Manuscript 8435

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ATG: Jason and Yvonne, as librarian/inventors and co-founders of the new start-up Sidecar Learning, you all have created quite a stir. Can you tell us about Sidecar Learning? How did you all come up with the idea? What does each of you find most compelling about Sidecar Learning? What has been the most challenging aspect of the project for each of you?

YM: I did not know we had caused a stir, but glad to hear it. Sidecar Learning is an e-learning platform where you can create interactive, authentic tutorials using any web content from databases to web pages to web forms. The idea really came out of necessity. It grew out of the Guide on the Side, an open source tool, which was developed at the **University of Arizona** some years ago. It was a great tool that won some national awards and that **Jason** and I used with our students daily. Unfortunately, our Library did not have the resources to make updates to it, add new features, or host it for other libraries. **Jason** and I still used it a lot and did not want to see it die, so we thought of different ways that we could maintain it and improve upon it. We eventually settled on developing a whole new product with our tech transfer office, Tech Launch Arizona, and received a grant from them to create a new product which turned into Sidecar Learning.

I think the most interesting aspect of Sidecar Learning is how easy it is to create tutorials. I have been working with e-learning tools for over a decade now and each year they become easier and easier to use, so I knew we needed something that a librarian could learn to use in minutes. It is also incredibly interactive for the end user. Learners aren't just watching how to do something like using a database, but rather they are learning as they are actually using it. That is authentic learning at its best.

The most challenging part of starting Sidecar Learning has been the software design and development process. We knew what features we wanted but were never entirely sure if it could be done with our limited budget. We had a lot of help from some technology advisors along the way, but some did not really understand e-learning nor the user experience, so we had to know when to take advice and when to know that we knew better. So that was hard too, knowing when to trust our instincts even though we were navigating uncharted waters.

JD: The time commitment. There is always something to improve and another person to talk to. Also, you need to let people

go who aren't fitting into your company; they can really slow down the process, especially in a small team.

ATG: What specific role did each of you play in founding the company? What are your current roles? How many people are currently part of Sidecar Learning? How would you describe your business model?

YM: At the beginning, we both interviewed a lot of potential customers to better understand their needs, their process, and their pain points. We also both worked on the software specifications. **Jason** has taken over software development management and many of the business aspects. I am more focused on marketing, customer support, the user experience, and I act as the education lead. Currently, it is **Jason** and myself and **Kevin McLaughlin**, our lead advisor who has been with us since day one.

JD: We are both involved in every aspect of the company, but each of us has complimentary skills and each of us has our area of specialty where we take the lead. We are using the software as a service (SAAS) business model where individuals and institutions pay a yearly subscription fee for access to the platform. An individual can go to *www.sidecarlearning.com* and quickly sign up for a free trial or an individual subscription that can be paid monthly or by the year. Or an institution may choose to set up an enterprise-wide subscription that is discounted heavily and based off of the FTEs at the institution.

ATG: We understand that you all worked closely with another office at the University of Arizona campus called Tech Launch Arizona. Who are they? What services do they offer the UA campus? What specific help did they provide in getting Sidecar Learning off the ground?

JD: Tech Launch Arizona was formed by President **Ann Weaver Hart** with the goal of supporting the **University of Arizona's** inventors to bring their intellectual property to market. The Tech Parks, Corporate Relations, Tech Transfer, and other resources were brought under one roof so that they could coordinate and better support the IP at the **University of Arizona**. Before, if you invented something

you had to form a company to bring it to market on your own, now TLA has a team of advisors to support your efforts to launch a startup. If the inventor chooses, they also support the inventor by finding companies that are interested in licensing the IP of the inventor, that way the inventor can maintain their focus on research and discovery without needing to be distracted by commercial interests.

YM: Tech Launch Arizona has been amazing. They have provided us with excellent advisors, helped us out in putting together pitches, and awarded us with development funds through their Asset Development Program. They have also helped with our commercialization process and they licensed us.

ATG: Evidently, the McGuire Program for Entrepreneurship and the UA Eller College of Management were also involved. What can you tell us about the roles they played? How did their efforts contribute to the project?

JD: I have been the liaison librarian for the **Eller College of Management** since I began working at the **University of Arizona** in 2012. In 2013 or so I began working with the **McGuire Center for Entrepreneurship** which is part of **Eller**. Just being in an environment like **Eller** and **McGuire** exposes you to entrepreneurial thinking and provides a lot of opportunities to learn. I have been embedded in the **McGuire** program for the last four years and during that time period, I have taken the opportunity to not only teach competitive intelligence research but also learn and pick the brains of the many accomplished entrepreneurs who work there and have graduated from there. There is a real sense of community and an ethos of sharing. Many people at the **McGuire Center** have provided us with valuable feedback and guidance throughout the process of building the platform.

ATG: Is seems that entrepreneurship is promoted on the UA campus, as well as the UA library. Based on your experience at UA, what role do each of you think entrepreneurship could/should play in today's academic library? Do you all have any words of wisdom for other librarians that have a great idea they would like to pursue?

YM: With rising costs especially when it comes to resources and shrinking budgets, I think academic libraries can't afford to not consider entrepreneurship. At the onset of this

venture, **Jason** and I did not want to necessarily develop a software program for commercialization, but we realized it was the only way we could sustain the platform and enhance it. I think there are a lot of librarians and libraries doing some pretty innovative things that others outside of libraries and beyond academia would be interested in. My advice to other librarians would be if they have a great idea, find a way to pursue it and turn it into something bigger. That may happen with a grant, with another department, or with a tech transfer office. But first, talk to your potential customers, to a lot of them. Find out if your idea is something that they truly need and listen to them. Ask the right questions, and more than anything, listen to what they have to say.

JD: Yes, entrepreneurship is promoted at the **UofA**. I think that the lean startup toolkit provides a strong framework to experiment and to fail fast in an attempt to understand our researchers and the public. It is a great tool to move away from the centralized decision making and allow the people on the front lines of libraries, the ones that know our users the best, to quickly recognize and respond to needs that align with the strategic initiative of their library. My only advice is to listen to your users and to create something that they need at the point of need.

ATG: Jason you just mentioned the "lean startup toolkit" and the concept of failing fast. Can you clarify? What is the "lean startup toolkit"? What does it mean to fail fast? Why is it beneficial?

JD: The lean startup tool kit originates from the **Eric Ries** book, *The Lean Startup*. You can watch his presentation on **Google** here: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEvKo-90qBns*. The idea behind this book is to build stuff that people want, not what you perceive that they need and to do this with spending as little money as possible.

The idea behind failing fast is asking the people who are your potential customers if your idea/product/service solves a problem that they are willing to pay for in some way. That can be with their money, their time, their efforts, but they must be willing to invest in your product. Traditionally, what you find with engineers is that they are great at building things, but most of the time they build things that nobody wants. Failing fast is an attempt to get the engineers out of the office and to use their great skills to build things that solve problems that people are willing to pay for. When you fail fast you learn what people want without investing a lot of money. Research has shown that people who write the most articles, invent the most things, etc. are more likely to succeed; they also fail the most. We must embrace this in libraries so that we can create novel products and services that people need. We are lucky that we deal with people everyday who have real research needs because of this we can create beautiful products and services that solve real information problems.

ATG: It also appears to us that the situation at the University of Arizona is unique. Academe is often not supportive of new initiative and entrepreneurial efforts. Why do you think the UofA is an exception to that rule?

JD: I don't know what it is like at other universities, but we have found a lot of support from Tech Launch Arizona, the **McGuire Center for Entrepreneurship**, Startup Tucson here at the **University of Arizona**, and Tucson in general. I think that we are all looking for new sources of revenue, and no, licensing and startups are NOT going to fill the fiscal hole that state institutions find themselves in due to unjustified budget cuts. It is still true; the best way to increase your city, state, or country's GDP is to invest in education. An individual with a BA (on average) will out earn a person with just a high school degree by over a million dollars over their lifetimes and the person with a BA will have a better quality of life. For whatever reason this isn't recognized in our budgets coming from the states and at the national level, so here at the **U of A** it has pushed us to look for novel ways to generate funding. Our institution from the last two presidents down has been quite supportive, and in that we are fortunate.

ATG: How has the library community responded to Sidecar Learning? Has anything surprised either of you about how the community has responded?

YM: We conducted a lot, a lot of interviews before we started designing the tool and when we shared our ideas and later our prototype, we received an overwhelmingly positive response. Librarians loved Guide on the Side, but many couldn't use it because they couldn't upload it on their servers. Others needed to track student progress and Guide on the Side could not do that, and those are some the features we built into Sidecar. What really surprised us was the response to creating a tool that was subscription based. We had anticipated some negative reactions but got just the opposite. One librarian we interviewed, told us "If you can do this, please charge us."

ATG: The University of Nebraska — Lincoln was your first customer. Can you tell us how that relationship started? What do you think led the University of Nebraska — Lincoln to Sidecar Learning? Have other libraries expressed similar interest?

YM: We had previously worked with one of their librarians, **Erica DeFrain**, and knew she was a heavy user and fan of Guide on the Side. We interviewed some folks at **Nebraska** early on during our discovery process, and they helped us a great deal in understanding how they taught information literacy and what they needed from an e-learning program. It was a natural fit. We have had a lot of interest from some **Greater Western Library Alliance** libraries, some overseas libraries especially **Leiden University** in the Netherlands, and some smaller community college libraries.

ATG: Do you have a formal marketing strategy to expand the company? If so, can you elaborate? Can you tell us a little bit about your funding and operational budget?

JD: We feel that we have a natural initial market with libraries and institutions of higher education, and that is our focus to start. But we have talked to people in other industries who feel that this tool would be an excellent fit for their training needs as well.

There are also opportunities for us to partner with established vendors. Users who have success initially using their resources are more likely to return and use them again and this is something that database providers, libraries, and educators all would like to see. The Sidecar platform allows learners to experience success using academic research tools the first time and that makes them less likely to rely on the standard **Google** search.

As far as funding is concerned, we have had the initial funding from Tech Launch Arizona. This funding allowed us to build the platform and we have taken a license from the University to be the sole vendor of the platform. We have talked to a number of people who are angel investors and venture capitalists who have shown interest in investing in the company, and we are moving forward in this manner to seek funding. But first, we want to get the platform out there, get more feedback, and see what type of interest there is.

ATG: What do you see as the future for Sidecar Learning? How do each of you see the company evolving in the three years? Five years?

JD: There are a number of different paths forward for the platform. We are really focused on making the tutorial creator's life easier as well as the learners. So in the next three to five years, we will be rolling out enhancements to support those two goals. We are interested in building out the customer success side of our company so that creators will have a team supporting their efforts to educate their students as well as providing frameworks that drive the learners' curiosity and aid their retention of information.

YM: I really see this as just the beginning. We have a lot more ideas for the platform and would like to expand beyond libraries to schools, companies, and anyone doing online training or learning. In three years we would like to have a bigger team including marketing and sales teams and an expert designer that understands the user experience. In five years, it would be great to have the ability to offer the platform to K-12 teachers at no charge.

ATG: Spearheading a start-up firm like Sidecar Learning — not to mention being fulltime librarians — demands a lot of time and energy. When/if you get that rare moment of down time, what do each of you enjoy doing? Do either of you have hobbies or outside interests?

JD: I have two wonderful (most of the time) daughters and a partner that I try to spend as much time as possible with. Aside from reading, I love to cook, hike, and watch wrestling (collegiate & Olympic styles) and soccer.

YM: Downtime is quite hard to find. In those rare moments, I like nothing better than hanging out with my amazing little girl and

seconds. That's why verified, reliable, curated content like that offered by **Britannica** is only growing in importance in an age of fake news and misinformation. That's why an increasing number of companies (and the ministries of education of countries around the world) want to partner with **Britannica**, because they realize the importance of reliable information and the companies that produce it.

ATG: However, you still do some print publishing. We noticed that Britannica's 250th anniversary collector's edition — your final yearbook — is a print product. In fact, you are listed as the author. Can you tell us about that project?

TP: We produce an occasional print product, here and there, but for all intents and purposes we're a 100 percent-digital company today. Our special one-volume collector's edition of **Britannica** — *the Encyclopaedia Britannica Anniversary Edition: 250 Years of Excellence, 1768-2018* — was a print product because it was the final edition of the print yearbooks that we've published since 1938. It was a pleasure and an honor to edit the final edition in this hallowed tradition.

ATG: As you look into the future, what adjustments do you anticipate Encyclopaedia Britannica having to make going forward? Do you envision any new services or products? Where do you see Encyclopaedia Britannica in the next few years?

TP: Britannica is thriving today, with products sold and used in 88 countries and contracts with companies and countries on every continent save Antarctica. And we're moving into the realm of voice-activated games and appliances, powered by artificial intelligence. As **Britannica** has proven over 250 years, it's not the medium (print) that made our products special, but rather our message and manner of producing and delivering reliable, verifiable, expert content. Our methods of publishing may have changed since 1768, but our mission hasn't. 🐝

taking my dogs out for long walks. I also try to travel abroad as much as possible. Of course, even when traveling I seem to be working!

ATG: Jason and Yvonne, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us. It's great to see librarians pursuing entrepreneurial efforts like Sidecar Learning. We wish you the best of luck.

JD: Thank you! We hope that your readers will find our platform useful and we can't wait to hear their feedback.

YM: Thanks so much for the opportunity! 🐝

Collecting to the Core — Gegenwartsromane, Contemporary German-Language Novels

by **Heidi Madden** (Librarian for Western European Studies, Duke University; Germanic Languages and Literature Subject Editor, *Resources for College Libraries*) <heidi.madden@duke.edu>

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*Column Editor's Note: The "Collecting to the Core" column highlights monographic works that are essential to the academic library within a particular discipline, inspired by the **Resources for College Libraries** bibliography (online at **http://www.rclweb.net**). In each essay, subject specialists introduce and explain the classic titles and topics that continue to remain relevant to the undergraduate curriculum and library collection. Disciplinary trends may shift, but some classics never go out of style. — AD*

Building a core collection of contemporary German-language novels, or *Gegenwartsromane*, comes with unique challenges. There is a mismatch between a library's budget and the huge publication output, so libraries often use core author lists as a collection development tool. The term "core" is a value judgement and any claims about the canon are debatable. How can a librarian gain confidence in creating such an author list? This article offers some context unique to German studies, together with a well-reasoned, sample core author list.

One of the first challenges in building a collection profile is defining a time frame. What period is designated as "contemporary"? Some might interpret contemporary literature as all living writers, others as new and emerging authors. The term may also refer to recently published novels on the market. In terms of building a collection profile, contemporary can also represent novels that contextualize our understanding of the present, the *Gegenwart*, and, as the sample list below will show, this means that the author list may extend back in time.

The second challenge in collecting contemporary literature is that it represents 25% of the publishing market in any given year, which makes it difficult to rightsize a library budget for the overall German studies collection. The bestseller list is not useful because both the German literary scene and German studies programs in the United States favor "serious" literature — literature recognized through prestigious literary prizes — over bestselling "entertainment," *Unterhaltungsliteratur*. For example, **Charlotte Roche** (b. 1978) gained popular attention with her book *Feuchtgebiete / Wetlands* (2008), but she is not (yet) considered a core author. Similarly, **Jenny Erpenbeck** (b. 1967) had international success with *Gehen, ging, gegangen / Go, Went, Gone* (2015), but has not (yet) received the volume of critical attention that suggests a core author. There are many metrics for ranking authors to help sift through the considerable number of candidates and some tools for researching authors and their critical reception are discussed below.

The third challenge is discovery. What tools can librarians use to get an overview of potential works and authors? Catalog searches in **Worldcat** are not helpful in identifying contemporary novels and catalog records certainly do not denote "this is a core author." Take, for example, the translation of **Arno Geiger's** novel *Der alte König in seinem Exil / The Old King in His Exile* (2011); it is cataloged with subjects including *Geiger, Arno; Dementia; Older people — Germany*. The **Worldcat** search *German literature — 21st century — History and criticism* can be used to find literary histories, but authoritative literary histories, as we know them for established periods, have not yet been written for the contemporary period. Literary historians struggle with the tension between understanding the unfinished, evolving nature of a writer's output and the desire to present an author's oeuvre and its organizing principles within intellectual genealogies. Another problem with literary histories and dictionaries is that critical reception and appreciation changes over time. The history of the *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon* is a case in point.[1] Its three editions illustrate the difficulty with defining the "canon": the first edition was seven volumes, the second edition was twenty volumes, and the third edition was seventeen volumes. The third edition of the print *Kindler* was published in 2009 and actually contains fewer entries than the second edition because it focused on a canon wherein entries comply with editors' criteria for world literature. The *Kindler* is an essential tool for literary research, but the print publication is now ten years old and while the online version is updated every year, it is not expanded with new entries.