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ATG Interviews Kent Anderson

CEO of RedLink

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

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

ATG: *Kent, you've had a long and successful career in scientific and scholarly publishing and have contributed to the industry more broadly as a past President of SSP and the founder and former editor-in-chief of Scholarly Kitchen. What led you to take the helm of a start-up like RedLink?*

KA: Great question. **RedLink** represents an amplification of a thread that's run throughout my professional life — digital business and innovation — while also complementing my generalist nature. I came up through editorial and design work, but have gained marketing, finance, strategy, and product development skills along the way. Plus, I've always been pushing to do something new in every role, whether it was early online CME, early e-publishing experiments, new services like supplemental PowerPoint slides, podcasts, or video articles, or initiatives like the *Scholarly Kitchen*. One of the enticing aspects of running a start-up was that I'd have a wider opportunity to bring my generalist bent to the game, while being able to innovate on multiple fronts. In fact, innovation of some kind is required almost daily.

ATG: *On your website, you say that RedLink's mission and purpose is to help people see what they're missing. What does that mean exactly?*

KA: "See what you're missing" can mean a lot of things, which is part of why I picked the slogan. We develop services that show you data and connections. These services reveal the signals in the data so they're easy to understand and use. The most basic examples are our Dashboards, which bring customer and usage data together in ways sales and management teams can use 24/7 without more than a 5-minute orientation. Beyond that, we have a service called SiteLeads which lets publishers see the demand behind turn-away data for customers they don't have, putting it in context over time. At another level, we have Remark, which lets users see one another, see and share articles with annotations and comments and reviews, and see author and editor updates and discussions. Then, there's the meaning relevant to **RedLink** itself, in that our technology is current and high-performance, so you should see what you're missing.

ATG: *You also say that RedLink services enable customers to "save time and streamline their collaborations." How so? Which collaborations?*

KA: We focus on professional collaborations, whether those are business-to-business collaborations between, for example, libraries and publishers, or peer-to-peer between researchers or practitioners. Our view of the library-publisher relationship is that both are really devoted to serving the end-user, so have a

common cause, even though there's sometimes friction in achieving what they both want. Data can help both parties. Libraries can be more effective getting administrator attention with data showing demand, usage, and value. Publishers can be more effective using data revealing what's working and what's not working. Then, we have **RedLink** Network, which is where publishers and librarians can collaborate to ensure that access credentials and professional connections are current. This is a free service, and **RedLink** Network is run as a public benefit corporation.

ATG: *One of your cornerstone services is the RedLink Network which is now offered for free to both librarians and publishers. What advantages does it offer librarians? Publishers? Why should they want to become part of the network?*

KA: **RedLink** Network is designed to make it easy for libraries to broadcast changes to their IP addresses or other access credentials, and for publishers to accept these while the software lets both parties know the status of the updates. Too many times, updates don't get shared with all the affected parties, and libraries don't know if their changes have been taken up. This applies to link resolvers, Shibboleth, and branding updates, as well. Beyond this, **RedLink** Network lets consortia organize and share data, gives libraries a single place to store their COUNTER reports and SUSHI credentials, and creates a secure (two-step authentication, 256-bit SSL, etc.) environment for these credentials.

ATG: *It sounds like there might eventually be a fee to register and be part of the RedLink Network. Is that part of your future business plan?*

KA: No. We intend to run **RedLink** Network as a free service. It benefits **RedLink** indirectly to have clean IP data shared across the ecosystem. Right now, our Dashboard and other products suffer the same ills as access systems with out-of-sync credentials — we see unwarranted denials, or diminished usage in the data we process for our customers. We'd like to have data based on perfect or nearly perfect access credentials. If usage data are cleaner because there aren't technical issues or mistakes, our customers have better insights and everyone is happier. Plus, it just makes our engineers crazy to think people are still doing this by hand. It's not efficient.

ATG: *You also have a couple of subscription products, the Library Dashboard and the Publishers Dashboard. Can you tell us about them?*

KA: Sure. Our Publisher Dashboard product is designed to let sales and management teams quickly get insights into their usage and

customer data — denials/turn-aways, full-text usage, abstracts, and so forth. Publishers can look across a consortia, or dive in to any customer; look at archival usage and turn-aways; look at accounts in a certain country before a trip; see across their business where usage is up or down; let sales agents access data for specific customers or territories; and analyze trends in cost-per-download. Library Dashboard has similar functionality, but geared for library needs. So, library users can see usage, cost-per-download, turn-away, and other data by publisher, title, or bundle. We handle databases, journals, eBooks, and bundles. Users can compare usage of a title by vendor — so, is Title A more heavily used in Database A, directly as a Journal, or in Database B? Consortia can look across their member libraries, and dive in for detailed comparisons. Trends across the entire collection are easy to see, and then you can dive in with a click. Reports in either system can be saved by clicking our "pin" feature, and any chart can be downloaded as an image, PDF, or data.

ATG: *What unique data do they provide that are not available elsewhere?*

KA: Our Dashboards provide useful views of the data in and across the systems publishers and libraries use. We can process vast amounts of data very quickly, so our displays are snappy, while also being designed to be easy to understand. My experience having watched many people interact with our Dashboards is that while the data sources are familiar, the combinations and intuitive displays we provide make it all feel much more accessible and usable.

ATG: *We understand that data from the Library Dashboard enables librarians to make more informed spending and collection decisions. Can you give us specific examples as to how that works?*

KA: Certainly. By making data easier to see and use, we think Library Dashboard lets professionals make more decisions with more confidence. Adding cost-per-download helps, but it's not the full story. Trends by discipline, usage over time, and comparisons across sources all help to inform decisions that really only the library professional can make. Decisions are highly contextualized, and our displays provide more context faster and in ways that make sense. Later this year, we will be introducing upgrades to the decision-making toolset, with some data-driven recommendations to help further inform choices.

ATG: *We also understand that the data available via the Publishers Dashboard helps publishers retain customers and drive new sales. Again, can you give us some specifics? And how does this data differ from that pro-*

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vided by the RedLink SiteLeads service that is also intended to assist with sales efforts?

KA: Sales and management teams at publishers often have to go through IT or analytics staff to get reports. This can be a slow process, and often the reports don't quite hit the mark. We've even spoken to sales and marketing teams at large, well-established publishers with dedicated analytics departments who experience delays when requesting a customized report. For salespeople out in the field or third-party agents, this is especially challenging. Publisher Dashboard puts all the vital reporting in a secure Web app that's available 24/7, with the ability to give limited access to certain sales people. For instance, maybe the agents in Asia just have access to data from customers in Japan, China, and South Korea. This all has a few positive effects on retaining customers and acquiring new ones. First, sales people can take customers through the usage data "live" and show them how demand has increased, costs have changed, and so forth. Second, if sales agents halfway around the world have access to the data, they can be selling while the home office rests, making the entire operation more efficient.

SiteLeads is a unique service that takes publishers beyond the customers they have, and helps them identify and contextualize institutions generating demand. It uses proprietary technology to quickly and precisely identify unmet demand for a publisher's content, and puts it into the context of their current customer base, so they know how good a lead might be.

SiteLeads uses Publisher Dashboard data to put data about new leads into context, but the data from SiteLeads represents a new source of information about the market. So far the publishers who have signed on love it. The new leads generated either point to otherwise unknown opportunities, or provide real evidence of potential usage to prospects that are on the fence.

ATG: *What should librarians and publishers expect to pay for subscriptions to these services?*

KA: Our goal is to have wide adoption across the industry, so our prices are affordable. Generally, a library will pay a one-time setup fee and then a low annual subscription fee of a few thousand dollars. We have some different pricing based on library type and whether it's part of a consortia. For publishers, we differentiate between non-profit and commercial publishers, but it's essentially the same approach — a one-time setup fee, and then a low annual subscription. SiteLeads works a little differently, because we sell bundles of "unlocks" on top of the subscription, but again, the goal is to make the investment level manageable.

ATG: *Privacy is always a concern with data collection. What steps does RedLink take to ensure librarian and publisher privacy is protected?*

KA: Privacy and security are interrelated issues, both of which we take seriously. We use two-step authentication across our product suite, 256-bit SSL, secure facilities, and other techniques to ensure top-shelf security. As for privacy, which is also a policy issue, we review our privacy policies regularly with our

counsel, and ensure they comport with various regulations and expectations. Running a data company is really code for running a privacy and security company. We know that.

ATG: *We understand that new products are under development. Can you give us a heads-up and tell us what the market can expect from RedLink in the future?*

KA: The most exciting new product just rolling out now is Remarq. This is designed to give researchers, authors, editors, and practitioners convenient tools to collaborate, annotate, and share articles, all without changing their workflows by drawing them away from the journals and online content they know and trust. Players like ResearchGate and Academia.edu have tried to draw researchers away into their "walled gardens," but we feel the better solution is to bring the tools to the users, not the other way around.

Beyond this, we have other things in the works, but nothing I'm ready to talk about yet.

ATG: *Kent, if you were conducting this interview what question would you ask yourself?*

KA: I'd want to know how a former publisher is doing with the library market. And, I have to say, it's going pretty well. I've always felt that we both serve a common customer, and the vantage point I have now at RedLink makes this even clearer, while giving me direct ways to realize this perspective. The library community has been nothing but generous in its reception. I think there is a lot of interest in market innovations, and that our commitment to doing a good job and finding solutions helps reassure people that we're serious. 🌱

Booklover
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as many concerts as practical. This chapter twisted my thinking in a whole new direction. With **Spoletto** just around the corner, I will be observing the conductors in a whole new light.

Canetti was born in Ruse, Bulgaria to Jewish parents in 1905. The family moved to Britain prior to the sudden death of his father, after which his mother moved them to Vienna, then Zurich, and finally Frankfurt where **Canetti** graduated from high school.

He returned to Vienna and obtained a degree in chemistry from the **University of Vienna**, but never worked as a chemist. He had discovered the worlds of philosophy and literature and that set him on the path that led to his **1981 Nobel** "for writings marked by a broad outlook, a wealth of ideas and artistic power." 🌱

Rumors
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highest honors." The **Webby Awards** lauded the **Internet Archive** for being "the web's most knowledgeable historian." Perhaps the greatest honor of the evening came in the form of a video narrated by **Open Knowledge champion, Lawrence Lesig**. He said, "Creativity and innovation built on the past. The **Internet Archive** is the foundation preserving that past, so that perhaps, one can at least hope that our children and their children can shape a future that knows our joys and learns from our many mistakes." The award was presented by **Nancy Lublin**, CEO of the **Crisis Text Line** and **DoSomething.org**, who pointed out that in this chaotic political year, the **Internet Archive** has saved "200 terabytes of government data that could have otherwise been lost in the transition from blue light saber to red light saber."

And, listen up! **Brewster Kahle**, the founder and Digital Librarian of the **Internet Archive** will be our keynote speaker at the **2017 Charleston Conference** and the **Conference** thanks the indefatigable **Ann Okerson** for arranging this!
<http://blog.archive.org/2017/05/16/and-the-web-by-award-for-lifetime-achievement-goes-to/>
<http://www.charlestonlibraryconference.com/>

Got a nice note from the awesome **David Worlock** via **Anthony Watkinson** and **Becky Lenzini** about the publication of the latest volume of **Liber Quarterly** which marks the retirement of **Pat Manson** who has made a huge contribution to Library and Information work in Europe! Congratulations!
<https://www.liberquarterly.eu/586/volume/26/issue/4/>

I understand that many of the **Fiesole Retreat** speakers have papers in the above-referenced issue of **Liber Quarterly**. I was so sorry to have to miss **Fiesole in Lille** which I heard from **Leah Hinds** and others was spectacular for content and tourism! There are several reports on **Fiesole Lille** in this issue of **ATG** which will be mailed shortly as well as posted on the **ATG NewsChannel**. **Leah's** report will be posted online shortly as well. Many of the papers from the **Fiesole Retreat** are loaded on the **Casalini** website. Visit http://www.casalini.it/retreat/retreat_2017.html.
<https://www.liberquarterly.eu/586/volume/26/issue/4/>

We met many years ago in Fiesole, Italy, when she as working for **Casalini Libri** and later at **Ithaka**. And the vivacious **Colleen Campbell** has a new position as **Partner Development** in the **Open Access 2020 Initiative** at the **Max Planck**

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