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ATG Interviews Max Phua

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ATG Interviews Max Phua

World Scientific Publishing Co.

by John Long (John Long Associates) <JohnLong429@gmail.com>

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

To follow is a conversation between John Long and Max Phua of World Scientific Publishing Co.

JL: Could you give our readers a little history lesson in how WSPC began its publishing business?

MP: World Scientific Publishing was established by our chairman Dr. K. K. Phua and managing director Mrs. Doreen Liu over 30 years ago for two primary reasons — to create a community-minded and author-centric independent publisher which provides great service to both our authors and readers and to publish high-quality content from scientists around the world. Nobel Laureates in Physics Professor C. N. Yang and Professor Abdul Salam at that time felt many quality books and journal papers written by researchers from developing countries like China, India, South America, and Eastern Europe were not given enough attention and not published in international journals or their books were not marketed internationally, and had advised our founders to establish a truly global academic publisher with the mission to disseminate high-quality and relevant research and knowledge globally.

JL: You indicated that you had recently returned from India where WSPC has an office in Chennai. WSPC has a salient representation throughout Asia, but could you tell us a little bit about WSPC’s global activities?

MP: Around fifty percent of our market and authors are from North and South America, twenty-five percent from Europe and the rest from Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. Our two largest offices outside Asia are in New Jersey and London where we have around 15 colleagues in each office performing editorial, sales/marketing, and customer service roles. All our offices are closely integrated, and we operate very much like a single entity allowing quick response to authors, readers, librarians, distributors, and agents. Our headquarters in Singapore is a melting pot of colleagues from all over the world allowing us to understand the needs of our global customers.

JL: The wide scope of your publishing program is astonishing. I first became aware of WSPC in the late 1970’s and WSPC’s publishing program in physics. I think you have about twenty different subject areas now. Could you comment?

MP: We started our publishing program in Physics as our chairman was a scientist in the area of High Energy Physics. He was recently awarded an APS fellowship. We expanded to

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other areas in Physical Sciences and Engineering after scientists around the world learned of our mission and support what we are trying to accomplish. Over the last 15 years, our publishing program has grown to include fields in life sciences, medicine, environmental science, business, economics, and Asian Studies. We are also developing significant and important programs on nanotechnology, energy, and materials science.

JL: I noticed that your physics publishing program includes authors such as Nobel Laureates Claude Cohen-Tannoudji (1997) and Leon Cooper (1972). Can you talk about some of your authors?

MP: One of the core missions of World Scientific is to work closely with our authors and provide them with as much support, from manuscript preparation to sales and marketing. A majority of our authors are very satisfied with working with us, and many are close friends whom we work with for many years. We are honored to have many Nobel Laureates like Claude Cohen-Tannoudji and Leon Cooper among our authors and also long-standing relations with Nobel Laureates like P. W. Anderson, Ahmed Zewail, and U.S. Secretary of Energy Steve Chu, himself a Nobel Prize winner. Some Nobel Laureates like Eric Maskin, who is the book series editor of our Series on Economic Theory, works closely with us to publish and develop the best books in their fields. Our authors are our partners, and we strive to continue developing and improving on our author-centric culture.

JL: Tell us about WSPC’s eBook publishing program? I understand that you publish about 300 new eBook titles per year.

MP: We publish around 300 new eBooks a year and have around 5,000 eBooks in total so far. We have been developing our reference book program with e-versions of many top-quality handbooks and MRWs in the pipeline. Our yearly eBooks program looks to grow to 500 in the next three years. We have both a pick-and-choose model and also subject collections from various science and technology disciplines to business and medicine. We have received tremendous support from librarians on our eBook program and look to work closely with librarians to serve the information needs of their users.

JL: Just looking at one example, WSPC has a large publishing program with regard to nanotechnology, and I think that ATG readers are probably wondering how WSPC tracks hot areas (like nano) throughout the sciences.

MP: In addition to our in-house publishers and editors, our many authors are former professors, scientists, and lecturers, who we ask the advise of our managing editors, journal or book series board members, individual authors, and our network of advisors to spot trends and identify hot areas to publish. One good example, is the World Scientific Series in Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, of which the chief editor is Frans Spaepen from Harvard. Together with an editorial board consisting of world-leading academics in this field like Dawn Borell (UPenn), Jeff Grossman (MIT), Mark Lundstrom (Purdue), and Mark Reed (Yale), we are able to obtain good advise and insights in the field of nanotechnology so that the content and research we publish are at the forefront of the field, providing readers with high-quality and useful information.

JL: Thanks so much for keeping ATG readers apprised of WSPC’s fascinating, professional, and STM publishing activities.