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ATG Interviews Beth Marhanka, Interim Associate University Librarian for User Services & Engagement and Head, Gelardin New Media Center/Maker Hub, Georgetown University

Katina Strauch

Against the Grain, kstrauch@comcast.net

Tom Gilson

College of Charleston, gilsont@cofc.edu

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topics of research interest. We never really considered SAGE Stats a competitor and see the tools as very complementary. We saw SAGE Stats as a tool that was very easy to use and focused at data for the undergraduate. We considered them more of a competitor to Statista, but with more capability. By contrast, Data Planet offers the ability to drill down to a very detailed level and can be used as a research tool by comparing data from different sources and calculating new data fields based on figures from other databases. Data Planet is a trusted resource with a strong brand and we want to keep that brand.

ATG: *From the customer's standpoint, what will make these new SAGE data offerings unique in today's marketplace? Should customers look for any new products on the horizon? Is there anything new and innovative on the drawing board?*

RL: Being part of a larger company with more resources allows us to do some of the things that we could not do as a smaller company. We will continue to grow the Data Planet repository as we have, but now as part of SAGE, we are getting more traction with data publishers who would not speak to us as

a smaller company. To our customers, this acquisition will mean more data, and more valuable data, that we have not had access to in the past. SAGE has many well-established, well-respected products, and I think there is a great opportunity to seamlessly integrate data into these products and provide greater value to the researcher.

ATG: *We assume that research libraries are your main clients, but we understand that there are other trade and commercial organizations that make use of your products. Can you tell us more about your customer base and how you plan to market the products? How will SAGE change their marketing strategy, if at all?*

RL: We have sold to commercial and government customers and will continue to do so, but our focus will continue to be the support of academic libraries and information literacy.

ATG: *You along with several other staff members from Conquest Systems joined SAGE to support the development and transition of the product. Often the melding of staffs can pose difficulties. What differences in corporate cultures did you have to overcome to make the transition work smoothly?*

RL: I find that the corporate priorities are very similar, which has made the transition

fairly smooth. The one issue I have experienced moving from a small company to a large company is that when you see a problem, it is not as easy as just going to fix it. The good news is now, when I see a problem, I can get a whole group of people together to fix it.

ATG: *Is there a question you wish we had asked that we didn't?*

RL: I wish you would have asked about my golf game.... It's getting better. I was a TERRIBLE. Now I'm a TERRIBLE+. (All kidding aside, I think you've asked all the right questions).

ATG: *Richard, this transition must be both exciting and exhausting. What do you do in your down time to stay fresh and ready for the next challenge?*

RL: I have started riding my bicycle to work. It is about a 12-mile ride in the morning. I ride my bike downhill about a mile to the river and ride into Georgetown along the towpath. It is a great way to start the day. When I get into Washington Harbor, I sit and enjoy the water for a few minutes, then I go into the gym, shower and get to my desk. When I get in, I am in a great mood. I'm relaxed and ready for the day. The bad news is that in the evening, the ride is a mile uphill....still getting used to that one. 🌳

ATG Interviews Beth Marhanka

Interim Associate University Librarian for User Services & Engagement and Head, Gelardin New Media Center/Maker Hub, Georgetown University

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

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

ATG: *Beth, according to your LinkedIn profile you direct both new media literacy programs and emerging technology initiatives for Georgetown University. Can you give us some examples of the new programs and initiatives that you and your team have worked on?*

BM: Over the last few years the emerging technologies that we have been focusing on have been our makerspace, which we call the Maker Hub, and exposing our community to virtual reality and 360 video. This year we also plan to offer instruction for creating augmented reality.

Other initiatives we spearheaded a few years ago that are still incredibly popular and in high demand are data visualization and podcasting. We're continually taking the pulse of our community to figure out what resources or services will improve teaching and learning and provide the best return on investment.

ATG: *In looking at the Georgetown University Library website it appears that the Gelardin New Media Center and the Maker Hub are separate entities. Is that correct? Can you clarify?*



BM: Yes, that's right. In the New Media Center we make it possible for anyone at Georgetown, whether faculty, student or staff

and regardless of their department, level of experience or ability, to communicate ideas more effectively through digital media. When we got our first 3D printer and started getting requests for other types of equipment for physical making, like sewing machines and fabrication tools, it became clear that creativity and innovation extend beyond the digital realm to physical making too.

A very practical reason we separated the Maker Hub from the New Media Center is the amount of noise generated by the equipment in the Maker Hub. Digital media production requires quiet spaces and makerspaces are pretty noisy. The Maker Hub is also a separate entity because it is a great philanthropic opportunity for a donor interested in innovation and entrepreneurship.

ATG: *What specific services does each provide? In what ways do they complement each other?*

BM: The New Media Center provides access to digital media equipment, software, and hardware, and we offer instruction and

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consultation on all types of media production skills. We have over 600 equipment kits from dSLR cameras, microphones, and lighting to Chromebooks, laptops, audio recording devices, and even gaming equipment. Our spaces include a multimedia teaching classroom, editing suites, a production studio, a gaming area, and a VR lab. The Multimedia Specialist staff currently offer instruction on video production and post-production, podcasting, graphic design, social media marketing and data visualization.

In the Maker Hub we have 3D printers, a laser cutter, vinyl cutters, sewing and embroidery machines, a printmaking and book-binding station, electronics and circuitry kits, woodworking tools, industrial button makers, and even crafting supplies. Users are able to fabricate and prototype new entrepreneurial products or just come into the space to be creative. The most exciting thing that's come out of the Maker Hub is the incredible community of student staff, volunteers, and users that teach each other how to use the equipment and share ideas.

A great example of how the New Media Center and Maker Hub complement each other is when someone in the Maker Hub creates a new product and wants to market it, they can use equipment and software in the New Media Center to create a video. Making physical objects from digital creations is also something very common in makerspaces. This past semester a student created a laser cut map of a data visualization project which was incredibly cool.

ATG: *How do the services provided by Gelardin New Media Center and the Maker Hub fit into the library's overall service mix?*

BM: We're continually scanning the environment to keep up with the best services and resources offered by academic libraries around the world to see what we should offer here. We created the New Media Center when we saw the need for digital media production resources and the Maker Hub when it became clear that people could do amazing things with 3D printers and other fabrication equipment. The same type of service philosophy and constant seeking for improvement is happening across our service areas. When a user goes to any of our service points, we refer them to the most appropriate area, whether that's inside the library or another unit on campus, and we're always looking for ways to collaborate across departments. Right now Gelardin and Maker Hub staff are collaborating with Research and Instruction librarians to create an Escape Room that we are going to use at New Student Orientation to teach freshmen about library resources.

ATG: *Funding must be an issue. How have you gotten the library to support these new services? Where in the library's budget does the money come from?*

BM: Funding is always an issue because of competing priorities.

Our current funding for supplies and equipment comes from a mix of gift funds from donors and the library's operating budget. All of the funding for staff positions and student employment comes from the operating budget. Since the Maker Hub is such a wonderful service that has drawn tremendous interest from the community, we are making a concerted effort to work with our Office of Advancement to find sustainable funding from a family, individual or organization that wants to make a larger philanthropic impact.

With any new initiative, it's important to show what other peer institutions are doing and start small pilot programs to test the waters. After showing some success and getting buy in to increase user demand, I've found that getting a little more funding becomes possible. Having a million-dollar donor is wonderful, but I'm afraid we wouldn't ever do anything new or innovative if we waited for the full amount of funding from the start.

ATG: *Can you give us specific examples of the type of projects that students and faculty create when using your services?*

BM: This is absolutely my favorite thing to talk about. I've come to realize that if you give people creative tools, show them how to use them effectively, then stand back and wait, they are going to produce work that you could never have imagined. A great example of this occurred this past semester when a physics student named **Kate Bonner** used a VR app called TiltBrush to model a complex physics equation. It is both beautiful and intriguing to strap on the goggles and see this equation move across your field of vision. She was motivated to create this piece because she thinks that making physics more visually appealing could attract more women to the field and simply make it a more accessible discipline.

Another cool project that was made possible by the Maker Hub was a "CraneCam" vision system that allows operators of large construction equipment to see what they're doing if their view is obstructed from the operations cabin. The device was created by a **Georgetown** law student that would look out at a construction site while he was in class and saw how inefficient and dangerous it was for crane operators to rely on other people to direct them from below. Once he did his research and wanted to build a prototype for the CraneCam he needed a workshop with the tools like drills and soldering irons. Just last month he actually sold 15 CraneCams that he built in the Maker Hub to a construction company in DC.

Since stories about what students and faculty are creating are so interesting, we ask users to submit their projects to us and we put them up in an online Showcase (<https://www.library.georgetown.edu/gelardin/showcase>). There are over a hundred incredible projects in the Showcase from video documentaries and animations to 3D print projects and data visualizations. We put a lot of time and energy into creating and maintaining the online Showcase, but it's the best way I know to truly explain what's possible when you give a community access to creative tools.

ATG: *We understand that you have a team going to Make48 in August and just had a team participate in a Vatican Hackathon this past semester. Can you tell us about that?*

BM: Both of these amazing opportunities for our students came about because we have an incredible leader running the Maker Hub. His name is **Don Undeen** and his energy and ability to build relationships with movers and shakers around the world astounds me. In addition to his work at **Georgetown**, **Don** is the leader of the Labs group for the Vatican Arts and Technology Council which sponsored VHacks. We sent a 5-member **GU** team to the three-day hackathon which brought 120 students together from around the world to use technological innovation to overcome social barriers and embrace common values. There were three main categories the teams could choose to develop a technology solution for: social inclusion, interreligious dialogue, and migrants and refugees. The **GU** team chose the migrant and refugee category and they won!

Georgetown was also invited to be a part of another challenge-based competition called Make48, a nationally aired invention competition series where teams have 48 hours to create a marketable product. For Season 3 of the show, they've invited students from leading universities to send teams to compete for the chance to develop and license their product in hopes of getting it to market.

ATG: *And speaking of your team, are there special skills required of the librarians on the team to ensure their success in helping patrons of the Gelardin New Media Center and the Maker Hub?*

BM: I am actually the only person in our 8-person department that has a library degree. As I've hired new staff over the last 17 years since the New Media Center opened, I've sought out people with both the expertise, aptitude and attitude needed to support our work with emerging technology. Our Multimedia Specialists have degrees in film and media production, graphic design, and photography. **Don's** BS is in Computer Science and he had extensive experience with makerspaces. Anyone that works for us also needs to have experience teaching and working in a service environment. Most importantly though, they need to be excited about learning new skills, and love helping people. The intrinsic desire to help others is the core attribute that makes them a good fit for library work.

ATG: *What advice do you have for libraries/librarians who may be interested in starting up a makerspace at their institution?*

BM: The first thing you need to do is find allies who are interested in making things and sharing skills with others. Makerspaces are all about building a creative community of people that are not only interested in using specialized tools and equipment, but also sharing knowledge and learning from each other. The next key component to starting any new initiative is demonstrating demand and generating excitement about the possibilities. Pulling together some resources with some seed funding for

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basic supplies, like a 3D printer, vinyl cutter, electronics and circuitry kits (arduinis and raspberry pi), a button machine and a sewing machine is the next step. Then get your allies to help fundraise for a laser cutter to attract power users. The key component to being successful though is getting enthusiastic staff who can dedicate time to setting up the space, teaching patrons how to use the equipment, and most importantly, build up your community of makers.

Also find the other “makerspaces” on campus who are doing the kind of work you think you’d like to do. Frequently on college campuses there are places for making and actual makerspaces scattered about, but they generally only serve their departments and constituencies. Those other spaces and the people that run them could be some of your greatest allies. Seek out those networks to build support because they might want to help people outside their departments, but they just don’t have the resources to do so. This is where the library plays an important role. We serve everyone on campus and the end product doesn’t have to be the product of their coursework. Take the CraneCam I mentioned earlier as an example. That student was in law school and got his idea from looking out his classroom window

at a construction site. We didn’t ask him if his project was related to his classes. The same thing is true in the New Media Center when people come in to make a video or a podcast. Quite often we find people creating media or physical projects that they have a passion about sharing with others that isn’t related to a class. That’s what libraries have historically had at the core or our mission: self-directed learning and welcoming people that want to better themselves and have a positive impact on the world. Sometimes that stems from what’s happening in a class, but sometimes it comes from looking outside of the classroom window at what’s happening in the world.

ATG: *We know that you are interested in the evolving role of women in higher education and instructional technology. What do your experiences and career track say about the progress women have made? What about the pitfalls they still face?*

BM: The number of women in tech-related jobs on the **Georgetown** campus has doubled since I started here 20 years ago, which makes me very hopeful about our opportunities. I was the only woman in the New Media Center and Library IT for at least five years and now women make up 50% of those two departments.

Some pitfalls women face are trusting in ourselves and having the confidence to step up and take on leadership roles. People, whether men or women, sometimes think that leader-

ship means knowing all the answers, being unwaveringly decisive, and bulldozing through whatever stands in your way to get things done. I don’t think that’s the most effective strategy in the long run. Getting a diverse set of opinions and ideas on the table to understand issues from all perspectives before making decisions and forging new initiatives are incredibly important in libraries because we serve many constituencies and need to understand differing needs. Wanting to be inclusive and collaborative can seem like a weakness, but I think it’s a strength.

ATG: *Beth you must stay super busy managing both the Gelardin New Media Center and the Maker Hub. We were wondering how you keep your batteries re-charged? Are there some fun activities that you particularly enjoy?*

BM: I’ve been even busier lately because I’ve taken on the role as the Interim Associate University Librarian for User Services and Engagement. To recharge, I love hiking and doing yoga. My goal is to hike the Camino de Santiago and I’d really like to become certified to teach yoga when my schedule eases up a bit. My husband and I also recently subscribed to Movie Pass and are trying to go to at least one movie a week. You probably won’t be surprised that I’m also an avid reader and love curling up in my backyard hammock with a great book or even better, I like to listen to books while hiking. 🐾

Booklover — Fishing for Summer Reading

Column Editor: **Donna Jacobs** (Retired, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC 29425)
<donna.jacobs55@gmail.com>



A book entitled *Buying a Fishing Rod for My Grandfather* would naturally grab the attention for summer reading. When the typical nostalgic images of summer include fishing and/or spending time with family, it goes without saying that my attention was hooked. A small book of six short stories by **Gao XingJian**, the 2000 winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, was thus in my hand to be checked out of the library.

Gao XingJian won the 2000 Literature Nobel “for an œuvre of universal validity, bitter insights and linguistic ingenuity, which has opened new paths for the Chinese novel and drama.” On some occasions a particular work by an author is referenced when discussing the basis for the award, in **Gao’s** case it is his epic international best seller *Soul Mountain*. **Gao** was the first Chinese author to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Gao was born in Ganzhou, Jiangxi, China. His mother not only influenced his exploration into theater, writing and painting, but also his choice of higher education. He graduated with a degree from the Department of French at the **Beijing Foreign Studies University**. All of the biographical sketches make reference to the impact of the Cultural Revolution on his

psyche and the resulting destruction of some of his manuscripts. He felt the need to pack a suitcase with his writings and set it on fire. He ultimately immigrated to France and was granted citizenship in 1997. His works are celebrated in the West while China has decided otherwise, banning performances or reading enjoyment.

The book opens with a story entitled: *The Temple* — a curious title that nods at a couple’s adventure while celebrating a marriage while honeymooning. “We were deliriously happy: delirious with the hope, infatuation, tenderness, and warmth that go with a honeymoon.”

The title *In the Park* sets the scene for a conversation between two people reflecting on their past. “I haven’t strolled in a park for a long time. I never have the time to spare, or the inclination anymore.”

Cramp is the perfect title for this engaging story about a swimmer’s experience with a debilitating cramp. — “Cramp. His stomach is starting to cramp. Of course, he thought he could swim further out. But about a kilometer from shore his stomach is starting to cramp.”

The Accident opens with: “It happened like this ... A gust of wind swept up a pile of dirt from the roadwork outside Xinhua Bookshop

on the other side of the road, swirled it up in an arc, then dumped it everywhere.”

The fifth story carries the book’s namesake for its title, *Buying a Fishing Rod for My Grandfather*. The narrator delivers a delightful and literal walk down memory lane while visiting (or maybe day-dreaming about visiting) his hometown. “I walk past a new shop that sells fishing equipment. The different fishing rods on display make me think of my grandfather, and I want to buy him one.”

In an Instant is the final title in this series. It illustrates the curious literary nature by which this story is presented. “He is alone, with his back to the sea, sitting in a canvas deck chair on the beach. There’s a strong wind. The sky is very bright, without a trace of any cloud, and in the dazzling sunlight reflected against the sea, his face can’t be seen clearly.” A simple opening paragraph to a “formal experiment in simultaneity,” as one reviewer described it. This story contained the most intriguing question: “He is sitting at the computer with a cigarette in his mouth. A long sentence appears on the screen. ‘What’ is not to understand and ‘what’ is to understand or not is not to understand that even when ‘what’ is understood, it

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