



Beyond the Book®



**Magellan Media Partner's Brian O'Leary
On Mobile's Move Into Research
Interview By Christopher Kenneally**

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KENNEALLY: What a difference a year makes. A great deal has happened in the world of smart phones and tablet computers, and we're here to learn more from Brian O'Leary, who is the principal of Magellan Media, and Brian, welcome to *Beyond the Book*.

O'LEARY: Thank you very much, Chris.

KENNEALLY: Well, it's a return visit for you, but on this particular topic, it's also a return to subject for you at the upcoming NFAIS conference. Last year, you were there to tell them about smartphones and mobile computing and what they could expect for their industry. You're returning because a great deal has happened in that time. Obviously, the introduction of the iPad, but much more than that.

Why don't we start by going back to last year? What was the state of the industry last year as you reported it to NFAIS?

O'LEARY: Sure. Well, I think that the first thing that we found was that there was significant growth in the smartphone or the more enhanced mobile phone devices. This is before the launch of the iPad, obviously, and although that was quite a bit of discussion. And one of the things that we were able to tell everybody who was attending, both in person as well as mobilely (sp?), they had it as a webinar, a live webinar.

It was the – this is a burgeoning market that broke across iPhones, smartphone type devices, mobile enhanced devices like BlackBerry, as well as netbooks, which were very viable then. Now we have the iPad in the mix as well, and while that has affected different segments of the reading populace differently, it's still an important consideration, particularly for this community.

KENNEALLY: Well, let's then zero in on this community, because a great deal in the media, of course, reports on the consumer adoption of these various devices, and how consumers are using them. Does that make a difference, and what are the differences between the consumer use and the professional use?

O'LEARY: Well, I think that the – they're both using them to serve a specific end. And I think that in general, readers have not picked up smartphones as widely as dedicated reading devices, so that there are people reading, for example, on an iPhone, or

sometimes even a BlackBerry, but that's not the long form reading experience. We are finding, though, quite a few scholarly and information driven professionals using devices like the iPhone and now the iPad to consume content, sometimes long form content, that is either timely, or updated, or data driven, because it suits their – how they use information, when they need it.

KENNEALLY: Well, in the research community, what are some of the results of your research that you're going to be reporting to NFAIS?

O'LEARY: Well, I think we found three different things that are of interest, particularly with respect to use of mobile devices in scholarly and professional information community.

The first is that both the iPad and the iPhone and their equivalents are being – they're – it's a good device, because the community is effectively, not closed, but well defined. Both the creators of information and the consumers of information overlap significantly. That creates an environment in which development of apps, dedicated data driven devices, to send information both to and from a particular community, is a really good fit in a mobile environment.

The second is that they are typically – they may not always need long form information, but – and sometimes they do, but the information they need is consistently data driven. And that's the kind of thing that an app is really well suited for. An app for a reading application, they're pretty well defined at this point, and that's on the consumer side.

But developing a dedicated app to serve a specific community works best and is most cost effective when there's a lot of data going back and forth, and that's the nature of their work.

KENNEALLY: And you're addressing the fundamental issue for research, which is not just gathering data, but making sense of that data, and then sharing it with the community that also cares about those questions.

O'LEARY: That's exactly right. And the – and an app, when it's well developed, helps serve that purpose, because it helps a user distill and refine sometimes the limited data that they get.

The third thing we found is that the use of color, essentially, and a larger display as you sometimes see in an iPad, is of real use for this community, because sometimes the display of information is not just text, but also graphics. And the graphics can be critically important for understanding the content in ways that are not necessarily as important for a consumer application like reading a novel or any sort of other book.

KENNEALLY: What about the way the individuals, as we were talking about interacting with information, one of the critical ways that people do that today, of course, is to share. Have you done any research on the sharing patterns and the reuse of information in this way?

O'LEARY: I have not yet to this point, although there is some good work being done by a variety of people active in the NFAIS community, starting to look into that. Because the advent of the devices – really, I mean, it's hard to imagine, but the iPad is really half a year old at this point. The long form, long term impact of these devices has not really been well established.

KENNEALLY: Well, let's say you get to come back next year in 2011. What are some questions you would hope you have answers to, and what surprises do you anticipate finding out when you get those questions answered?

O'LEARY: I think the big question is going to be built around workflow, because right now, we are still creating content, essentially, for containers – books, journals, magazines. And we necessarily strip out – when we do that, we strip out the metadata and the contextual framework that is critical to understanding content, particularly when you're doing it in the environments or markets that we're talking about today.

So I think that publishers are going to have to start to – essentially, start with context, develop a framework that allows them to capture lots of different rich aspects of content, that don't typically get printed or published, but are mission critical to better understanding, particularly when you're sending it through an app to a particular end user.

So I think a year from now, two years from now, you're going to see a lot more publishers thinking about how the information might be used before they actually create the content itself.

KENNEALLY: Well, I'm getting into deep water, I think, for someone like myself, but is that what we think of as Semantic Web?

O'LEARY: It's a component of Semantic Web. To do an effective semantic search, you want to have content that is deeply and richly tagged with a lot of source material and reference material.

It also, obviously, the semantic search works on word combination and a variety of other things. I think that we've lost a lot of that tagging – either we never did it, or it was implicit in the development of the initial content, but in fact, it's critical for ongoing growth of these applications, to be able to provide that context in an ongoing basis.

KENNEALLY: Well, I think what I'm hearing is that there's been a rush to get onto some of these devices that might have been – kind of too much of a rush, that some things, some critical components, thinking ahead strategically, may have been set aside or overlooked, or just said to be not so mission critical as just being there. So we have to not only be there, but be there with the proper kinds of data.

O'LEARY: I think that's fair, but I wouldn't blame anyone who moved quickly and maybe not as effectively as they might have. The reality is that you could plan forever and not do something. You learn by doing, and by doing something not as well, you wind up with – for example, you have an eBook, and then people start to talk about enhanced eBooks. Well, reality is, the enhancements existed before the eBook did. It's just that they were in the author's head, or the author's hands. They were sitting on the sideboards and got cut out when content was poured into a book.

And I think that we're learning now that by keeping that content digitally, and making the output the container an option, then I think that the end product will be much more usable, much more valuable, and ultimately, much more cost effective.

KENNEALLY: Well, you say we learn by doing. Another way we learn here at *Beyond the Book* and Copyright Clearance Center is by talking to Brian O'Leary, so I want to thank you, Brian O'Leary, principal of Magellan Media for joining me today.

O'LEARY: It's always my pleasure, Chris.

KENNEALLY: I look forward to having you back. For all of us at Copyright Clearance Center, this is Chris Kenneally. Have a great day.

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