

**Transcript: research interview May 2001. Location – (1) Book shop
Welsh border town ABC. First meeting. Time 10.30 am onwards.
Research reference for audio tape recording is 2105-01-WDR.
Blog- nil**

Transcription conventions

Web: client liaison rep for MMA (web development company)
Jwa: client of MMA
Mwa: client of MMA
Res: researcher/facilitator – working with MMA as part of a company development project

The bookshop is located in a central position in a small market town on the Welsh borders. This town is known as the *Bookcentre of the World* and is home to a significant number of booksellers. The clients J and M Wa (name withheld) found MMA through a book trade contact.

Web: {walking into the bookshop} Hi – we are here to m..

Jwa: Hi, I'm J(withheld), nice to meet, M (J's partner) is just making a call, come on in. {enter into the shop area}

Shop is built on several levels and has a number of very small rooms. We are currently in the street entrance level room and surrounded by books. Three alcoves in this area, all filled with books, steep stairs run upward from the shop entrance and a staircase leads down to a basement. Upstairs is signposted – natural history. Downstairs is signposted – antiquarian books

Web: {smiling} Good grief, I don't think I have ever seen so many books. You have a huge stock here

Jwa This is just the small room – it looks impressive'cos all every space is filled. But, we have over 115000 books on the shelves at any one time, plus another 'god knows how many in storage... I can't even get the car in the garage

Mwa {entering with tray of coffee} ... it's odd really we have to keep a huge stock, and so it seems that we are always crammed out {smiling}

Web: it is really impressive operation. The whole town is book shops – I'd never been here before and it is

Jwa we get people from all over the world here – and all year round. They come for just one thing- books

Res I'm fascinated. Are all these (sweeping hand around and pointing to the stock) second-hand?

Mwa By far the majority... we have a small stock of new texts... but it is such a specialist area that few new books are printed each year... our real trade is secondhand

Web is that the same for everyone in ABC

Jwa yes, most of us trade in secondhand specialist books and keep a small stock of new texts for our regular clients... but most people will use amazon or Waterstones when they want a new book – why drag all the way here ... or pay postage?

Web so, you are really second hand book specialists

Mwa Well, it is a huge area you know... but yes I suppose we are

Res Can we have a looked around the shop...

Jwa ...yeah – come on and have the tour...

Res ...I think it is really interesting

Jwa but mind where you go... I think we have wood rot upstairs

Res {walking up the stairs} I've noticed the signs you have around the place {entering another large area full of books}, I take it this is natural history

Mwa yeah – that is a our real specialism. According to one of our clients, we have one of the best collections in the world... he lives in Canada and buys lots from us..

Jwa yeah, this is the beginning of the natural history collections – but you can see it is grouped into different categories... and this room is reptiles

Maw but not paleo stuff ... that is on the third floor at the back... keeps it away from the kids

Res {following into the adjoining room}so, you are really well organized, I suppose you have to be with this huge collection. How do you think we can help?

Jwa well, we have had email for some time now, most of our clients use fax, phone and email to ask us to find a something for them. But, well, we thought maybe that a web site would make contact with us easier and we might get some additional trade that we are missing at the moment. Many other specialist booksellers are getting sites now [looks to partner]

Mwa {nodding agreement} yeah – that's right, I also think we may be missing out on some acquisitions too

Res sorry – I don't understand, can you explain that to me

Jwa soory – yeah – well we don't just sell secondhand books – we buy them too. Typically, we buy collections, library off-loads and personal collectors libraries. Buying the books is quite competitive... got to get to the sales, follow the press, check out leads and so on. We use the web to find collections all round the world...

Mwa but if someone had a collection to sell – well they would not find us – not unless they were a customer in the first place

Jwa or knew a customer who sent them to us... that has happened in the past

Web so you buy and sell second hand books and specialize in natural history books, and you want a web site to help you do both?

Mwa Yes

Res Ok, can we move on from here, it is little claustrophobic in this room, bit spooky too {smiling}

Jwa Sure, A (staff) is downstairs, lets go up to the terrace room... it is lovely up there, really light

Res thanks, what stock is up there

Mwa My favourites, waterfowl

Res oh right {follows on}. *Up three flights of stairs – each flight positioned in a different location. Arrive on a roof terrace with book cases. Sitting in the sunshine.*

Res Ok – how do you go about your trade now?

Mwa Some trade is passing –

Web people walking in off the street

Mwa yes... but the majority of our trade is personal recommendation, email, fax, phone and so on

Res Ok – talk me through a typical ‘phone’ call to your shop.

Jwa well, the caller rings us with a particular book in mind, they know some details – not always accurate - but they know something like author, title, ISBN. We check our database catalogue and then, if they want us to, we set them up as a find...

Res OK, can we just stop there a minute, if you do not have the book on the database, then you set up a FIND?

Jwa yes, that is when we act as the agent for the buyer – we use all our contacts and resources to FIND someone who has the book and is willing to sell it?

Web oh, so you offer a specialist search service for your customers

Mwa oh yes, and we check quality, supplier all that sort of stuff

Res I suppose if you have the book in stock you just sell it straight from your own catalogue

Mwa Oh yes, sold!

Res do you then pack and post the book

Mwa yeah – all calculated in ...

...

...

Web your database, would you like that on-line

Mwa I think so... not sure really... might turn people off if they can't get what they want immediately

Jwa we'll take your advice on that – will it be costly

Web leave it with us for a bit, I need to look at your set up in more detail on that, and what the competition do – I think we will need another meeting about the on-line catalogue

Res good idea. But, whilst we are here, do you have any material that you currently use to market your services?

Jwa Oh yes, fliers, stuff that goes into the local centers and trade directories.

Res can I have a look ...

Jwa yeah, of course {rising}

Res {wait a sec} How about giving you some time to gather the stuff. we will have a look around the town and get a feel for the place. Maybe

you can find some current publicity blurb, a copy of your catalogue and some idea of what your database can do.

Res Oh – can you also find me one example each of a purchase by fax, mail, email and phone – if you can bring everything you would use up to the point of financial details – obviously I don't want real examples of that, and then show me the forms that you might use for payment/invoice and so on.

Web So, quite a list, how about we take you for a late lunch, say 2pm? Then we can discuss these issues. I'll have done some research into the competition a bit – maybe have some illustrations for you, and you can think a bit about the sort of look and feel for your site.