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## Back Talk--The Frankfurt Book Fair

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# Back Talk — The Frankfurt Book Fair 2016

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To experience cutting edge in the book business, one has to go to a city that's five hundred years old. Every October, over a quarter of a million people descend on Frankfurt for the Buchmesse. The first Book Fair was held in 1454, just about the date on which **Gutenberg** was turning out his first Bibles, 25 miles away in Mainz. With ups and downs, the Fair has been an annual event ever since. A conscious decision was made in 1949 to revive and promote it, and what we see and experience now is a result of that inspired decision the year after the revival of the Deutschmark and a year before people first spoke of the German Wirtschaftswunder — "Economic Miracle."

Once upon a time, booksellers and publishers had to come to Frankfurt to see what had been published and what was on offer. Now we have more ways (and Book Fair clones) of getting information that pedestrian; but, if anything, the appeal of meeting, seeing, and greeting has increased. The core business of the **Frankfurt Book Fair** is business: doing the deals that make the world of publishing go around. Buying, selling, and licensing rights make the Fair a lucrative venue for people from all over the world — literally. Now an American author's agent is likely to be seen negotiating rights for Chinese translation with the semi-official state press that also publishes the collected speeches of the supreme leader of the moment. It's also the venue of choice for many parallel meetings — for example, the International STM organization's annual fall meeting.

And then there are throngs of people like me, working at a slightly less exalted level. I've gone to the Fair off and on for over twenty years. When electronic journals were young (1996), I remember an aisle conversation in the exhibit halls with **Academic Press** (a firm later absorbed by **Elsevier** — in the year 2000), where we concluded one of the first licensing deals for bringing electronic journals to users in

a great research university. That world of library licensing has now grown from its humble beginnings to something vastly larger, where buyers are represented by consortia of every stripe. Although these days publishers and library licensors know each other better, the complexities of the business are great and the amount of money changing hands still greater.

Frankfurt can be an unglamorous city, as fairgoers get there just in time for the cold and rain of October. This year, we were a couple of weeks past Oktoberfest, so the delights — I recall one year fresh hot potato pancakes, Kartoffelpuffers, from a kiosk on the pedestrian mall — are fewer, but the city makes a huge effort to welcome us. (Fair registration includes a pass good for unlimited use of public transportation while you're there, and it's an excellent system.) The Fair itself is beautifully organized in the vast halls of the "Messe" — which is used at other times of the year for many other kinds of fairs and meetings. People have to eat! The food trucks are a variable delight, heavy on the pretzels and bratwurst (70% of the people attending are German, after all). It takes a sturdy pair of sneakers to get from one floor to another, one booth to another (over 7,000 exhibitors), and it's a MUST to have all one's meetings scheduled well in advance, because everyone is so busy. For example, at one big publisher's booth (**Cambridge University Press**), we arrived on time for our appointment, but still had to wait for a small table at which to sit and have our meeting — the several tables were all in use for other scheduled appointments! (I began scheduling appointments in July, 3 months in advance.)

Quick daytrips are possible — my favorite is to Wiesbaden a few miles west, the home of our colleagues at **Harrassowitz**, the great and hospitable German book publisher and bookdealer that has made North American libraries their special market. And when one needs a little relief, there's actually a



my favorite there was the huge local shop of **Gudrun Sjöden**, the colorful Swedish designer who has begun branching out to cities around the world. And there's no shortage of evening receptions, as well as wonderful dining.

But one goes to the Fair because there's real work to be done. I was attending this year with the remarkable **Anne Powell**, Programme Manager at **INASP** (formerly called the **International Network for Availability of Scientific Publications**), the UK not-for-profit that works around the world to connect readers in developing countries to the most important scientific and scholarly publishing, as well as to provide support for research, education, and publication. Working with consortia in developing countries is a special niche of licensing work, dependent on the commitment of the smallest to largest commercial publishers to making their output available to users in places where the first-world pricing models we love to complain about just can't work. **INASP** has projects in 22+ countries, and having had the opportunity to meet some of the senior scientists in countries like Bangladesh has given me a sense of enormous satisfaction as researchers become part of the global scientific community. What we learned over and over in our publisher meetings at the Fair is that our publisher partners are also passionate about supporting emerging countries.

**INASP** wouldn't be doing its job if it weren't also pushing forward to make sure that the important set of users it represents are connected to the most important innovative techniques and enterprises. For example, we attended a riveting presentation about **Yewno**, an exciting new type of discovery tool. **Stanford University Library** is a beta tester, and University Librarian **Mike Keller** happened to be at the stand to give us a demonstration. **Anne** and I had a meeting with **Kent Anderson**, CEO of **RedLink**, about the Library Dashboard, with its distinctive way of presenting usage metrics. We discussed how **RedLink's** offerings could bring high value to library consortia in developing countries (those discussions continue).

We were privileged to meet up with many long-time **INASP** friends and supporters, for example: **Lenny Allen (OUP)**; **Anne Davenport (Geological Society)**; **Toby Green (OECD)**; **Herman Pabbruwe (Brill)**; **Anne Snoeyenbos (Project MUSE)**; **Kim Steinle (Duke)**; **Martha Whittaker (ASM)**; and many more — 24 scheduled appointments! Thanks to all for their support!

In summary, new work is begun at the Fair, some long-struggled-over work is completed, and of course there are some frustrating meetings as well. In the great world of Frankfurt, an organization such as **INASP** is like a small puppy running around between the legs of the bigger dogs, and the Fair is hardly aimed at

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- Off-campus access is cumbersome.
- Personalization requires registration and authentication on each publisher site, and each publisher has its own unique interface.
- Systems lack scale or an agreed-upon infrastructure between information providers and consumers.

**Toler** suggested the creation of an institution's authentication server, to which new users or users with new devices are automatically directed when accessing any publisher's site. Once they authenticate themselves with that server, they can use their device to access any publisher's content from anywhere in the world. In this model, the authentication moves from the publisher's site to the user's institution, and there is no further registration or maintenance. The servers can use any type of authentication and transmit only the unique user identification and metadata required; no personal data is shared. A "WAYF" (Where Are You From) cloud is an intermediate solution and is still needed. It would provide the connection between the user's device and publisher sites by installing a cookie on the user's device and keep track of all information provider systems and the content to which the user has access. The main issues are:

- How to get this model on to a library's agenda,
- The readiness of institutions to maintain these environments,
- Publisher platforms that support this technology,
- Maintaining the library's mandate for privacy but still allowing publishers to transparently collect the usage data they need.

### Privacy

**Todd Carpenter**, Executive Director of **NISO**, said that security and privacy are intertwined. If you want to protect something, you must think about the value of what you are trying to protect. There is no common definition of private information. What you consider private may vary depending on the circumstances, and things you consider private may actually not be. Network analysis might signal something about you; for example, if **Amazon's** book cover images appear in a catalog and are clicked on, that might provide an insight into user behavior. We need a better balance between privacy and providing services. The tactics we now use to understand our users are not working very well; opt-in systems might be a possible way to protect users' privacy.

### Closing Summary

After some audience round-table discussions, summaries were presented.

#### Predators

- Cabells International<sup>8</sup> will be taking over the production of **Beall's** list. They have been publishing a journal directory for 30 years and are well qualified for this task.
- Not everyone has access to an elite university and its information resources. How can we do a better job mentoring junior faculty and help them build a legitimate career?
- What is the role of research societies? Training for peer review?
- What is the role of libraries? Some of them provide literature guides, but it is not clear who reads them. Libraries could perform a useful service by providing ethical training for scientists.
- Anything publishers issue would be helpful for libraries.

#### Piracy

- Libraries generally do not provide appropriate user education about the use of passwords.
- Communication is necessary when a new security system is implemented.
- Many different parties must work together to combat piracy; how ready are institutions to integrate? (Generally, the larger ones are ready, but the smaller ones are not in a position to make changes.)
- What are good things for the user? Confusion stemming from the need to log in to systems with different credentials should go away, so that search and discovery can be a richer experience. There are benefits to a universal identity system.
- IP address management is a difficulty now for many administrators because access should be based on individuals, not institutions.

#### Privacy

- Pressures on libraries are forcing them to address privacy issues. They want to deliver good access but also good ROI to administrators.
- Libraries have a long tradition of protecting privacy. Policies are well meaning, but now we have a population that is much more comfortable sharing than in the past. They want to be able to access their own data.
- More experiments are needed; in the future only the data actually needed should be collected.
- Vendors should help provide some level of support to users; more tracking may help them to be better partners with libraries. We need to study this in more detail. 🐼

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***Donald T. Hawkins** is an information industry freelance writer based in Pennsylvania. In addition to blogging and writing about conferences for **Against the Grain**, he blogs the **Computers in Libraries and Internet Librarian** conferences for **Information Today, Inc. (ITI)** and maintains the **Conference Calendar on the ITI Website** (<http://www.infotoday.com/calendar.asp>). He is the Editor of **Personal Archiving: Preserving Our Digital Heritage**, (Information Today, 2013) and Co-Editor of **Public Knowledge: Access and Benefits** (Information Today, 2016). He holds a Ph.D. degree from the **University of California, Berkeley** and has worked in the online information industry for over 45 years.*

#### Endnotes

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sci-Hub>
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4. <https://www.loc.gov/issn/>
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8. <https://www.cabells.com/about-us>

librarians. But I came away refreshed by a sense that for all the money and for all the "big business" atmosphere, the world of publishing and libraries still is a community united by a commitment to putting knowledge and imagi-

nation into the hands of every possible user on the planet. In some exciting ways, **INASP** is a little closer to the edge of conventional library activity, and it benefits from the imagination and generosity of many others in supporting its mission. I'm happy that the skills developed in one very privileged kind of institution can now be put to work for the benefit of people in very different places worldwide. 🐼

#### Some Frankfurt Book Fair Facts and Figures:

[http://www.buchmesse.de/images/fbm/dokumente-ua-pdfs/2016/facts\\_and\\_figures\\_2015\\_en\\_57076.pdf](http://www.buchmesse.de/images/fbm/dokumente-ua-pdfs/2016/facts_and_figures_2015_en_57076.pdf)  
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