

Mini-profile:

a day in the life of a director of library relations



BRUCE HETERICK

Director, Library Relations, JSTOR and Portico, pictured on a trip to Taiwan where he keynoted at the CONCERT meeting in Taipei

I've been fortunate enough to have been associated with JSTOR for almost a decade and to have had the opportunity to take on many different roles as JSTOR evolved from a small project funded by The Andrew W Mellon Foundation to an independent not-for-profit organization that plays an important role in the international research community. My main responsibilities revolve around managing global library outreach and participation for JSTOR and Portico. I also spend time establishing and managing our business relationships with our linking and discovery partners, as well as developing business models for the new initiatives that we undertake from time to time.

With so many interesting things on my plate, like many of you, no day is 'typical' for me. Not only do I travel extensively – both at home in the United States and abroad – but I also have the added complication that I live in the New England area of the US (Rhode Island, to be specific), and when I'm not traveling, I spend the week in JSTOR's New York City office. It's quite a hectic life, but it is one

that is always interesting and challenging. My wife, Jill, the saint to whom I have been married for the past 21 years, is used to me being away. Early on in our marriage, we made a deal that no matter where I was in the world – whether in NYC or Australia – I would call and wake her up at 6:15am, so that we could take a few minutes for ourselves before work and the kids take over the day. She has always been supportive of my work in libraries and higher education, but she'll be the first to tell you that our marriage has been successful because she only has to put up with me for three days a week.

On this past Monday, for instance, I awoke at 4:00am to get ready to catch the 5:45am train from Providence, RI to New York City. This is a trip that I've taken hundreds of times in the past nine years, so it is one that I can practically accomplish in my sleep. In fact, sometimes I probably do.

After calling my wife at 6:15am, I usually try to find a balance of catching up on e-mail and sleeping for the three-hour ride to New York's Penn Station.

I usually arrive at Penn Station around 9:00am, then I take the 20-minute walk to JSTOR's office in the Flatiron District of Manhattan. Once I set my bag down and get my computer turned on, the craziness of the day begins. JSTOR has about 30 folks in the New York office, with a much larger contingent in our Ann Arbor, Michigan offices. I also spend some time each week at Ithaka's office in midtown Manhattan (near the Mellon Foundation), and from time to time spend the day at Portico's main office in Princeton, NJ. There are lots of incredibly smart people throughout the Ithaka organization, so that makes each day a singular challenge just to 'keep up'.

Since the recent announcement that JSTOR and Ithaka have merged, there has been a great deal of additional strategic planning taking place. On this particular Monday, the new Ithaka management group is meeting to discuss the top priorities for the new organization in 2009, as well as outline how the fluid economic environment is affecting currency values amongst participating institutions in various countries. Over the past four years, new participation in JSTOR has evolved primarily from communities outside the US, to the point that participation in JSTOR from outside the US exceeds participation from within the US. As well, about 30% of the library participation in Portico comes from outside the US, so the currency fluctuations that are being felt in different countries are very important for us to understand.

Following the Ithaka management group meeting, I have a phone call with the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) in Germany to finalize some of the details of a national license that will offer JSTOR to over 100 institutions in the German research community. This is an important partnership for JSTOR – one that has been in discussions for nearly three years. With those details settled, I grab Jason Phillips – JSTOR's Associate Director for Library Relations – and we walk to a local deli to grab a quick sandwich and discuss some of the strategies that we're considering for reaching out to secondary schools outside of the US. The secondary school community is the fastest-growing community in terms of JSTOR participation. What started as a simple 'pilot' in 2002 has evolved into a community of participants that is now 600 schools, and growing. Most of that participation is in the US, but in 2008, we started to hear more and more from 'high schools' in other countries. A wonderful 'problem' to have, but a challenge

nonetheless given our outreach bandwidth for that community.

After finishing a sandwich, I then join a weekly conference call of the Portico management team. Working with Portico for the past three years has been an amazing experience, as it highlights in very stark terms how important long-term preservation is in this transitional 'moment' from print to electronic, and how much ongoing work it entails. I'm a 'techie' at heart – having started my working life as a developer, then cutting my teeth in the library world working for a library system provider back in the emerging days of personal computing and the Internet – so the information architecture aspects of building digital preservation systems are incredibly interesting to me. So, too, are the immense challenges that we (as a community) have just begun to address to try to put in place a strong safety net for our important e-resources. In response to these challenges at Portico, we're studying how best to preserve materials digitized locally by libraries while also broadening our preservation activities beyond e-journals to now include e-books. As I prepare to leave for Australia in a few days to attend the Online meeting in Sydney, I'm heartened to learn that Duke University Press has agreed to join Elsevier in preserving their e-books in Portico.

As the afternoon moves along, I have a good conversation with OCLC, as we finalize our agreement to send them metadata to expand the discovery of the journals in JSTOR to WorldCat. I also talk with Ithaka Strategic Services about an upcoming research project they are planning, offering some perspective from the library community about the subject at hand. I've never been a coffee drinker – in fact, I've never actually had a cup of coffee – but I've become addicted to the unsweetened green iced tea at Starbucks. I treat myself each day to an afternoon break at Starbucks (there are five stores within a two-minute walk from the office), but I almost always ruin the healthiness of the green tea by showing no self-restraint and indulging in a chocolate chip cookie the size of my face.

The late afternoon of this particular Monday is full of little interruptions about topics ranging from personnel issues to last-minute planning for ALA Midwinter in Denver, CO. In between, I'm trying to finalize my university visits in Australia, as well as try to figure out how I'm going to get from Sydney to Denver in time (and in a coherent

enough state) to speak at the JSTOR Participants' Meeting. Finally, at about 5:30pm, I get my first opportunity to look at the abundance of e-mail I've received during the day. I removed myself from all listservs several years ago in order to make the situation more manageable, but like unmatched socks in a dryer, the e-mails just seem to multiply without explanation. This is the most difficult thing for me, because as each year has gone by, I've become less and less able to keep up. If any of you have suggestions for me, I'm desperate for advice. I'd ask you to send me an e-mail, but ...

Around 8:15pm, I shut down the computer, say goodnight to the cleaning crew in the office, stop by my favorite pizza place (Patsy's), grab a couple of slices, and head to my home away from home: the Chelsea Savoy Hotel (not the famous 'Hotel Chelsea' where Bob Dylan composed songs and where Sid Vicious allegedly stabbed his girlfriend to death). I've been staying at the Chelsea Savoy for the past nine years, and while it is simple and unassuming, the people there have always taken care of me.

Once I get to my room, I check-in at home and see if any of my children need help with their homework. One of the downsides of this vagabond existence is that I don't get to see my four children as much as I'd like. However, I've become an expert at 'virtual parenting', and I've even gone as far as to implement video cameras on my laptop and home computer in an effort to more effectively parent (e.g. yell) at whomever my wife demands at the time. I remember when I first put these little gadgets in place, my 16-year-old asked me why I was implementing the video system. I told him it was because I wanted him to see the "pain in my face" as I told him for the umpteenth time to leave his seven-year-old sister alone.

With the chaos of home somewhat in control at the moment, I change clothes and head to the gym for a little decompression. Folks that know me know that I'm a 'gym rat'. I love to exercise and to play sports; and I love to follow my alma mater, Virginia Tech. I exercise every day, and I play a lot of golf when the weather is good. I had both of my



Bruce catching up with his favourite sport, helped by daughter Cary

hips replaced a couple of years ago, and after a ten-year break from competitive amateur golf, I've taken to playing tournaments once again. The results aren't as good as when I was younger, but I do enjoy the competition. I try to end each day with a smile on my face, so that means watching the 11:00pm re-run of 'Seinfeld' before falling asleep and starting it all over again.

Every day brings new and interesting opportunities in my work at JSTOR and Portico. It may seem like a crazy life to most ... but for me ... I can't imagine doing anything else.