

## Five reasons why you shouldn't miss this year's UKSG Annual Conference

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I was struck by a recent blog post from Rob Johnson, where he described scholarly communications as a "complex system" (<https://www.research-consulting.com/if-open-is-the-answer-what-is-the-question/>): "you cannot take one part of the system and understand it in isolation, without looking at the other parts. We cannot look at scholarly communication in India in isolation from the rest of the world because the rest of the world impacts on scholarly communication in India and what happens in India influences what happens in the rest of the world. Nor can we look at entities such as a journal, a researcher or a discipline in isolation from the rest, because the scholarly communication system is comprised of myriad one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many relationships."

This vision of scholarly communications as an intertwined network, full of interdependencies, led me to reflect on the unique value of **UKSG's** Annual Conference in bringing together all the different and diverse elements in the scholarly communications ecosystem: librarians, publishers, intermediaries and technology vendors. One of the many things that this difficult last year has shown us, is that complex problems can only be solved by working together to find solutions.

This year will be different for UKSG's Annual Conference as it takes the leap to an online format, and although there are some things about a face-to-face conference that we'll miss in digital form, here are five reasons why it mustn't be missed.

## **1. The usual fantastic programme**

UKSG's Annual conference is known for its relevant programme and top-notch speakers, and this year is no different. We've worked hard to put together relevant and interesting plenary discussions, and have been able to exploit the advantages of the online format to assemble diverse and balanced international perspectives on scholarly communications - for example our plenary on day 2 combines speakers from three continents: the **SCIELO** programme in Brazil, the **Chinese Medical Association Publishing House** and the **University of Cape Coast** in Ghana. That's something that would be hard to achieve at a physical conference.

## **2. No more difficult choices for breakout sessions**

All breakout sessions are being pre-recorded, which means that this year there'll be no difficult decisions in choosing between which to join. For the first time ever it will be possible to attend all 32 breakouts, as well as the plenaries and lightning talks. Whether it's how to evaluate read-and-publish deals; the impact of COVID-19 on research, delivering library services, or the way we work; digital accessibility; open access toolkits and business models for books; or challenges around metadata - there's something for everyone. The programme also includes live Q&A sessions with all breakout speakers.

## **3. The social side is still important**

One of the highlights of UKSG is the chance to catch up with colleagues, meet with vendors and make new connections. Our fabulous team at UKSG have been working hard to recreate the networking elements of the conference. As part of the virtual exhibition, there will be opportunities for live meetings with vendors as well as for suppliers to post videos and share literature. One exhibitor, **Taylor and Francis**, is hosting their own live webinar during the exhibition hours. For more informal private and public meetings, as well as the Tuesday night social event, I'm looking forward to trying out the UKSG Networking Lounge - a platform that lets you walk around a virtual space and engage in conversations using your avatar. There will be a map to explore the different areas, you can find specific people you would like to meet with, and for those of you who enjoy the competitive side of the exhibition, there's an iPad up for grabs.

## **4. It's even more accessible & inclusive**

Going digital also means that we can make the conference more accessible. Delegates are free from expensive travel and hotel costs, and we've been able to pass on the savings from moving the conference online, including a special offer for libraries who send multiple delegates. There are free places on offer to people who are currently out of work as well as the usual bursaries for new professionals and under-represented communities. Presentations will be as accessible and inclusive as possible - speakers are encouraged to provide auto-generated closed-captioning for both live and recorded events as well as making sure the slides are as easy as possible for all people to read.

## 5. The quiz lives on, but we're not afraid of trying something new

Yes, for those who missed out on the traditional UKSG quiz when last year's conference was cancelled, we've been able to recreate the experience online! Our legendary quiz night, sponsored by **Overleaf**, has gone digital, so sign up online, grab a drink and a snack and join quiz host **Mark Hester** to test your trivia knowledge. As usual, there will be prizes for the winners. New initiatives for this year include chair yoga with Poppy Koumis (sponsored by **AIP Publishing**) and a Conference Daily magazine with highlights of what is happening at the conference and vendor news which will go out to delegates every morning.

Look forward to seeing you there, and joining in the conversations on Twitter at **#UKSG2021**



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