

## UKSG Trustees: in the spotlight

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The eNews co-editors Josh and Helle, asked the current Board of Trustees to reply to three important questions, exploring UKSG's response to current challenges and their vision for the future:

1. How is UKSG adapting to the dynamic challenges of the coronavirus pandemic?
2. How will UKSG stay connected beyond the UK in a post Brexit world?
3. Given these two challenges, what does the future of UKSG look like?



The Trustees obliged and their responses will be published in three editorials running in October, November and December.

We provide the replies to the first question here:

### **Andrew Barker (Chair)**

Like the majority of the sector, we moved as much as possible online, fast!

More seriously, back on March 11th, when the WHO announced Covid-19 as a pandemic, we were less than a month from the beginning of our conference. UKSG's conference is where we get the income to do all the great things we do throughout the year, from seminars and webinars to [Insights](#) and [eNews](#). As a charity, we had serious decisions to take about our future. We were fortunate in the way that the sector responded to support us. We are also incredibly fortunate in having such great staff who pulled together and got us quickly into as good a position as possible and began to look to the future. That future is, of course, a lot more digital with our first fully digital conference '[From Transition to Transformation: providing scholarly content and services in tumultuous times](#)' streaming on 11th and 12th November, with recordings for anyone unable to attend live. This will prepare us for our first

digital annual conference in April 2021. Things will remain difficult, and we will continue to rely on the support and engagement of our members to see us through 2021.

That's how we have adapted in the here and now, but looking to a future I think the pandemic has taught us how to do things differently, not planning for a digital only future, but taking the best of what we've learnt these last months and ensuring we don't lose sight of them as we look to our future post-Covid.

## **Joanna Ball and Charlie Rapple**

*Joanna Ball and Charlie Rapple comment on the cancellation of the annual conference and the opportunities that the all-digital November conference will give us.*

Joanna: The decision to cancel the 2020 conference was extremely difficult and the impact on UKSG finances has been significant. However, as an organization, UKSG is in a strong position to enable it to cope with the current challenges. The recent changes to our governance structure mean that we have a smaller, more streamlined and more flexible Board of Trustees, who have been able to meet online, sometimes at short notice, to give input and make decisions. The situation has also pushed us to experiment new models for delivery of future events and conferences, for example, we've been able to set the delegate price for our November online conference way under the level for a physical conference, which makes it more affordable for institutions to attend and even for individuals to fund themselves. Facilitating connections and conversations across the scholarly communications community is what UKSG is all about, and the high numbers registered for November conference suggest that we still have a vital role to play in bringing people together.

Charlie: Our first challenge was cancelling our annual conference in 2020. This involved a huge administrative effort to coordinate refunds where these were requested - we are hugely grateful to those who were able to gift us their fees, or roll them over for next year. That generosity has been a huge factor in helping UKSG survive the current disruption. Despite the cancellation, UKSG and our speakers were able to record and share some talks that would have been on the programme. We learned a lot that will stand us in good stead for delivering future events online. We will shortly be delivering our first virtual conference, on November 11th and November 12th ("From Transition to Transformation: providing scholarly content and services in tumultuous times"). For this, "adapting" meant things like working out a completely new conference format (e.g. "how long will people want to sit at their screens?"), figuring out a reasonable price, and thinking about making it as accessible as possible (how could we provide captions, or make it as non-scary as possible to ask questions?).

The one thing we didn't want to "adapt" was the relevance, timeliness and quality of the programme, which was harder than ever to get "right" given how rapidly the situation is evolving. I think / hope we've got this right - we've got record numbers signed up which suggests we have. All of this has really helped us understand some of the details that we needed to be thinking about as we adapt our 2021 Annual Conference to also become a virtual event. Planning for that is also well underway!

## **Katherine Rose and Lorraine Estelle**

*Katherine and Lorraine focus on the completely online November conference to explore how theme of "From Transition to Transformation: providing scholarly content and services in tumultuous times" can be enjoyed and discussed.*

Katherine: We know all our members are working in very different ways and facing new challenges. Through our events and our first completely online conference in November, we're exploring how the pandemic is changing our industry and looking at the opportunities, as well as the challenges. The principles of UKSG: connection, openness, and innovation, have never been more important.

Lorraine: UKSG is about 'connecting the knowledge community' and until this year face to face interaction has been at the heart of what we do- but not all we do. We are already well practiced in facilitating connection through other channels, for example, our training webinars and Insights (the open access journal). As much as we all love the excitement of getting together in person at the annual conference, connections can still be made in the virtual world. I am looking forward to the 2020 UKSG November Conference, with the timely theme of "From Transition to Transformation: providing scholarly content and services in tumultuous times". As a delegate I will be debating the new ideas both in the online conference environment and on Twitter.

## **Dominic Broadhurst, Anna Grigson, Colleen Campbell and Graham Stone**

*Dominic, Anna, Colleen and Graham look at the bigger picture where the high-quality virtual events and digital connections matters more than ever.*

Dominic: Paradoxically, whilst the current pandemic has made some of the UKSG activities more difficult to host and facilitate (especially in terms of face to face interaction) the value and benefits of this activity is required more than ever. The challenge now is for UKSG to continue to deliver high quality agile events and related activity over the next 12-18 months whilst positioning itself for a post COVID world. We don't know how this will look, but I forecast a mixture of the old and new.

Anna: UKSG is all about making connections, and we are finding new ways to maintain and build those connections. The scholarly communications sector has been shifting to digital over many years, so we're well placed to be able to draw on the skills of our member community to find innovative new ways to make those connections, and strengthen UKSG's virtual presence.

Colleen: As we all adapt to a virtual setting for the better part of our interactions with colleagues, UKSG becomes an ever more important focal point for professional development and exchange among libraries, technology vendors, publishers and other emerging service providers in the scholarly communication landscape.

Even while factors such as the pandemic and Brexit close borders, the information sector is opening up as open publishing business models and open science practices change the way we all deliver service and value to our shared "customers": researchers and learners.

Graham: In 2020, I found out that I had been voted on to the UKSG Board of Trustees after a break of around 5 years. What a time to come back! Despite the chaos and more than a little doom, one thing hasn't changed. The sheer determination and hard work of all those connected with UKSG to keep the community informed and engaged. Much attention has been given to the switch to digital formats for events such as the [November Conference](#).



This UKSG Editorial is taken from the industry newsletter UKSG eNews, published every two weeks exclusively for UKSG members. The newsletter provides up-to-the-minute news of current issues and developments within the global knowledge community.

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