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McHUGH EXPERT INTERVIEW

Innovations in STM Publishing:
An Interview with Mark Mandelbaum, ICST

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the **McHugh Expert Interviews** is to learn from leaders in the publishing business. In selecting experts to interview, I ask "What experience do they have in a specialty that will help my readers to do their jobs better?" Therefore, I search out executives who have been successful in their leadership positions and who have substantial knowledge to share with you.

One executive who matches perfectly with these criteria is Mark Mandelbaum. Mark was the long time Director of Publications at ACM and is currently the Executive Director/Director of Publications at ICST. Mark has also been an active member of CESSE and SSP.

In our discussion we will use the term "publications" broadly to encompass the output of associations and societies to include: journals, standards, transactions, magazines, conference proceedings, and SIG (special interest group) newsletters. When a subset publication is referred to in a question, it will be identified as such.

In our interview I will ask Mark to comment on:
• ACM Transition to Digital
• Digital Libraries
• Authors and Copyright Transfer
• Copyright Policy and Digital Publications
• ICST
• Open Access and STM Publishing
• Libraries and Publishers
• Dealing with Content Aggregators

Finally, since our interview will use copyright terminology, you may want to keep handy **McHugh's Rights Permissions Glossary,** which is available at

http://www.johnbmchugh.com/rights_permissions.htm

TRANSITION AT ACM

Q   As ACM Publications made the transition from paper publications to both digital and paper, what were the lessons learned?

A   Several lessons: 1) Involve your community! Work with an external (volunteer/member) committee to help define what the community wants/needs. 2) Involve the staff! Work with an internal committee (IT, Finance, Marketing, Sales, Editorial), for implementation, and buy-in. 3) Don't be afraid to experiment and/or to make mistakes.

Q   What research did you base the transition on?

A   At the time ACM went to digital, there was very little research to base the transition on. We were fortunate that we were in the computer science field, so we had very bright and knowledgeable volunteers helping.

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Q   How did you predict income from digital subscriptions? What subscription model did you use to ensure you would recover all costs plus generate a "respectable" margin?

A   We guessed! We made assumptions all over the place: 25 percent decline in library print subscriptions in the first year; 20 percent decline in member subscriptions in the first year. Keep in mind, we launched the ACM Digital Library and electronic publications in 1998! There were no models, no empirical data on how to price electronic subscriptions. In 1997 we announced our Digital Library and electronic publishing plans to the ACM membership, and asked each member for a voluntary contribution of $15. We got a pretty good response and the idea was that this "fund" would act as a reserve against huge declines in print, AND also act as a capital fund to develop/enhance electronic publishing if the revenues held up.

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Q   As you made the transition to digital, at ACM, how did you accommodate constituencies with vested interests including members, publication committees, SIGs, governance, and staff? How did you understand the needs of your customers including subscribers, content aggregators, and libraries? What were the challenges politically?

A   No political challenges, as the entire ACM Management staff and Volunteer Governance were in agreement that this is the right direction for ACM. At that time, too, libraries were consolidating into consortia for the purpose of "bulk" buying from publishers, so our major market was ready for the revolution. Since at ACM, the SIGs were responsible for generating conferences and proceedings, we recognized their contributions to the literature and gave the SIGs 30 percent of net Digital Library profits to help to further develop their activities.

Q   What is the ACM Digital Library? How did you think of that idea? What were the key factors that enabled ACM to create the Digital Library? What are primary benefits of the ACM Digital Library to your customers?

A   The ACM Digital Library was conceived back in the late '90s as nothing more than a full-text repository of all ACM Journals, magazines, books, conference proceedings, newsletters, etc., to be made available to ACM members for research. As we developed the thinking, plus as the internet/web was exploding, we evolved into a more commercial view of the DL as a commodity and product. The key enablers were 1) that our audience/members were already receptive and supportive, if not demanding for such a service/product; and 2) that we had a primitive online bibliographic citation database (the ACM Guide to Computing Literature), which had already defined a taxonomy of Computer Science literature, which made indexing and metadata creation very easy.

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Q   Who can subscribe to the Digital Library? Are there any restrictions as to who is eligible to subscribe to the Digital Library?

A   Only ACM members and institutions can subscribe. An individual must join ACM to be able to subscribe to the DL.

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COPYRIGHT LICENSING

Q   How did you deal with authors' concerns over the breadth of the transfer of rights in digital publishing? How did you address some authors' concerns that the copyright transfer is too open-ended with many unknowns?

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A We made it very clear in our policies available online and on our copyright transfer form what rights the author retains. We also allowed the author a lot of latitude to post their submitted content to their own and/or employers' web sites. We addressed some of the authors' concerns by trying to be very specific with the copyright policies. And based on the relatively tiny amount of comments/criticisms, it was working.

Q How should an organization navigate the statutory work for hire limitation imposed on employees on the transfer agreement?

A Have a separate agreement or put it in the employee's contract. It's not a big problem anymore as far as I am aware.

Q How does one deal with officers or employees in the United States Government being unable to transfer copyright?

A Have a section of the copyright transfer form related to U.S. Government employees, where the author acknowledges he/she is a Government employee or under contract to the U.S. Government, and therefore the work is not copyrightable and in the public domain.

Q In the transfer of copyright scenario, rather than license arrangement, what rights do you recommend being held by the author and original copyright holder?

A

• All other proprietary rights to the work such as patent

• The right to reuse any portion of the work, without fee, in future works of the author's own

• The right to revise the work

• The right to post author-prepared versions of the work covered by copyright in a personal collection on their own home page and on a publicly accessible server of their employer, and in a repository legally mandated by the agency funding the research on which the work is based.

• The right of an employer that originally owned copyright to distribute definitive copies of its author-employee's work within its organization.

Authors may post works on public repositories before acceptance but must incorporate the Publisher's copyright notice upon transfer of copyright.

After acceptance, authors may post the work on public repositories only with the explicit permission of the Publisher.

Q ACM needed to revise its copyright policy as it made the digital migration. So with respect to your experience in developing a new ACM copyright policy, where did you start the process?

A The process was started with a volunteer/staff committee that reviewed the situation at that time, and tried to anticipate what the electronic publishing issues relating to copyright would be.

Q How did you time the rollout of the Digital Library and revised copyright policy so they would be in sync?

A Not really timed that way. The DL was officially launched in January 1998, and the next revised version was posted November 1998. The interval was used for monitoring and reporting copyright issues that might come up.

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Q   Who at ACM was involved in the formulation of the new ACM copyright policy? ACM staff? Volunteer members? Outside experts (including legal counsel)?

A   Volunteer and staff collaborated on the draft and, when completed, it was sent to the ACM counsel for review.

Q   What were the goals in revising the ACM copyright policy?

A   The goals were to be fair to the author without jeopardizing the existence of the organization.

Q   What were the lessons learned from your experience in revising the ACM copyright policy?

A   To paraphrase Winston Churchill's comment about democracy: "It's the worst form of government, except for all the others"! Copyright transfer was not the ideal situation, but it was better than the other options at the time.

Q   What advice do you have for others starting the process of revising their copyright policy?

A   Take a long hard look at Creative Commons and their hierarchy of rights to be retained by the author. This might be a viable alternative to copyright transfer for those societies or publishers with a very large, vocal community agitating for change in copyright policies. Or at least, experiment with one journal using the Creative Commons license.

Q   How does a publisher ensure full copyright compliance in the global marketplace and specifically in China, where one hears that there is lax protection of intellectual property and blatant piracy?

A   You can never be 100 percent sure. I suggest using a reputable agency to represent your organization. An agency can monitor the local publishing climate and see if there is unauthorized printing or duplication. I recommend the iGroup to monitor compliance, and to do sales representation in China and Asia as well. (http://www.igroupnet.com/)

Q   What is the impact of European Union Copyright Policy on STM publishers? What is really important for U.S. publishers to know?

A   Not much impact. The major differences are that the EU has a copyright policy that is much more protective of and catering to authors. In particular the EU policy is explicit with regards to the "moral rights of authors." The Institute for Computer Sciences, Social Informatics and Telecommunications Engineering, (ICST)

Q   What is ICST?

A   ICST is a nonprofit, membership-based organization that organizes over 120 conferences and workshops annually, as well as publishing some 28 journals, a book series, and an online magazine. ICST looks to disseminate and foster innovation, rather than "pure" research in its conferences and publishing activities.

Q   What innovative things is ICST doing?

A   ICST is doing some pretty interesting things with respect to peer-review publishing. Rather than rely on the same, centuries-old closed-door decision-making about submitted papers, ICST is using web 2.0 technologies across the entire scholarly publishing process. In particular, ICST is implementing a unique "bidding" system for reviewing submitted papers. When a paper is submitted to an ICST journal (through the ICST

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eSCRIPTS manuscript and review system), the availability of that paper for review is emailed to those members whose interests match the papers via a keyword matching system. All reviewers who are interested in reviewing the paper then reply to the email, and the software then looks at the respondents H-factor, and other related data, and then finds the winning bidder based solely on their objective accomplishments. We believe this is the future of peer review given the technologies now available. http://icst.org/e-scripts/

A second area of innovation is our Science Rewards Program (SRP). We give points for an individual member's involvement in ICST. So, one can get points for volunteering to serve on a committee, for submitting a paper to a journal or conference, additional points upon that paper's acceptance, points for reviewing papers, etc. These points are redeemable to offset conference registration fees, reduced journal subscription fees, book prices, etc. http://icst.org/science-rewards-program/

Finally, a third area of innovation is in the ICST AGORA. This is a community-based system where members can apply for open volunteer positions; propose new books, journals, and conferences; and comment and vote on other members' proposals for new books, conferences and journals. How does ICST fit into the spectrum of technical societies for computer scientists and telecommunications professionals? Would ICST be considered a "primary" or "secondary" society for your members? It would be a primary society for those in the areas of internet/web engineering, mobile technology, and software development. It could be a secondary society for the more pure researchers in Computer Science.

Q   What percentage of ICST's membership is in the U.S.?

A   About 20 percent in the U.S., 15 percent in Asia/Middle East; and the rest based in Europe.

Q   How does ICST fund its operations?

A   Primarily through its conferences and workshop revenues. How much does a membership cost? Another innovation. Membership is free.

Q   What else do we need to know about ICST?

A   Additional information can be found at www.icst.org

WRAP UP

Q   How would you respond to the "information should be free" notion; namely, that "information provided digitally should be free as there are no print, distribution, or postage costs in digital publishing"?

A   But there are costs for quality control (peer-review), systems, and software maintenance and development; delivering the data; implementing web 2.0 and ongoing technologies, etc. The costs for disseminating scientific literature have not gone away, just shifted elsewhere. If you look at the trends, more web publishers (online newspapers and magazines) are starting to or are considering charging for content that has been free to date. Information must not be free, just reasonably (cheaply) priced. Some contend that open access will destroy the scholarly journal subscription model and, therefore, the underlying economics supporting scholarly publishing.

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Q What are your thoughts on this matter?

A Yes. I believe that open access is a noble, but bad idea that was turned into an art form. Open access as a response to the high subscription rates charges by the commercial publishers is understandable, but the scholarly societies became, or are becoming, collateral damage. The societies are the alternative to the commercial publishers, but the proponents of OA (not all of them) seem not to want to work with societies.

Q What are the copyright protection implications of open access? Will contributors and publishers lose control of their work in an open access model?

A Publishers will lose control; authors will gain control. But then the authors will have to deal with resolving requests for permission to use their works, making sure their works are not being plagiarized; paying for legal services if they discover plagiarism (getting a lawyer to write a letter of cease and desist, for example); also writing letters to the plagiarizers, their institutions, following up, etc. Be careful what you wish for. Along with greater copyright control comes greater responsibility that the publishers always undertook in exchange for copyright transfer. Let's not forget, while we focus on rights retained by authors in this new age, the responsibilities that those rights require.

Q How can STM publishers serve their library customers and still earn margins to ensure the financial stability of the publishing enterprise?

A There are two components of a publisher's offering: content, and features operating on that content (e.g., search, personalization, usage statistics, etc.). Publishers have to figure out the value of each component and charge accordingly, but also sensibly. Libraries are under extreme duress, and publishers should try to be a little more long-term oriented in that the lower prices that can be charged today are an investment in the future when economies will be better (we hope!). Librarians want better network licenses and more affordable licenses.

Q Do you have any suggestions for publishers on the subject of network licenses? What improvement in network licenses are librarians looking for?

A Both publishers and libraries need to work together through this transition to some clear way of charging for institutional-wide access. It seems that a direct, usage/download method would be a way, but there are too many unresolved issues for that to work today. The best way now may be a hybrid system: libraries pay a certain flat rate for access, and a variable rate for downloads, usage of advanced features, publisher assuming the role of archiving and preservation instead of the library, and other services that would be negotiated between library and publisher. But it has to be an a la carte menu to give the libraries the maximum choices.

Q What advice do you have for publishers when licensing content aggregators to disseminate their publications? How does a publisher achieve the best outcome for all involved including members, nonmember customers, and libraries while protecting its intellectual property and optimizing revenue?

A First, understand what content the aggregator is already providing; e.g., is the aggregator offering the content of one or more of your competitors? Second, discuss with librarians their views of the aggregators' offerings and get their feedback about how your content will meet their needs within the aggregator's total offerings to the library. Then determine what content you want to negotiate with the aggregator.

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If a publisher/society does not already have some kind of Librarians' Advisory Committee, get one ASAP! EDITOR NOTE, *How to Start a Publisher's Library Advisory Committee,* 2009, available at

http://www.johnbmchugh.com/periodicals.htm

Q   How do you avoid not getting overwhelmed by technical details during a migration to digital and still do your job as a publisher in regard to strategic matters?

A   It's not rocket science – rocket science is easy! Delegation is an answer, as is making sure there is a good team, especially in IT! There is a definite need for a publisher to be educated about the technology too.

Q   What is your vision of the future of the dissemination of STM publications?

A   Print goes away, but slowly

Publishers increasingly take on preservation and archiving, instead of libraries

Web 2.0 and future technologies deliver highly personalized information to users; publishers and users almost develop a 1:1 relationship based on personalization.

Microbusiness: Users pay for publishers' content down to the chapter or section level of a book or paper; maybe even a quarter for a paragraph!

Go to Africa: In 5-10 years this will be the China now. Since there was never much of an information/communications infrastructure (outside of South Africa) many nations are skipping copper wire and building fiber-optic and related advanced technologies. Now is the time to establish relationships with universities and libraries. Give them free content; establish prize competitions for best article or book; hold a conference or two there. Be innovative!

ABOUT MARK MANDELBAUM

Before joining ICST, Mark Mandelbaum has been Director of Publications at ACM from 1980 until December 2008. During this time, he led the development of thirty ACM Journals and Transactions, an ACM Book Series, seven magazines, and several redesigns of the ACM members' magazine, Communications. He also supervised the development of the world-class ACM Digital Library. He was responsible for marketing and sales of the ACM Digital Library, culminating in recent annual revenues of over U.S.$11 million. During Mark's tenure at ACM, he helped develop the ACM Copyright Policy, which was the first to recognize the impact of electronic publishing on intellectual property. Mark can be contacted at markman509@gmail.com

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ABOUT JOHN B. MCHUGH

John B. "Jack" McHugh, a 30-year veteran of the publishing business, is a long-time successful publishing consultant. He is the author of the ***McHugh Publishing Management Series***—80 practical papers on all aspects of publications management. He also publishes the **McHugh Expert Interview** series, interviews with publishing leaders on various publishing specialties. All of these are available free at www.johnbmchugh.com .

In the book publishing business, McHugh has worked as an executive for Houghton Mifflin, Wadsworth, and Saint Mary's Press. McHugh is also an experienced association publishing executive. For seven years, he was Publisher and Director of Programs at the American Society for Quality. For a two-year period, McHugh served as the Interim Publisher at the Project Management Institute. McHugh has advised a variety of association publishers including: Alliance for Children and Families, ASCD, ASTM, AWHONN, Boy Scouts of America, International Employee Benefit Foundation, NSTA, Police Executive Research Foundation, SAE, SMACNA and SNAME. McHugh has also worked for commercial publishers such as Butterworth Heinemann, Cardiotext, Kendall Hunt, and Llewellyn Worldwide. Jack McHugh's specialties include association/nonprofit publishing, book publishing, executive recruiting, journal publishing, rights and permissions, organizational design, and startups.

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