, in the case of merging two bookselling operations, would be to devote some time to carefully study the compatibility of information systems and put everything in place for a complete, reliable, and useful consolidation of past activity.

ATG: *Gilles, thank you so much for taking the time to talk us about this exciting new venture!*

GLR: Thank you and thanks to your readers for your interest in AMALIVRE. 🌿

against the grain

publisher profile

AMALIVRE

Corporate Headquarters:
62 Avenue de Suffren, 75015 Paris, France
Phone: 33 (0) 1 45 67 18 38 • Fax: 33 (0) 1 45 66 50 70
www.amalivre.fr

AFFILIATED COMPANIES: Editions Clément Juglar (Law and economics), Distributor for the Voltaire Foundation, (Oxford), Centre d'études sur le XVIIIe siècle (Fernel-Voltaire, France) and Société Diderot (Langres, France).

OFFICERS: Gilles de La Rochefoucauld, Christèle Giboire, Lionel Chaumontet.

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS, ETC.: Member of SNIEL (French Association of vendors which sell abroad); ACRL-WESS.

VITAL INFORMATION: We maintain a database of over 650,000 new French language titles with bib records published around the world.

KEY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES: Monographs (print and electronic), journals, series, DVDs, microfiches, out-of-print material marketed through firm ordering, approval plans, standing orders, or subscriptions.

SERVICES: Bibliographic information, cataloging (MARC21 FCR), tables of contents (pdf and MARC21), shelf-ready processing...

CORE MARKETS/CLIENTELE: Academic Libraries, Public Libraries, Museums and Research Institutions, Foreign Booksellers marketing French materials...

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 35

HISTORY AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR COMPANY/PUBLISHING PROGRAM: Founded in 1935, initially as a dealer for antiquarian books and as a publisher. Began working with North American libraries as a bookseller and subscription agent in 1945. Focused on current and out-of-print search since 1990 on the *Amateurs de Livres* side and since 2013 on the *Touzot* side. 🌿

Rumors
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conversation among librarians, publishers, aggregators, and repository managers so that we can all get the best possible usage reports for our electronic resources. The *Usus* Website provides: 1) a source of hints and tips on solving known problems; 2) a list of vendors with problems that are affecting the credibility and/or usefulness of the COUNTER reports; 3) a collection point for suggestions for new COUNTER usage reports and metrics. The *Usus* Supervisory Board will ensure that the Website is editorially independent and will serve the needs of the community. Chaired by **Anne Osterman**, Deputy Director of VIVA (the Virtual Library of Virginia), the members of the Supervisory Board are: **Anne Osterman**, VIVA, USA (Chair); **Simon Bevan**, Cranfield University, UK; **Melissa Blaney**, ACS Publications, USA; **Anna Creech**, University of Richmond, USA; **Lorraine Estelle**, JISC, UK; **Oliver Pesch**, EBSCO, USA; **Kari Schmidt**, Montgomery College, USA; **Mark Tullis**, ProQuest, USA.

And, thanks for **Project COUNTER's** financial support to get *Usus* off the ground. COUNTER has also offered to provide a travel award worth £1,000/\$1,500 to a librarian who contributes the best opinion piece for the *News & Opinions* section of the *Usus* site. The award can be used to travel to the **Charleston Conference**, **UKSG Conference**, or **Electronic Resources**

AGAINST THE GRAIN DEADLINES VOLUME 26 & 27 — 2014-2016

2014 Events	Issue	Ad Reservation	Camera-Ready
ALA Midwinter	Dec. 2014-Jan. 2015	11/13/14	11/28/14
2015 Events	Issue	Ad Reservation	Camera-Ready
Annual Repot, ACRL	February 2015	01/08/15	01/22/15
MLA, SLA, Book Expo	April 2015	02/19/15	03/12/15
ALA Annual	June 2015	04/09/15	04/30/15
Reference Publishing	September 2015	06/18/15	07/09/15
Charleston Conference	November 2015	08/20/15	09/10/15
ALA Midwinter	Dec. 2015-Jan. 2016	11/12/15	11/27/15

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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& Libraries Conference. Send submissions of 1,000 words or less to <usus.stats@gmail.com> by **December 31, 2014**. Good luck!

And we must not leave out the elegant **Peter Shepherd**, the creator of Project COUNTER! He has a letter to the editor in this issue and will also be in Charleston in November!

A whopping **130 exhibitors** will be featured in the **Charleston Conference Vendor Showcase**. We will be using the **Gold Ballroom** as well as the **Carolina Ballroom** in the Francis Marion Hotel. This is a golden opportunity to connect with the vendors, publishers, and aggregators

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