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The Scholarly Publishing Scene — The Innovators

Column Editor: **Myer Kutz** (President, Myer Kutz Associates, Inc.) <myerkutz@aol.com>

One of the key contributors to the last heyday (2013-2017) of the **Association of American Publishers' Professional and Scholarly Publishing Division's (AAP/ PSP)** annual conference was **Darrell Gunter**. Genial, elegant, knowledgeable, and sharp, **Darrell** ran a plenary session, called *The Innovators*, that usually closed out the conference, which was held in Washington in early February. Despite being at the end of a long program spread over parts of two days, with a full day in between, and with Washington weather not at its best (there were blizzard forecasts on the eve of the conference's last day in 2013), the sessions were well attended.

The format was a simple one: representatives from entrepreneurial organizations would speak about products and services their companies offered, **Darrell** would ask questions himself, and then he would solicit further questions and comments from the audience. **Darrell** told me in a phone call in early November 2019 that he didn't want panelists to give sales pitches. He simply wanted them to describe what their companies were actually doing. Conference attendees must have been comfortable with the ways the presentations were tilted because the sessions went on for five years until the annual conference was suspended and changed. In any case, the sessions didn't veer off into replicas of *Shark Tank* TV episodes — no one in the audience offered on the spot to buy a stake in any of the companies — which isn't to say that arrangements might have been worked out later between the innovative companies and publishers and other organizations where conference attendees worked.

With his wide-ranging professional experience, **Darrell Gunter** was well-positioned to moderate these sessions before a publishing audience. A 1981 graduate of **Seton Hall University**, with a 1991 master's from **Lake Forest University** — both degrees are in business administration — he worked in marketing, sales, and management at **Xerox**, **Dow Jones**, **Elsevier**, **Collexis Holdings**, and the **American Institute of Physics** before starting his own management consulting firm, the **Gunter Media Group**, in November of 2010. The majority of **Darrell's** clients are in publishing. Since 2009, he's taught undergraduate and graduate courses in professional selling as an adjunct faculty member at **Seton Hall's Stillman School of Business Administration**, and he's taught at seminars held before **PSP** annual conferences.

Darrell was also co-chair of the **PSP** division's committee on digital innovation. That was a springboard of sorts for his sessions at **PSP** annual conferences. **Darrell** wasn't looking for entrepreneurs who were starting publishing companies or selling such traditional services as typesetting, printing, and wholesaling. Instead, he wanted conference attendees to hear from companies that were providing services that publishers needed to

succeed in the digital era. That so many such companies have been founded over the past two or three decades testifies to the changing nature of **PSP** publishing, and its relationship with authors, researchers, and libraries. The entrepreneurial companies **Darrell** was looking for — the key criterion for how he selected companies for his sessions — he told me, “had to be relatively new and had to be doing something innovative that would help the industry do better.”

Darrell used his industry contacts and Google searches to find these innovative companies. Over 20 of them presented in the five years he ran his sessions on innovation. I was at four of the five sessions in my role as **PSP** annual conference chronicler. (**Barbara Ford** covered the 2016 conference in my absence that year.) Our reports on the conferences appeared in the *PSP Bulletin*, which was published three or four times a year. What follows are brief and very lightly edited excerpts from my and **Barbara's** reports. (The full reports can be found at publishers.org/our-markets/professional-scholarly-publishing/psp-bulletin.) They give a flavor of what it was like to hear the presentations firsthand.

2013: The session featured innovators from several fledgling organizations, including **Veomed (Thomas Chandy)**, whose activities included delivering continuing medical education more efficiently, **Slicebooks (Brian Erwin)**, which operates a platform for slicing, remixing and customizing eBooks, and the **Edanz Group (Benjamin Shaw)**, which does such things as making videos in which editors of journals discuss their Aims and Scopes to facilitate author submissions.

2014: I heard presentations by **Marcia Allan, BioTech Solutions Enterprise Group**, about the clever ways her company gets researchers to use gamification for content aggregation, and **Steven Toole, Content Analyst Company**, about the heavy usage of semantic tools by the legal and intelligence communities.

2015: The session on innovation presented a group of clever products and services, including a user engagement and advertising platform for mobile devices (tapCLIQ), a bookstore for free eBooks that are already freely licensed (Unglue.it), a service that helps funding organizations make sure they're not about to fund research that other organizations are already funding (UberResearch) and a platform that enables students to study for standardized exams with a management system that primarily uses text messages from tutors (Prepcube). (Data show that 98% of text messages are actually read — not, one hopes, while student recipients of the texts are driving.)

2016: Start-up founders **Carol Barash (Story2)**, **Dmitry Green (Arximedes)**, **Tim Lloyd (LibLynx)** and **Karen McCord**

(**Breezio**) unveiled their respective new companies to 100+ attendees. **Story2** builds on the “Moments Method” and makes it scalable to the classroom. An online writing platform, **Story2** helps to “tell the stories only you can tell in the way only you can tell them.” Few of us would disagree with **Green's** statement that there is “the need to curate the sea of literature.” **Arximedes** augments traditional peer review by being a repository of community ratings for “sleeping beauties” (papers with no citations at first then BOOM! they are discovered). **LibLynx** offers a cloud-native service based on IAM (Identity & Access Management) with an API-centric design. **Lloyd** claims his system delivers agility to publishers in the sense that its functionality allows them to make small bets without great cost which can be quickly turned off if the product or service idea doesn't work. **McCord's** product, **Breezio**, is an engine that answers questions in an asynchronous way while searching and reading individual results.

2017: **Kent Anderson**, a veteran medical publisher and former mystery novelist (“I did three and I'm done,” he told me), talked about **Redlink**, which helps academic publishers, editors, readers, users and libraries employ data to streamline their collaborations, and **Redlink Network**, a public benefit company, which allows libraries and publishers to connect and collaborate to resolve access and support issues with a community-driven offering. **Prof. Peter Burnhill (University of Edinburgh)** talked

about several groups he's involved with that are dedicated to preserving the scholarly record, such as preventing “reference rot,” which can occur when web references are lost or content “drifts.” In those cases, you freeze content with note-taking software.

As illustrations, **Prof. Burnhill** used pictures of fish in various stages of decomposition. **Doctor Paul Kudlow** (on leave from his residency and working toward a PhD in bibliometrics and content discovery) talked about **TrendMD**, which deals with information overload and works to drive serendipity by annotating published articles with Netflix-style recommendations. The company has now gone beyond medical content. **Daniel Whaley** demoed the capabilities of **Hypothes.is**, an annotation trail provider that is intended to replace ubiquitous comments widgets, which don't work effectively because a comment is not placed next to the content being commented on. He annotated an Open Access law journal article, then went to the linked Congressional bill, where he inserted more annotations. There was some discussion during the Q&A as to whether he'd defaced the archived text of the bill. I found the session entertaining.

All of **Darrell Gunter's** innovation sessions were not only informative, but also entertaining. They were a great way to end **PSP** annual conferences and will be missed. 🐼