

No Shelf Required
Interview with Jordana Vincent

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Interviewer: Sue Polanka, No Shelf Required
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Sue Polanka:

Hi everybody, this is Sue Polanka with No shelf required. Today is Tuesday November the first, and I'm on the phone today with Jordana Vincent. She's a collection development librarian at the Douglas county libraries. Jordana, thanks for joining me today.

Jordana Vincent:

Thanks so much for having me Sue.

SP:

And Jordan and I met about two weeks ago out in Colorado for the Colorado library conference and she was telling me all the wonderful things that are going on at the Douglas county library, so that's what I wanted to focus our conversation on today, and let's start Jordana if you could tell me a little bit more about Douglas county libraries.

JV:

Sure we're located at about half an hour southwest of Denver Colorado. We serve a population of approximately two hundred ninety thousand people we employ about three hundred and sixteen people, and articulation and last year was eight point three million. We also have been voted the number library for our population size for the last two years.

SP:

Congratulations on that. So you've been in at least eBook news recently for some very innovative ideas related to ownership of the eBooks and other things can you tell me more about some of the ideas and projects that you're working on?

JV:

Absolutely, it basically all started with our purchasing of an adobe content server. We've realized that that was what overdrive refusing to host all of the content that we have been purchasing and once we realized that we didn't own the content that we are purchasing from overdrive, we started looking into the alternatives to that and the first step with purchasing the adobe content server, we also have a digital power wall which brilliant IT director Monique Sensei had sort of visualize and come up with at the request of our director Jamie LaRue, and sort of a walk in the door and have a giant I pad in your face to select E-content with. We were trying to figure out a way to market the E-content to the people could have the browsable experience that they do with.

Books. And the digital power wall came about because one of our greatest marketing tools in our libraries is what we call power walls which are just walls of different of our highest circulating sorts of areas. Like.

cooking or holidays or fitness that sort of thing, so Jamie wanted to recreate that experience for the digital content as well as the print content.

JV:

Monique is just amazing in terms of her ability to come up with a concept and bring it to fruition and through all of her research she decided to go with viewfinder as our discovery layer which enables us to put the content on the power wall and have people get recommendations, they can save their check out history so that they can choose things based on things that they have tapped out in the past. It's all been really interesting in terms of figuring out a way to market the digital content make it as browsable as the print content. We also are offering the ability to purchase digital content in fear of you know looking at something and it's not available it's checked out there's a wait list you can actually just click on buy it, and it will take you to Amazon or we can go through the tattered cover which is our local independent bookstore. We'll do it with whatever link that a person will provide to us to purchase their content so that's been a huge thing.

SP:

Excuse me for interrupting is that something that the patron then pays for or is that something that the libraries for?

JV:

At this time, it's something that the patron pays for, eventually we hope to have more patron driven acquisitions in which case they will select materials and then we will purchase them based on now following our guidelines and all that. You'll be able to request materials that way.

JV:

We've also been working on talking with publishers to purchase the eBook files ourselves and host them ourselves on the adobe content server which is huge because we don't own anything that we've purchased through overdrive and should we decide not to continue our relationship with them I can or want to pay the fees that keep rising we lose all of that content and we're trying to figure out a way that we can buy and own the content just as we do with a book or an audio book or a DVD are game anything that we are already purchased. We've had several relationships with publishers established and that is just really where everything in focus right now is talking to the publishers and figure out ways to get this content. And Jamie and Monique have been speaking all over the country which I'm sure you've seen. And they're everywhere, so we have had a lot of interest in what we are doing, and people contacting us to see how to go about replicating our model and how they can do something similar with their library or consortium that sort of thing. We recently signed a contract with 3M, to really explore all of our options are really keeping our options open because we do know that this won't work for everybody and we do need to acquire the content that our patrons want at the bottom of everything is just filling the patrons needs so we will continue to purchase however we need to make sure that we're getting the content that everybody wants. We also have a blue fire app. Again, Monique and her brilliance designed a white label blue fire app which is going to be on the iOS and android operating systems and apps and that's in the works as well.

SP:

Wow, I don't know when you all sleep. So, I'm really intrigued with the adobe content server into the local hosting project that you're working on. Tell me about how it how is it going you know trying to negotiate with the publishers to own content and where do you think this might head?

JV:

You know it's been really fascinating, and I have to say it's going rather well. There have been several publishers who right off the bat have wanted to participate. You know Gal with one of the first in terms of the bigger publishers that was willing to just give us the E-files content that we for the virtual reference library and so they've been great day got that to us and I mean that the overwhelming part of this is all getting into the catalog and all of that sort of thing so it's not really been the content as much as figure out how to get into the catalog and get it out there. You know we were the first public library in the country to purchase the adobe contents server, so we are kind of out there on our own figuring out how this all works and it's really been just an amazing learning experience for all of us I think and thankful to Monique so much because she just was able to pull this all together and make it happen and work and her fabulous team as also just coming up with API's and figuring out how to make this all work on the digital power while as well. So for my part of this I'm the one who's been basically contacting the publishers and as I've said they've been mostly receptive. Obviously the big six they're a little more hesitant.

JV:

They just really needed to be more of a bigger stakes kind of thing you know for them to set up to sell to one library time would be a little unrealistic. So, they're waiting to see how far we can bring this and how many libraries we can sort of get to follow us in this model and that's I think what it will take to get the bigger publishers. They're willing to talk to us which I think is pretty amazing but they're not willing to commit to. They probably have a bit more buying power behind them.

SP:

Right because obviously selling to Overdrive and 3M. and maybe a couple other ventures a lot easier than thousands of libraries right?

JV:

We Had a conversation last Friday with a very large publisher and that was basically what they said. They said we love that you're doing this, and we love that this will be a possibility and were not you know saying that this wouldn't be something we would do that it just isn't feasible found one library at a time.

SP:

But you do have some that are that are working with you? That's great.

JV:

And as I said Gale was one of the early adopters and, Learner publishing, which is it primarily as a juvenile, nonfiction and fiction publisher whom I happen to have a personal relationship with because I was honored by advisory board and once I spoke with them and that they were really willing to kind of be the Guinea pig. They really are so easy to work with and have made it such a pleasure that let me do a little. Spoiled by their whole process. We do have all of their content and might just testing records now and that sort of thing to make sure that that's working properly we did by I believe it was about a thousand eBooks and a hundred and twenty interactive children's books. So for the eBooks we got all of the files and will be hosting them ourselves and for the interactive books since they're not ePub style adobe content server doesn't have the ability to host those right now so we have a seamless connection to their platform to view these books.

SP:

Okay you've mentioned a couple times that getting the content into the catalog working with the records has been a challenge. Are there certain things specifically that?

JV:

Well.

It's a matter of how we're receiving the records and for us it's creating a new collection code and making them searchable and figuring out for the overdrive records. We can't search date picture books. So we're trying to fix that with the books that we're purchasing. So it's just been a lot of working with the catalogers and that and learner saying in terms of figuring out which feels we can attest in what we should put in the fields and how they would be even better searched the subject heading that would work best that sort of thing. Because we really want to eliminate that problem at the start if we can.

SP:

Absolutely.

JV:

That's one of the things people keep asking, how do I find the board books? We're like you can scroll.

SP:

Do you know the tile? (laughs)

SV:

Yes, exactly. Especially for story time, a lot of the children's librarians are asking you know how do I find a book that would be good for story time to incorporate the eBooks into story time and that's been a problem.

SP:

Well, that's great that you're able to add additional meta data hope that goes well for you. What advice do you have for other libraries who are thinking about offering this type of service?

JV:

You know it's funny I asked Jamie asking this question and he says: Do it! (laughs). So we're in that point in this whole process where we're a little behind the eight ball. We should have really seen this coming and maybe been a little more prepared. So we're working from instead of being out ahead of everyone you know we're trying to catch up with the aggregators and figure out how to do it ourselves so I think the biggest thing is to really just examine all of your options, and it's not to say that any one particular option or model or vendor or whatever will work for everybody, it's very different for every library there some libraries that don't have the funds to do what we're doing which is a reality in this economic climate and there's others who don't want the hassle of trying to figure out how to do this and hosting it themselves, they're perfectly happy you know going at 3M or a big retailer or anyone and letting them do all the work. So, we're not trying to tell everybody this is what you must do. We want to provide another viable option for people who do have the same interests that we do in terms of owning the content and making it accessible and managing it like we have books for hundreds of years. It really isn't much different it's just another format of what we've already been doing a really long time.

SP:

Many libraries don't have a Monique and a wonderful staff.

JV:

We are very fortunate to have Monique and Jamie and we have a programmer who is incredible and we have a lot of really meeting people at Douglas county so it's made this a lot easier I think than it could have been. But You know our advice just to examine your options and just be open to things and talk to people and leverage really need to be talking to each other to solve this rather than just saying I'm gonna boycott Harper Collins.

SP:

Right.

JV:

Because that doesn't solve anything that just puts everybody in a stagnant state so we're hoping to you know open up the conversation and open up the dialogue with publishers.

SP:

So your job as collection development librarian how has it changed with this new project?

JV:

I basically am doing two jobs right now. So initially my focus was all of the juvenile collections for our six and a half branches and I say half because one of them is only open four hours a week. But so I was giving all of the print for the juvenile and children's and audio books and then I was doing some of the adult and some of the overdrive and as soon as this changed it really changed when I went to BEA and I just sort of took it upon myself to start asking publishers about the possibilities of us purchasing their content and that was just a happy accident.

JV:

It really wasn't a planned thing and once I was in the city, walking around the big exhibit hall, it just kind of happened and I realize that I have been an ability to really communicate with these people and educate them on what we want and what's going on and trying to find the best solution for all of us. And so half of my time pretty much is spent contacting people, following up with people, emailing people. Jamie has called me the bulldog in terms of not relenting and getting all this stuff going and talking to people so and I've been pretty successful at it we have a lot of publishers that are kind of on the line right now where we're trying to come up with a standard boilerplate sort of agreement so that it's not a negotiation every time. Like right now the IPG contract is going through that process of figuring out all the little dotting your eyes and crossing your t's, all of those things.

SP:

That's great, it sounds like it's coming along nicely and obviously you all incredibly overworked but in the end, I hope that you have a great product and I hope that other libraries can learn from that and possibly replicate it. We can all be stronger together right.

JV:

That's our goal time to just provide another option for people.

SP:

That's great. So if somebody wanted more information about what you're doing or to follow some of the progress what's the best way for them to get more information?

JV:

They can email me directly at Jvincent@bclibraries.org. They could also email Monique, our associate director of IT, her name is Monique Scendce, S.C.E.N.D.C.E and its mscendce@bclibraries.org. And also, Jamie Twitters quite a bit about what he's doing and where he is. You can follow him at @Jaslar. I Twitter a bit as well and my handle is @livredame which is a fancy for book lady.

SP:

That's great. Wonderful, well thanks so much for your time today Jordana.

JV:

Thank you so much! It was a lot of fun, and as you can tell we're pretty excited.

SP:

Yeah, I think it's great. Well good luck to you.

JV:

Thank you.