Against the Grain

2016

Liz Mason Profile

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people profile

Liz Mason

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BORN AND LIVED: Born and raised in Kansas. After graduate school, lived in Atlanta, Georgia; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Charlottesville, Virginia. Currently residing in Birmingham, MI.

EARLY LIFE: High school in Overland Park, KS; B.A. Business Administration & Spanish, **Michigan State University**; Master of International Business Studies, **University of South Carolina** (all in the 80s).

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: 1989-1994: Product manager at a banking start-up; 1994-2013: 20 different jobs (and 24 different bosses!) at **LexisNexis**, starting as a Marketing Manager, then as a Director/Sr. Director of product management, then as Vice President & General Manager of several different market segments; 2014-2015 Chief Operating Officer at Weather Analytics, a weather data start-up. 2015: started at **Gale**.

FAMILY: Three children, two in college and one in high school; two dogs (beagle mix rescues) and one husband.

IN MY SPARE TIME: Reading, cooking, hiking. I keep a list of books I want to get at the library on my phone.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Scandinavian police procedurals, psychological fiction, family sagas, books where a relationship is told from both perspectives, coming of age stories, non-fiction on health topics, biographies of strong women.

PHILOSOPHY: Leave it better than you found it.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Stepping in for the Chief Technology Officer to get a key product completed for our most important customer.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: I am in endless pursuit of a better work-life balance.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I am very intrigued by the impact of technology on learning. I believe we have barely begun to see how it can transform access to education.

LM: Our archive programming has been expanding and changing over the last few years in terms of the type of content we're digitizing — we're focused on more multicultural content — and the amount of content. We recently addressed these significant changes with a rebranding of the program as *Gale Primary Sources*.

The *Gale Primary Sources* program has published 35 new products this past year, covering more than 500 years of history. Through its nearly 100 content partners, **Gale** is opening up 15 million pages of rare content from different parts of the world to researchers and digital humanists. New archive programs that launched this spring represent the new face of the program, such as:

Archives of Sexuality and Gender, a milestone digital program that brings together primary source content on gender, sexuality and identity. The first part of this multi-part series — *LGBTQ History and Culture Since 1940*, represents the largest searchable digital archive of LGBTQ history;

Early Arabic Printed Books, the first major text-searchable online archive of pre-20th century Arabic printed books, required **Gale** to develop new technological advances such as optical character recognition software for early Arabic printed script; and

American Fiction, 1774-1920, which explores the development of American literature from the political beginnings of the United States through World War I, and includes thousands of works never before available online. It enables students and researchers to answer key questions about history, society, identity, psychology, race, gender and culture.

ATG: There are a number of players in the primary source/digital archive space. What separates Gale's offerings from the competition? Are you focusing on particular subjects? Does your interface differ? Does it offer any unique functionality?

LM: In addition to the academic-driven approach to our archive content, which we discussed earlier, we deliver this unique and multicultural content on an advanced platform. The platform provides data-visualization tools, essentially introductory digital humanities tools, which help researchers look at content in a different way, and draw new insights from the content. This platform includes term cluster and term frequency tools, and it works across all of our archives. So a researcher can look for connections across everything we have digitized.

Gale has also gone one step further. Many of our archives are fully indexed and the metadata and data are available for text and data mining and other forms of large-scale digital humanities analysis. We're also developing and testing a new service, "a sandbox" so-to-speak, to allow digital humanists to run different analyses and apply different tools to our data sets (as well as other data sets they may have access to). You'll be hearing more about

this from **Gale** in the future — we're currently collecting customer feedback on our prototype.

ATG: Gale continues to add new reference works to the Gale Virtual Reference Library eBook collection. What do you see as the future of that collection? In fact, what is the Reference Collection these days? Generally, it appears to be largely digital, not print, correct?

LM: While **Gale's** revenue overall is more than 80% digital, we deliver our new frontlist titles in both print and eBook format, and GVRL represents eBooks from **Gale** as well as non-fiction eBooks from our network of more than 100 publisher partners. With more than 12,000 eBooks available, GVRL really offers something for all reading levels and content across popular subject areas such as STEM, DIY, and more.

Customers give us great feedback on our GVRL platform, as **Gale** has focused on making our ebooks as accessible and usable as possible. We offer ReadSpeaker technology (text-to-speech functionality), article translation in several languages, online book browse, and the ability to download articles as PDFs for offline access. **Gale** eBooks are Interlinked which allows customers to link directly from

their InfoTrac periodicals to contextually relevant articles within GVRL. GVRL allows unlimited concurrent users and downloads. As with many of our other resources, GVRL is integrated with Google & Microsoft tools.

Going forward, you can expect us to continue enhancing our platform, in response to customer requests, with more multi-media capabilities and additional customization features.

ATG: As of now, it seems that print editions still play a part in your plans. Do you see a viable market for new print reference works? From your customer research can you say who is using print reference works in libraries?

LM: Our goal is really to be wherever our end users are. If they still want print we will deliver print, and international customers continue to demand print.

ATG: We understand that Gale Researcher, your newest product, is a bit of a departure for Gale. How so?

LM: *Gale Researcher* is a new research platform that is designed to help students who may not be comfortable doing college-level re-