Changing career track within the UKSG community: experiences and lessons learned

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Summary: Three different voices from the UKSG community tell why they decided on the major career change it is to move from the public to the private sector or vice versa. The differences – or lack hereof is discussed by all three, and is a testament to UKSG's vision of being a meeting point for the entire scholarly communications community.

Joanna Ball, Managing Director, DOAJ

I joined DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) in January 2022, after 25 years within academic libraries.

Open Access has been a theme throughout my career: developing services, policies and strategies, and more recently advocating for libraries to take a more strategic leadership role to use their budgets to support the shift to open. The opportunity to transition to an organisation so closely aligned with my values and where I felt I had the opportunity to make a difference was what most attracted me to DOAJ. I didn't see the move as a conscious decision to move out of libraries, and I still see myself very much as a librarian, just in a different setting.

DOAJ is also a virtual organisation, and whereas I probably would have never even considered that this could be an option for me a few years ago, the experience of working at home through COVID convinced me that I could do this permanently (while preparing me for some of the challenges).

Working at the interface between publishers and librarians is really exciting and enabling. This is something I learned first at the **University of Sussex** Library, where we developed some exciting and innovative partnerships with publishers, and then through **UKSG** as a member of the *Insights* Editorial Board and as a Trustee. This opened up the world of scholarly communications from an alternative angle, bringing me into contact with publishers and intermediaries from different types of organisations and internationally. I found that in many cases our goals and values are similar or overlapping, and that we can achieve so much more through collaborating, rather than through traditional supplier-customer relationships.

Overall, I would say that the differences are less significant than you might imagine. Organisations are all about people, and the team at DOAJ are as mission driven and talented as any of the previous library teams I've been part of during my career. Many of the challenges we face are exactly the same as in libraries: matching our ambition levels to the amount of resources we have available, while ensuring that we continue to evolve to meet the rapidly changing needs of our community.

Helle Lauridsen, Product Manager, Lyngsoe Systems

24.5 years as an academic librarian – most of them enjoyable - working with students, pushing the change from print to digital, and collaborating with local IT as well as vendors on developing tools to manage the digital content, so what on earth possessed me to take the leap to "the dark side"? I think it was the power to actually make a difference, to work in an environment completely focus on developing and maintaining viable products not just for local use and by local developers (even though they were very good) but tools which could be used in libraries across the world. Admittedly I also needed to get away from the influence of political management trends, not to mention the actual political influence on what was happening in the library.

I got the courage to take the leap from my involvement in UKSG: the annual conference showed me that "vendors" are so much more than that, that excellent developers, visionary leaders, and passionate account managers form as varied a workplace as any library.

Now 15 years later I can ask myself if I have regretted it? At times- yes, I do miss the students, the lovely co-workers, and the sense of belonging to academia. But, quite honestly – most of the time I do love the sometimes turbulent paths my career has taken me. I have worked with some amazing teams over time and the general openness to new ideas and the ability to actually get things done and not drowned in reams of red tape and policy papers continue to enchant me. I still believe strongly in what I do, and that the products I work on will benefit the library community.

I love to work closely with libraries, the product I am working with at present – an intelligent logistical material management system (I am all the way back to printed books) is a good example of a successful vendor library partnership: two libraries came up with the idea and my present employer developed the system and has provided steady and continuing development in close collaboration based on user input.

Yvonne Nobis, Head of Physical Science Libraries, **Cambridge University** Libraries

I am an accidental librarian following a similarly accidental career as a publisher. One thread running through my career has been the use of electronic information. I started my career in research (hypertext and law) and became the IT development person in a joint post between the Oxford Law Faculty and the Bodleian Library. I thoroughly enjoyed this role but having to move geographically for personal reasons I was offered a position by **Butterworths**, then part of **Reed Elsevier** Legal Division, to help create their online offering (having worked with them on an electronic casebook project). I thus became, literally overnight, a publisher. I was chastised by a former colleague for giving into the lure of 'filthy lucre'!

I worked on various projects, including the digitisation of Halsbury's Laws of England, commissioning in the fields of Intellectual property and Information Law and the creation of online legal information services. Eventually the 4 hour commute took a toll and I joined **ProQuest** in Cambridge as a Development Manager for KnowUK and KnowEurope.

In these roles I learned project management, how to work collaboratively and how to design products for which there would be a market, often using librarians as a test bed for my ideas.

As anyone working in publishing knows, redundancy is a fact of life. I was offered redundancy whilst working part-time after the birth of my first child, and as I was finding the travelling commitment increasingly onerous, I took redundancy and gave myself a year's thinking time (whilst working as a marketing manager for the University of Cambridge). I realised I really enjoyed working with information and applied to Library School. I took my MSc (from **City University**) part-time and moved into a reference/training role at Cambridge University Libraries, before being appointed to my present position as Head of Physical Science Libraries.

Many of the skills I learned in publishing have been invaluable to my role. I've always viewed publishing and librarianship as the differing sides of the coin (either one is creating information or utilising it) and believe that the relationship between content creation and use should be symbiotic.

These views are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect the views of UKSG.

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