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@Brunning: People & Technology: At the Only Edge that Means Anything / How We Understand What We Do

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to the attention of users/readers. Quite a meta-
morphosis of vision from a firm conceived of
as a regional supplier of scholarly books to a
limited number of buyers.

We were well aware that we still had to walk
many a mile to reach such a lofty goal. But we
were well on the way. The Amsterdam office
was now acquiring all the scholarly books in
Western Europe. The London office was doing
the same for all UK scholarly books, as well as
profiling the books from both Western Europe
and the UK for input to the now fully automat-
ed Approval Plan. The Sydney office covered
the then growing Antipode output. The firm, of-
course, was able to fulfill all library-generated
orders, standing orders, and approval-plan titles
for libraries throughout much of the developed
world with the scholarly book output from
much of the developed world.

We were able to supply cataloging either
in the form of card sets of various contents
or in machine readable form. (The Dan-
ish National Library required 50 assorted
cards at one time.) We had brought up under
Don Chvatál’s direction (Don had come to
Portland from Texas to take on the complex
matters associated with providing cataloging
to a variety of libraries in a variety of formats)
the direction of the multi-year development
and implementation of a subject authority file
for the University of Texas system. This file,
when the work was completed, allowed us to
provide authoritative subject headings for our
original cataloging, as well. The extensive
cataloging data-base underlying this capacity
also permitted us to provide “instant” librar-
ies, the titles selected from our extensive
bibliographic database, fully-cataloged from
our massive cataloging database, and processed
for both undergraduate libraries and opening
day collections.

We had augmented our capacities for
selecting the books and assembling under-
graduate library systems of 50K-75K books
together with their catalogs to selecting the
books, assembling them, and cataloging and
processing them for opening-day collections
of 125K-250K books for newly established col-
leges and/or universities. In some cases these
collections were packaged in shelf-list order.
This procedure was followed so that the newly completed and
furnished library building and newly hired staff
had only to open the cartons in the indicated
sequence to expeditiously shelf the collect-
ion. Several such opening-day collections of
books were augmented by a collection of back
volumes of the basic journals in the subject
areas to which instruction/research were to be
oriented. In a few cases we also provided a
basic rare book collection in the subject areas
the nascent library planned to build toward.

At the end of decade of the 1960s I attended,
with Bernard Starkmann who ran our Am-
sterdam office, a meeting of the Scandinavian
libraries held in Copenhagen. Bernhard had
invited all the university and research library
librarians to an all-day session at which I
presented the total array of the services to
libraries that the firm had available. I outlined
the programs and their inter-relations using a
blackboard. The presentation took about six
hours and traced out the firm’s inter-related
programs beginning with orders and standing
orders initiated by a library through the flex-
ible approval programs, through cataloging, to
“instant” libraries. In the hotel that evening I
reflected on the day and was astonished by what
the Argonauts had accomplished in 20 years.
I had never thought of what we had done in
such a global and systematic way before. Our
attention had been narrowly focused upon the
planning and execution of one program and
then the next and how they related and the
connections to be made between each to cre-
ate what in the global view was an integrated
system for supplying all or part the prevailing
knowledge of Karl Popper’s Three Worlds and
the continuing and difficult efforts to extend
that understanding, as synthesized by thinkers
and writers around the world. But we, or I at
least, had never reflected upon the meaning of
the totality of the system and its contribution
to present-day conceptions. These satisfying
reﬂections were quickly replaced, however, by
the summoning up of all that remained to be ac-
complished, how much further this Argonauts’
voyage had to go, and what labors still faced
the band.

@Brunning: People & Technology

At the Only Edge that Means Anything / How We Understand What We Do

by Dennis Brunning (E Humanities Development Librarian, Arizona State University) <dennis.brunning@gmail.com>

Oh, Google

A
ge has settled in at the Googl
eplex. Page is CEO, and Schmidt is
kicked up to Chair, a cool 100 million eas

The complaint? There are
three: search spam, search neutrality,
and comprehensive search.

Like email spam, search spam are results that
game Google’s finely wrought algorithms.
Major offenders are content farms — Websites
that produce keyword-rich articles likely to
show up in Google’s organic search results. A
major content farm are the various properties
of Demand Media. This company, planning to
go public soon, generates pages of informative
material across many topics. The idea is simple
— get people to find your site and then click on
text or banner ads running on your site.

Google can work on mitigating search
results; it says so much about what is available.
Google thinks differently, they want results no
matter what.

Understandably the Google guys were
uncomfortable with zero results which was
almost as bad as irrelevant ones. To address
the “something relevant” issue, they boldly and
brilliantly borrowed yet another library science
philosophy into the “something relevant” issue, they boldly and
brilliantly borrowed yet another library science
philosophy into the “something relevant” issue, they boldly and
brilliantly borrowed yet another library science
philosophy into the “something relevant” issue, they boldly and
brilliantly borrowed yet another library science
tool. It’s called implicit Boolean vocabulary.

First, Google combined keywords rather
than united them. Then they took the “and”
word. Called implicit Boolean, this simple
move overcame automatic bad results usually
seen as too many and too wrong.

But as any librarian knows, three keywords
are often too many and two not enough to avoid
“negative success.” Librarians appreciate no

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Against the Grain / February 2011

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>
Where the Wild Things Are eBooks: Google eBookstore

After a long and hot 2009 in e-book publishing that saw device makers and publishers roll out e-readers and books they’d sell for them, 2010 was less turbulent, less interesting. Out of the perfect storm we seemed to lose wind in a horse latitude of waiting. Readers sold widely; sales continued to trend up. Somewhere along the line we learned more new e-titles were sold than hardcover. Somehow, it was hard to imagine; what with e-book retail price often being far less than half-price on publication. Some of us might have thought, gee, I may need an approval plan for these purchases. Oh, wait, that would double the price — my bad.

Google did open its long-awaited bookstore. Like all things Google it didn’t have a grand opening; it rolled out with a brief blog announcement. The news media covered the story. But it didn’t disrupt, no dire predictions of Amazon or Apple being significantly challenged. The seven-year parturition may have had something to do with it.

Too long? Larry Page announced Google's intent in 2003 to partner with key libraries to scan and digitize their collections while honoring copyright owners. This was when Google was still young, private, and yearning to do no evil. Once Google went public and everyone got rich and serious, things changed. Building the book database became let’s vacuum up all book content from the libraries, scan, digitize, and require copyright owners to opt out. As social media sites have discovered, the opt out strategy is so pre-2005. As Google still is finding out, no one enjoys guarding intellectual property through 24/7 due diligence. Why should publishers or authors have to ask Google not to sell their books? Well, even though the most immediately miffed, the Writer’s Guild and the American Society of Publishers, did figure out a workable settlement to the copy now, pay later approach Google took, it has yet to square with foreign publishers, miscellaneous authors and publishers, and the U.S. Department of Justice.

Google eBookstore, launched in early December 2010; it is all about getting unstuck and getting to market with something. Like just about every product since Gmail, it is Google good enough. It is designed for Web browsers no matter where you find them. Any device that can point to “the cloud” and runs a Web browser can work with Google's eBookstore. But, since most publishers prefer selling downloads of books, there are few publishers working in Google's cloud. Until this changes, you are reading out of copyright and little else at Google.

For the word on Google eBookstore, grab TCAt’s managing editor, George Machovec’s, excellent summary of Google’s eBook market entry.

Kudos — Haank’s A lot!

When you Google “Derk Haank + interview,” the Web rewards you with over 68,000 links. Disambiguate false hits (Henks Derk, Dirk Henk, Henk the Derk), you reach what clarity the Web will allow and Springer’s CEO since 2004, a period of significant challenge for STM publishers, dials into clarity. Derk Henks owns a message that defines precisely his company’s position in scientific publishing.

It is an operational message. Springer is a publisher for scientists, and publishing is its business. There are two customers: the scientist and Springer’s shareholders.

Haank’s interviews are a model of a CEO’s ability and knack for staying on message. They also document a life spent on the world library circuit stating the case. Can you imagine the frequent flyer miles? Henk’s travel database would be worth the price of a Springer journal.

Haank’s several decades of publishing are ours. The explosion of scientific publishing, the pricing as steep as a Saturn launch, the cold reentry splash of open access — all on Haank’s watch which is our watch. Anyway, in 2004, stamping the STM circuit in romantic, exquisite Barcelona, we heard the now head of Springer talk straight about STM publishing. His message: the format was pdf, the distribution method, the Internet, the cost, whatever the market made it, subscription or open access.

Think what you will of the message, the message is intact and complete. You know where you stand with the Springer King.