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ATG Interviews Franny Lee, Founder of SIPX, and Kurt Sanford, CEO of ProQuest

Katina Strauch
Against the Grain, kstrauch@comcast.net

Tom Gilson
Against the Grain, gilsont@cofc.edu

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ering. Aside from general information about titles, such as price and licensing, we find the most vital information is gathered into reports that one need only make a few clicks in order to acquire. **EBSCO** offers any number of easily accessible reports, so why not a report of new offers from publishers? One might imagine a process whereby the subscription agent would gather offers from publishers into one secure location and notify (or not, according to specified settings) the contact librarian about said offers. As is usually the case in databases like EBSCOnet, one can sort the offers by a number of variables such as price point, subject area, type of purchase, and publisher. Imagine how much more streamlined it would be, during times of unforeseen and increasingly rare end-of-fiscal-year budget surplus, to look through a report of this type, rather than go through emails and try to remember which vendor was offering that discount on a package of eBooks about some obscure topic two months ago.

The Future

How do we realize this new world of quiet telephones and manageable inboxes? In short, one must be willing to say no. Librarians have to be willing to tell publishers that communications, offers, and purchases must be routed through an agent or consortium. One must also be willing to allow their publisher communications to be controlled by a third party and the publishers would actually have to agree to this. Unfortunately, there would be a need for subscription agents and consortia to take on more work in order to field all of these communications, but they would also benefit from this arrangement in the form of additional sales. There would be far fewer direct purchases from publishers and vendors. There would also be more time for libraries, publishers, and vendors to invest in different ventures, perhaps even more collaborative development. Less time should be spent in the obligatory activities of the past and more time building libraries, resources, and infrastructure that will serve the needs of the future.

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Endnotes

1. **Kitchen**, "Vendor Relations."
2. **Stamison et al.**, "What They Never Told You About Vendors in Library School."
3. **Smith**, "The Reality Is...Everyone Is Selling Something."
4. **Coe**, "Managing Customer Relationships."book vendors have had to go beyond bookselling, and provide technical services to help libraries to become more efficient. This has required new levels of expertise from book vendors, who today work more closely with their customers then ever before.","DOI":"10.1300/J111v44n03_0 5","ISSN":"9780789033529","shortTi-tle":"Managing Customer Relationships","-journalAbbreviation":"Library/Vendor Re-lationships","author":[{"family":"Coe","-given":"George"}],"issued":{"date-parts": [["2006",6]]}}}],"schema":"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"}
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by **Tom Gilson** (Associate Editor, *Against the Grain*) <gilsont@cofc.edu>

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

ATG: Some of our readers may not be that familiar with SIPX. Can you elaborate on what services SIPX provides? How do these services benefit libraries and their patrons? Do they compete with existing library services like online course reserves, open etextbook programs, etc.? How do they differ from similar providers like the Copyright Clearance Center?

FL: SIPX is a perfect fit with *Against the Grain* readers because it empowers schools to leverage their own library content for digital course materials, works with open content initiatives, and simplifies the rights process for other content they want to use. It's an easy-to-use cloud-based solution that can be connected into campus Learning Management Systems, library course reserves platforms and bookstore coursepack workflows. It's even a natural fit for distance education, continuing studies programs and global Massive Open Online Courses.

SIPX is a nimble, innovative solution — we've always worked closely with libraries to shape its development and we remain deeply in tune with library perspectives today. **Michael Keller**, **Stanford UL**, was a board member since inception, and our early adopters and reviewers played a significant role in evolving **SIPX's** mission and design — demo users coming back to us from the early days would see their feedback realized in a system that schools are delighted with today!

Educators, librarians and support staff use **SIPX** to set up course readings lists and then students use it to get the readings they need for class. What's really great about the **SIPX** solution is that it always automatically checks to see if those works are available at no cost to students via library subscriptions or open sources. If they are, the faculty saves their students money and the library is the hero! When the selected readings are outside the school's holdings, **SIPX** offers the instructor alternate open and royalty-free options that match the same search criteria. If that non-subscribed first choice is really what the instructor needs to share with their students, then **SIPX** simplifies

all the complicated licensing, purchasing and invoicing processes. There's an easy, seamless online transaction for the student, that the library can configure to be invoiced for if that's the way things work on their campus, with no paperwork or permission payments for the library or bookstore to deal with.

SIPX is different from other providers in that we come at course materials from the perspectives of the instructor, the library and the student. We partner with many types of complementary third parties to combine products and services to create all-new solutions, including the **Copyright Clearance Center**. **CCC** is an important partner of **SIPX** and shares its robust copyright clearance and pricing information via a direct API to its database. However, **SIPX** also incorporates customers' institutional holdings (including where a school has purchased **CCC's** Annual Copyright License), open resources and other publisher sources to build an actionable reading list for students and satisfy the full user

need — we ensure users have a comprehensive content experience that operates in real-time, recognizing and applying users' access rights to save them money.

KS: SIPX is truly innovative and exceptionally timely when we look at the issues facing higher education. It saves money for students and schools, it eliminates redundant spending and it reduces administrative burdens. We're impressed by all those things, but where **SIPX** most deeply aligns with **ProQuest** is that it connects the library into the day to day of students and faculty and exposes the value of the collections librarians are carefully investing in.

ATG: You both mention that SIPX is a nimble, innovative solution. A number of companies refer to themselves in those terms. What do you mean by nimble and innovative exactly? Can you cite a couple of examples that prove your point?

FL: Simply put — we're fast at responding and adapting to our users' needs and our solution is the product of real user behaviors. **SIPX** lives by a hybrid agile development methodology, which means we develop our features on aggressive sprint cycles, release often, and iterate and adapt based on actual user behaviors to continuously improve our product. The proof of our success with this approach can be seen in many of the exciting product releases we've made just in the recent few weeks — enhancements to our linking technology to make re-running similar courses even easier, more options for seamless authentication across campus, and our integration with hundreds of millions of documents in **ProQuest** databases to make setting up a **SIPX** reading link even easier for everyone.

ATG: Franny also notes that at the beginning early adopters and reviewers played a significant role in evolving SIPX's mission and design. What hurdles did they help you overcome? Are there specific examples that come to mind? What were the biggest challenges you faced when SIPX first entered the market? How were they overcome?

FL: The **SIPX** technology is very flexible and gives us the opportunity to let the market guide us on what they need most from us. Early on, we invited schools to be completely frank and fearless about sharing their needs, and we used that feedback to evolve **SIPX** into a tool that could be most useful and valuable to the market. We asked them about their biggest campus pain points — unaffordable textbook costs? Broken links? We focused **SIPX** on addressing those problems first.

Some issues were (and still are) big ecosystem questions that involve lots of different stakeholders — like determining the right privacy standards to put in place. For example, **SIPX** data can be used by schools and libraries to determine what content is actually being used in support of teaching and learning. That's important information for making smart purchasing decisions — especially in a highly budget-conscious environment. Feedback

from our early adopters helped us develop a system that ensures robust user protections while still enabling visibility into data that helps libraries adjust their collections to better serve classroom needs.

ATG: ProQuest recently acquired SIPX through its affiliate Bowker. That sounds a tad complicated. What is the relationship between these three companies? Where does SIPX fit in the mix? What about Bowker? How will SIPX impact the existing Bowker product lines? Is there potential for support and integration with products like Ulrich's and BIP?

KS: The organization of **SIPX** within **ProQuest's** affiliated **RR Bowker** unit is intended to start **SIPX** off with the ideal balance of independence and integration. **SIPX** will keep its development and service nimble and responsive like **Bowker's** independent ISBN agency, while taking advantage of **ProQuest's** scale in the library like **Bowker's** Syndetics. We handle the back and forth behind the scenes with intercompany agreements, so that customers can fully enjoy the benefits of **SIPX** being part of **ProQuest** and **SIPX** can keep its fast-paced start-up speed.

As for where **SIPX** fits in the mix, there are many touch points between **ProQuest** and **SIPX** that improve the workflows of libraries, faculty, students, publishers and partners like bookstores. Just as you've suggested, support from **Ulrich's** and **Books In Print** can enrich the metadata in **SIPX**. We also see opportunities to provide insight to libraries on content use in the classroom. The first connection is in the name, which is now **ProQuest SIPX** to firmly establish the service's strong foundation with one of the market's most enduring brands.

ATG: What touch points are you referring to exactly? How will ProQuest and SIPX complement each other to improve workflows for libraries, faculty, and students, not to mention provide insights on content use in the classroom? What specific plans are in place to make this happen? Are there examples of how these touch points are working?

FL: We've launched some wonderful integrations already. In August, **ProQuest** content was linked to **SIPX**. Now, when an instructor chooses a reading that's available through the library's **ProQuest** subscriptions instead of scanning and uploading the article or chapter they can simply use our pristine PDF. That's a big quality improvement for the student and a big time-saver for faculty and administrative staff. And importantly it reinforces to all of them the value of the library in the classroom workflow.

You're also about to see a **SIPX** reading list module as an add-on option for the Summon discovery service. Users will be able to search in Summon, save items and then build and organize their students' reading lists directly in **SIPX**. You asked me earlier about why we describe ourselves as innovative and I think these integrations are great examples. This is a reading list solution that addresses everything the campus needs: all the content instructors want to assign — library AND open resources. It addresses cost issues that are so important,

it folds into existing workflows, and it's completely flexible to allow the library to bring benefits and grow their value and relevance across the LMS, the reserves system, in the bookstore, with MOOCs, and so forth.

ATG: What changes do you anticipate now that SIPX has been acquired by ProQuest? What benefits does SIPX accrue from the deal? Under the current arrangement how much independence does SIPX have? How will the current SIPX management team be affected? What will the overall organizational structure look like under the new deal?

FL: It's been a very smooth transition and it's really an exciting time at **SIPX**. We see the connection with **ProQuest** as accelerating our ability to connect more library holdings to course materials workflows on campus and beyond, and to reach many more schools with our good news story. The full **SIPX** operating team has moved over to **ProQuest SIPX** so our vision and mission to improve education and save students money remains consistent. Concurrently, we are also exploring what next steps **ProQuest** and **SIPX** can take together from a product and content partnership perspective. Organizationally, I am VP & General Manager and run the **SIPX** business as an independent unit. Because content and copyright are such essential parts of the **SIPX** story, we are strategically positioned with **ProQuest's** SVP of Global Content Alliances & General Counsel, **Kevin Norris**.

ATG: We've read that ProQuest plans use its resources to increase the availability and richness of SIPX's services. How so? On the other hand, what is in it for ProQuest? Why acquire SIPX? Why now?

KS: Our job at **ProQuest** is to create an environment that allows **SIPX** to grow. We take on their back-office work — let **Franny** and her team focus on developing the service while **ProQuest** adds value with accounting and HR and all the other things that a larger company can do for them at scale. There's also the immeasurable benefit of joining a larger, very creative environment. They can brainstorm with our other experts and avail themselves of R&D and other very specialized support for integrating with schools' diverse systems and new content formats. **SIPX** brings **ProQuest** a unique technology and proven success in navigating at the forefront of some very exciting market changes with big challenges.

ATG: How does the ProQuest acquisition enhance SIPX focus on "making access to course materials as affordable, simple and transparent as possible"? What benefits will libraries see due to the acquisition? How about students and faculty? Are there any possible negatives? How will it impact your pricing structure?

FL: Our acquisition by **ProQuest** enables **SIPX** to grow and be adopted by more schools. That's good news for libraries. Let me explain. When **SIPX** is implemented at a school, the library's collection immediately becomes more visible and useful across the campus, showcasing the value of the library to the institution. Libraries also gain new insights that can

inform collection development decisions and point to ways they can contribute to teaching and learning activities that don't traditionally happen through the library. **SIPX** spotlights opportunities for libraries to get involved and stay relevant to their campus. That's especially critical in a time where the nature of teaching and learning in higher education is undergoing rapid and fundamental changes.

It's good news also for faculty, students and schools who can expect to see substantial savings in cost and time. Students save money because the cost of course packs drops dramatically when **SIPX** is implemented — an average of 20% to 35%. Faculty and administrators save time through new automated processes for gaining compliant access to the quality content needed for successful learning outcomes. If they pay permissions on behalf of students through services like library reserves, the library saves over 50% on their permissions budgets!

There really aren't any negatives, though at the beginning of **SIPX's** life as a commercial service in 2013, we got strong feedback from schools to really think hard about the level of privacy we needed to provide to students and schools. We took that to heart, and as a result, we developed strict policies and are committed to ensuring personal protection while providing institutional transparency. Overall, we see **SIPX** helping libraries to evolve campus and content workflows in ways that address critical points of friction in higher ed.

ATG: As you note, privacy is an essential concern for libraries. What is unique about SIPX's approach to protecting user privacy? Can you be specific as to how SIPX offers greater protection for instructor-identifiable data than traditional coursepack providers?

FL: We listen to our community to build a system that combines both robust institutional reporting and complete respect for our customers and their students' privacy. **SIPX** does not disclose any personally identifiable information — we have always been *FERPA* compliant. In fact, **SIPX** provides greater protection for instructor-identifiable data than traditional coursepack channels, as **SIPX** does not provide instructor details such as name and contact information. The information disclosed to publishers is industry standard: to report the amount of their content that has been sold and the amount of usage of the subscription products they've licensed to the library.

ATG: According to a recent article by Nancy Herther posted on the ATG NewsChannel, one early potential customer expressed concern about some of SIPX's practices. They claimed that student data was being loaded but never removed from the SIPX system; SIPX was loading library content on to their servers and storing it permanently; and data on usage was not "the library's" but belonged to SIPX. Can you clarify if this was a misunderstanding? How is student data currently treated in SIPX?

FL: Yes, there are significant misunderstandings and I appreciate the opportunity to clarify.

First, **SIPX** doesn't load student data into the system. Users create their own accounts just as they would in most Web services. Student data is only disclosed in anonymized, aggregated form to give meaning to the usage analytics.

Second, **SIPX** doesn't load library content onto our servers. Sometimes **SIPX** doesn't have a PDF of a reading article from a publisher partner, so an instructor might upload their own copy into the system to distribute to students. However, we're not trying to collect these copies. Our preference is actually to harness this insight to reach out to the publishers of those copies to set up a technical connection, so that it saves our instructor users from having to take extra steps. It also gives students a more legible copy of the reading than the typical photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy that the instructor has uploaded.

Finally, all our customers have free rein over their usage analytics. We devote significant resources to making sure they have intuitive, real-time tools to get data anytime, anywhere they need it as well as helping them compile statistics and reports if they want more formal outputs. We work very closely with our customers to figure out what kind of data is useful to them, so that we can build even better tools.

ATG: One of the rationales for SIPX agreeing to the ProQuest acquisition was that it better positioned SIPX to continue working with valued partners and customers. How? In what ways?

KS: The breadth of partnerships **ProQuest** has with content providers is extraordinary — from Summon to our aggregated journal content — the benefits of introducing **SIPX** to these partners is valuable to growing the service. And that's the tip of the iceberg. **ProQuest's** partnerships encompass very diverse content types, which matches trends in the types of content faculty are choosing to assign to their students.

FL: I'm so excited to be able to blend **SIPX's** Silicon Valley DNA with the increased reach and resources of **ProQuest**. We grew **SIPX** up following the same innovative development philosophies as the consumer-level technology giants in our neighborhood — we don't try to over-design our approaches, features, and functions before release but instead listen and work closely with early adopters to make sure we've captured their core needs, release, and then with the insight of actual user behaviors on the system, we can see and respond to what's working and what could make things even better. This helps us fulfill user requests faster, in a way that's not disruptive to the customer or user experience, and ultimately shapes a product that is built to fit actual user needs and behaviors so that it's truly useful to everyone. With increased resources and connections, and the commitment from **ProQuest** to keep **SIPX** nimble, we are better positioned than ever to deliver that high level of responsiveness, and exceed expectations

for not only current customers, but for new customers and partners, too.

As we continue to explore new opportunities with new partners, **ProQuest** and **SIPX** also share a continued commitment to being platform-agnostic. That's a key component of **SIPX's** value to schools as there are many kinds of workflows, infrastructures, and combinations of vendors that schools support for course material activities on their campuses. It doesn't matter what LMS, bookstore, e-reserves or MOOC platform a school uses, **SIPX** can bring benefits everywhere, in whatever way teachers choose to share course materials with their students. At the end of the day, **SIPX** can make the library's value visible even in channels that extend out beyond the traditional scope of library involvement.

ATG: Other publishers and vendors besides ProQuest provide course materials via library subscriptions. How will SIPX's new status as part of ProQuest impact access to course materials from other vendors and publishers? Will materials from ProQuest competitors receive equal treatment? Some may see this as a conflict of interest. What is your response?

KS: **ProQuest** differentiates itself from competitors with a continued commitment to supporting choice in the marketplace. **SIPX's** platform- and content-agnostic approach fit right into these beliefs. We know libraries don't want to be confined to one company's business model and our goal is to ensure their **ProQuest** services support our publishers and work seamlessly in many contexts. We proved our commitment to neutrality when we constructed the index behind Summon, which treats every record equally, and we continue to honor it through collaborations with other information services — **ExLibris**, **OCLC**, and **Google Scholar** are just a few examples. With **SIPX**, we believe the ultimate choice for what content is needed belongs in the hands of faculty, libraries, and schools. Our role is to help those experts easily and efficiently select and deliver what they decide is relevant and cost-appropriate.
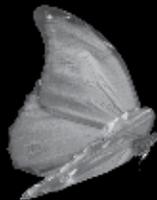
ATG: What about open educational resources (OERs)? Do they play a role in the course materials SIPX provides? If so, what is it? If not, will they play a role in the future?

FL: You can't read a newsfeed these days that doesn't mention the rising costs of education, so supporting schools' and students' needs and pressures to lower the cost of education is a core mission of **SIPX**. The system already makes academically relevant open and public resources available within **SIPX** display results. Being part of **ProQuest** now gives us access to make more efficient and robust connections into more open resources, such as with open access publishers, OER or institutional repositories, or public resources like **HathiTrust** that are already indexed by **ProQuest's** services.

ATG: What marketing strategies will ProQuest employ in promoting SIPX? Will educational institutions still be your primary target? And how do you convince institutions

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with robust licensing arrangements with key publishers that they need SIPX?

FL: We're still focused on higher education and enhancing schools' efficiency and effectiveness for the benefit of students. Even libraries with robust licensing arrangements like **Stanford** benefit greatly from **SIPX** because it exposes these rich collections more widely to faculty and students. This generates a greater return on investment. For schools without many library resources **SIPX** offers easy transactional access to quality and open content, so that students can still connect to what they need for an effective educational experience.

ATG: Since we live in a global market, can you tell us what plans you have for international expansion? Will these plans be impacted by the extension of U.S. copyright protocols through TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership)?

FL: SIPX already services global MOOCs where we might interact with students from dozens of different countries per course, and with **ProQuest's** impressive global reach, international expansion of **SIPX** as an institutional service is coming soon! We recognize that different countries have unique workflows and needs, and we're fine-tuning to make sure **SIPX** can be configured to be useful and valuable wherever it's used. We expect no direct

impact between **SIPX** and **TPP**, however, I do think that technologies and solutions like **SIPX** can be a way to demonstrate to policymakers the changing needs and behaviors of users and provide guidance on current and/or healthy market practices.

ATG: How do you see the ProQuest-SIPX relationship evolving? What are your goals for the next year? How do you see the market for your services changing? What will SIPX services look like in two years?

KS: Looking at the upcoming year, our immediate focus is on giving **SIPX** the room and resources to grow. **SIPX** will stay nimble and be powered by the same entrepreneurial drive, but be much more robust with the resources of **ProQuest** to rely upon. That said, we'll see the touch-points I mentioned between **SIPX** and **ProQuest** start to spark change both within **ProQuest** and in higher education generally, to bring benefits and new opportunities to our customers, partners and everyone. We want to keep **ProQuest** and **SIPX** adapting and always open to finding new ways to provide value, which is especially important in the dynamic market we're in. We will constantly change to meet the customer needs and user behaviors.

ATG: Franny and Kurt, thank you both for taking time from your hectic schedules to let our readers know how things are evolving between SIPX and ProQuest. We really appreciate it! 🐿

Rumors
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Training the new Acquisitions Technician. As many of us know, there are fewer and fewer people with library acquisitions experience.

Speaking of which, **Stacey** has a feature article in this issue with **Bob Nardini** about Improving Customer Service, p.20. In fact this entire issue of *ATG* is about communication between librarians and scholarly content providers.

From **James Joyce** to **Critical Insights about comic books** (p.66) we librarians are trying to keep up with the present at the same time we respect collect, and digitize the past. A tall order to be sure.

Did anyone besides a few of us hear **Bill Hannay's** session in **Charleston 2015**? He was speaking about the recent **U.S. Court of Appeals case between Google and the Authors Guild**. **Google Books: It Ain't Over 'til the Librarians Sings** is the topic **Bill** spoke about during a concurrent session that was attended by librarians, many of whom bemoaned the fact that the digitization of books by **Google** had ceased. **Bill** wants to hear from librarians about **Google Books**, because in the end, the **essential question to be answered is whether the Google Books project has been worth all the effort to create it (and to fight about it)**. Speak up! Be Heard! Email **Bill Hannay** about this! <whannay@schiffhardin.com>