



**INTERVIEW WITH MARCY PHELPS, PRESIDENT,  
ASSOC. OF INDEPENDENT INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS  
&  
LINDA RINK, CHAIR, AIIP INDUSTRY RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

KENNEALLY: We're coming to you from Washington, DC at the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference of the Special Libraries Association. My name is Chris Kenneally, director of Author Relations for the nonprofit Copyright Clearance Center. And we have two professionals here today with the Association of Independent Information Professionals and they've got a lot to say about their work as researchers and how it relates to the information industry. Joining me is Marcy Phelps, who is the president of Phelps Research, and she's also the new president for AIIP, which again, is the Association of Independent Information Professionals. And welcome to the program, Marcy.

PHELPS: Thank you very much. Glad to be here.

KENNEALLY: Well, it's good to have you. And joining us as well is Linda Rink, who is the president of RINK Consulting. And Linda is also AIIP's – she's the chair of the Industry Relations Committee, and welcome to the program, Linda.

RINK: It's a pleasure.

KENNEALLY: Well, let's get started right away and turn to you first, Marcy. And give us an introduction to AIIP, which probably ought to be better known because research is the core of what you do. And it seems to me today with the digital revolution, that the very fundamentals of research are changing. Talk about that a bit.

PHELPS: Well, we're an association of information business owners, and yes, many of our members are researchers. We also have library consultants, we have writers, editors, taxonomists, anything to do with information, the common ground being that we own our own business. We have about 600 members now and we're in approximately 22 countries, and we provide support and resources for people who own a business. We focus on the business aspect of it.

KENNEALLY: So what kind of training do your information professionals have and how do they sell their services to the world?

PHELPS: Well, many of our members have worked in the corporate environment. We've been with other companies and decide they want to be more entrepreneurial



and they go out on their own, so they use their connections. In those cases, many of them use their connections to market their business and they start that way. Some of us, like myself, started our business straight out of graduate school and we don't have those connections to get started, so we do a lot of networking. I do speaking and writing to promote my business. It's all word of mouth in developing relationships.

KENNEALLY: Well, Linda, you're the chair of AIIP's Industry Relations Committee.

What are some of the industries that more commonly use the services of your independent information professionals?

RINK: Well, we have a very diverse member base. We have people who specialize in the pharmaceutical industry, people who are business researchers primarily like Marcy and myself, people who do legal service support. You name it, there's probably a specialist within AIIP ranks that does it. So their customers will range from large corporations who outsource specialized research to people who specialize in helping startups, entrepreneurs like themselves, get their businesses off the ground.

KENNEALLY: And so at one moment in a business' development – perhaps it's all along the spectrum – should somebody think about hiring an independent information professional? Why would they need you, if you will?

RINK: I would say they need us from the get-go because in many instances, they have not done their homework, nor do they know how to do their homework on is there a niche for their business idea? How large is the market? Who are their prospects? Everything that goes into writing a business plan and developing a plan needs to get researched, and most people think that they can just go online and dabble around and get it, and that's not the case.

KENNEALLY: Well, in our audience for Beyond the Book, we have a lot of people who are in independent book publishing and they may be working in a certain niche and may need the kind of information you're talking about. But why go to you rather than, as you say, just do some Googling? Do you have access to information that the average person doesn't?

RINK: Yes, we do. Not all of it is free but that's why I'm the chair of the Vendor Relations Committee. We have relationships with many providers of information in all different categories and we give our members special benefits and discounts so that they have access to information that someone off the street wouldn't.

KENNEALLY: And in publishing, Marcy, have you had any experience in working with people? Do you interact? I'm sure you must because some of the research that



you're looking at has been produced by publishing houses large and small. What's the relationship you have with publishers?

PHELPS: Well, some of our members are publishers. Many of our members are writers and are published, have books. And we also are very active in informing our clients, too, about publishing and copyright issues.

KENNEALLY: So you're directing them to the resources? It's not just delivering them the information, but making them aware of what's out there. I think one of the things that's happened to people, and Linda was alluding to it, is that Google is the first and the last step they take in research. They think they researched whatever the topic may be because they put a couple of keywords into that little rectangle, but really, it's about making people aware of the resources, the databases that are out there. And then, the delivering it to them in a condensed way, but probably also as a continuing thing, making sure they know that they can go back to these resources again and again. Is that right?

PHELPS: In some cases, they can't go back to the resources because we're using proprietary databases, but we not only deliver the documents and the information but many of us do analysis and help our clients make sense of the information and we do provide ongoing updates. So it's a lot more than just finding the information, it's making sense of it and what does it mean to our client.

KENNEALLY: I think that's a really good point because at a program like SLA's conference, you realize just how much information there is out there. We're in an information glut, frankly, and making sense of it is absolutely important and knowing what you can use and what you cannot use is also important, as I've learned with my work at Copyright Clearance Center. There's a code of ethics, I think, that AIIP follows that gets involved with copyright. Tell us about that.

PHELPS: Yeah, so all our members follow a very strict code of ethics, and one of the elements of that code is that we not only have to adhere to and follow copyright laws, but we need to teach others about it. I do that almost on a daily basis with my clients who say well, that's a great article, can I distribute it to 500 of my closest friends? So in that respect, we educate them on what the conditions are for use of that article and how they can go about securing an article that they can distribute widely.

KENNEALLY: Well, again, that's often an impact of the digital world, I think. In the past, when people wanted to do serious research, they had to turn to serious researchers, really. They couldn't just go to the laptop and get that little rectangle and put the keywords in. And so the access to the information, that's a terrific



thing, but then once you have that access, you're not a trained professional. You don't know what to do with it.

PHELPS: Exactly. And even the Web information, people are under the misconception that if it's on the Web, that they can distribute it freely to other people. So again, we're educating our clients to tell them that's not always the case, and again, direct them to appropriate ways of using and distributing information.

KENNEALLY: Well, let me ask you Linda, as the chair of the Industry Relations Committee, do you have some objectives in the next few months or the next year that you're trying to achieve for AIIP? Any special plans?

RINK: Well, our objectives are always to make sure than any relationship we have is a win-win, that our industry partners and affiliates get as much out of the relationship as our members do. And I think that the reputation and the reach of AIIP is perhaps larger than many companies realize because our members not only have their own businesses, but they have clients large and small, and as Marcy said, many of them publish and write. So we are quite influential in our own way in the information world, in itself.

KENNEALLY: Well, I'm certainly impressed by what you do. I appreciate your coming over to Copyright Clearance Center's booth and introducing yourself, and hopefully we can continue the relationship and share some resources that we have at Copyright Clearance Center with your members, and then tell our audience at large about some of the services you offer. We've been chatting with Marcy Phelps, who's the president of Phelps Research and the new president of the Association of Independent Information Professionals. It's been a pleasure chatting with you, Marcy. Thanks for joining me.

PHELPS: Thanks so much for inviting me.

KENNEALLY: And we also had in our discussion Linda Rink, who is with RINK Consulting, based out of Philadelphia, and she is also the chair of AIIP's Industry Relations Committee. Linda, thanks for joining us.

RINK: Thank you. It was a great opportunity.

KENNEALLY: Well, again, as I mentioned earlier, we look forward to continuing the conversation about the resources available at [aiip.org](http://aiip.org), which is the Web site for the Association of Independent Information Professionals. And for Beyond the Book, this is Chris Kenneally, thanking you for joining us.

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