Jan-Erik de Boer
Springer Science+Business Media

Jan-Erik de Boer is executive vice president of IT at Springer Science+Business Media where he is responsible for leading Springer’s technology development and innovations in addition to standardizing the infrastructure across Springer’s many business units. In 2000, he became Manager of IT Operations at Kluwer Academic Publishers and two years later was in charge of all IT. When Kluwer merged with Springer in 2004, his role was to merge the infrastructures. In 2007, he was promoted to his current role.

Prior to joining Kluwer, Jan-Erik was IT manager at Housing Corporation “Binnen de Ringvaart” and at Relan ICT. He is married with two children and lives in Rosendaal, Netherlands.

Gary Donaldson: Jan-Erik, thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this interview.

Let’s begin with an understanding of your organization and your role in that organization. Then we’ll drill down on some specific issues related to, and challenges to and trends, etc., focusing on publishing, where you’re involved. So can you give a little background about Springer?

Jan-Erik de Boer: Springer is a publisher that is divided essentially into two main parts. The biggest part is the STM part. “STM” stands for “science, technology, and medical,” so it’s academic publishing. The other part is professional publishing or B2B publishing as you would call it, primarily located in Germany and in the Netherlands. Without a doubt, STM is the most important part of the organization. It contributes most to our revenue on an
annual basis, so that’s where we focus most of our time. IT is different because basically we provide services for the entire organization. At Springer, in total, there are roughly 5,500 people working, of which the vast majority are in India. In India we have a typesetter called SPS where most of our content is sent and then typeset, so that we get back XML to put on websites and send to printers.

G. Donaldson: And this is for hardcopy documents?

de Boer: Well both, the typesetter creates PDFs to be sent to the printer for hard copy, but they also send XML for us to display on the web.

G. Donaldson: And that would be for e-books then?

de Boer: Well, e-books and journals.

So if you look at the product lines basically, we’re talking books and journals. Journals is probably an even smaller part of the knowledge pyramid, so we publish journals for, let’s say, the top 200 or 300 researchers in the world, whereas the books depend a little bit on the field but are slightly more accessible for professionals. Since, I think, 1997 all our journals are being published online, and we’ve done the same thing with e-books.

G. Donaldson: Okay.

de Boer: And we have had those online since 2003, and we’ve started major projects to digitize all content. So for journals, we have issue 1, volume 1 online, and everything moving forward, and currently we’re in the process of doing the same thing for books.

G. Donaldson: What would you say are your overall revenues?

de Boer: I would say, roughly 900 million Euros.

G. Donaldson: Okay.

de Boer: And then our profit, I think the latest report is 286 million Euros.

I think you can verify that on the annual report that you can find on our website.

G. Donaldson: What is your role in Springer? I see on the organizational chart here that it mentions IT. Is that all-inclusive of the chief technology role and technology investment management and CIO responsibilities?

de Boer: Yes, it is. I report to the COO, Martin Mos.

G. Donaldson: Okay.