



2015 – a year in review

UKSG eNews 362

08 Jan 2016

Yann Amouroux, Bioscientifica

The big news at the start of 2015 was the end of Swets and how this major loss to our industry was handled. It was certainly not as disruptive as it could have been, nothing like when Rowecom suddenly went bust for example! But the general consensus has been that librarians have opted to spread their holdings, in case other subscription agents were to follow the same path. Consequently, all agents gained some of Swets business share, not all of it went to the same pot (as many of us almost expected to happen), and that was quite surprising to me.

Return on investment is the new 'serials budget crisis', any money spent on resources has to be justified no matter how big or small. This brings with it a new array of qualitative elements, pushing up the need to have more than just impact factors as reference. With so many publishers moving towards altmetrics and adopting new analytics tools, data has never been so important and will simply carry on growing. Great for major commercial publishers already geared up for such changes, quite a different prospect for much smaller publishing houses.

It would not be too surprising to see more mergers happening in 2016, after Springer-Nature in 2015 more consolidation will be happening.

Andrew Barker, University of Liverpool

Taking over as UKSG Publications Officer was a key event for me in 2015. I was lucky enough to inherit the role just as UKSG's *Insights* journal was moving to the Ubiquity platform. The migration has already been a great success since the first issue went live in March 2015. In my working life the University of Liverpool got a new VC, Janet Beer, who is already doing great things and bringing new confidence to the university.

In 2016, my crystal ball suggests that open access will enter a new dawn with the new HEFCE REF policy going live in April. What that dawn will look like my crystal ball does not yet tell me. By December 2016, we may also be clearer on what the much mooted Teaching Excellence Framework will consist of and what the implications of it will be for UK universities. I'm generally in favour of the TEF, I just can't yet imagine what it will look like. Just how do you measure teaching excellence? Well, in 2016, we may find out one way to measure it. Possibly.

Dominic Broadhurst, University of Manchester

For me much of last year (outside of my normal day job!) was spent providing our students with a copy of their own textbook. Ideally in a financially sustainable manner with all parties benefiting from the advantages offered to us by the digital format.

In tandem with this we, as elsewhere in the sector, were grappling with rapidly changing and

diminishing options for our traditional library licensed e-book acquisitions. However we don't want to disconnect the e-textbook debate from the debate about library licensed e-books as this would risk a conflict of priorities and interests potentially playing into publishers' hands regarding the kind of market they might wish to see! Ideally what we are looking for is an all-encompassing vision and strategy for both models, and coordination of activities regarding e-textbooks and licensed e-books (even if they are pursued as separate strands) within the wider sector. Further discussion with Jisc and like-minded institutions is on the cards for 2016.

We also don't know enough about publisher business models and their views for the future market for e-textbooks. To this end we have set up a number of meetings for 2016 and have asked them to complete a template of approximately 15 questions on these very topics. Watch this space!

Terry Bucknell, Digital Science

For me, a key trend from 2015 that I'm sure will only become more prominent in 2016 is the plethora of new tools and new start-ups in the scholarly communication world, exemplified by the poster '[101 Innovations in Scholarly Communication - the Changing Research Workflow](#)'. To what extent are libraries and publishers engaging with the tools that researchers (and students) are choosing to use, and to what extent will these tools seek out publishers and libraries as their customers, rather than just end users? Do libraries see their role as encompassing the support of such tools, even if they haven't been 'officially' adopted by the library or the institution? So, for example, how long do libraries continue to support something like Endnote whilst their users are flocking to tools like RefMe?

Ken Chad, Ken Chad Consulting

For me 2015 was the year of user experience (UX). In January I was in Aberdeen facilitating a workshop on improving the user experience around library discovery services. In March I attended the very first (and excellent) UX in Libraries conference at Cambridge University. And then, almost rounding the year off, at the UKSG forum in November I shared a platform with Andy Priestner and Hillary Kenna to illustrate different UX approaches. The truth we don't always admit to is that the user's experience of libraries is not always good. Of course libraries are not alone in this and the experience of library self service beats the W H Smith experience any day! We have the customer at heart of course but that doesn't always translate into a good user experience. Thankfully there is much more awareness now of the tools and methods to translate those good intentions into something remarkable. As one of the blog posts I cite a lot says, "nobody ever complained about the user experience being too good".

Lorraine Estelle, COUNTER

As Co-Editor of *Insights*, 2015 was a great year – we published articles on some amazing projects and initiatives but my favourite part is getting to meet and interview some fabulous people. John Scully from the National Library of Scotland was inspiring; I particularly liked his move at “warp speed” away from seeing library users as customers to “a community who can work with us”. I met Laila Vahed from the University of Zululand on my first visit to South Africa this year. I asked her to write about a day in her life – what a woman – she does more in a day than most of us in a week! Interviewing John Jardine was a highlight, he is a fund of interesting stories (not all suitable for publication), but my favourite was his telling me that he decided to move from teacher to subscription agent, when during the Brixton riots, his pupils offered to get him anything he wanted when they looted the local Dixons the following Friday. Steve and I are looking forward to sharing the articles we have lined up for *Insights* first issue in 2016 – but most of all, I am looking forward to going out and interviewing more remarkable and stimulating people!

Adam Gardner, Alexander Street

It's a fool's game to try to predict the future, but it is possible of course to see a faint glimmer on the horizon of what is coming, and it's bold! For me, 2016 will be the year that business models in scholarly publishing really move from purchase or subscription only to pretty much 'pay how you like'. Traditional open access (it has now been around long enough to earn that prefix) is common ground, and the new models for books that are gaining traction will be successful if they can become sustainable. Demand-driven acquisition in its many forms will continue to be popular with institutions, and the brave 'pay what you like' approach from Thieme could be a game changer if adopted by more suppliers. It's with the latter in mind that I think scholarly publishing business models will be disrupted most by external agents – pay what you use; low-cost subscriptions to 'channels' of hundreds or thousands of content items à la Netflix; even the PBS/Wikipedia-style donation request – any of these could have a huge impact on the industry. And when that does happen, it will happen quickly!

Jane Harvell, University of Sussex

OK I'm going to go with big data and data mining, particularly in the humanities. Publishers and librarians will need to find a way of supporting a growing requirement from researchers to manipulate and mine large datasets such as newspapers and archives in order that they can be used to advance scholarship in the digital humanities. It's a great opportunity for librarians (and archivists) to get involved with scholarship in a way that many missed out as the scientists moved use data mining as their de facto method of reviewing and reusing existing research. So many of the dull static digitised humanities resources that have been sold to libraries over the years are of no use to researchers interested in digital scholarship and it will be great to have conversations with publishers on how these can now be made available to be used effectively in this growing area of scholarship.

Helle Lauridsen, ProQuest

2015 has been a year focused on UX, UI, CX and many more people oriented acronyms. Through the years it has been interesting to watch the change from when (a few) users had to be experts of the systems, till now where the systems should be an integrated and intuitive part of your daily life. Although in some institutions the battle still goes on between ease of use and the high level expert functions, it does look very much like the twain *will* meet – with the easy, end user friendly systems maturing to also being capable of handling complex tasks. Indeed, the new platforms emerging as a result of the many mergers and acquisitions need to be able to handle complex functions and do it quicker and better than a human being with a spreadsheet.

Mergers and different purchase models also puts pressure on the systems facing the users and in 2016 I am sure we will see new and vastly improved systems for managing the library.

Kate Price, King's College London

Looking ahead to 2016 is both exciting and daunting. Here at King's College London, we are just about to launch 'Library Services 2025: Our Vision'. This short document draws together the ten essential areas in which the academic library can provide a vital leadership role at the heart of the university and well beyond. One of the key sentences in the document is “By 2025, we will have advanced from our role as supporters to become collaborators and co-creators”, and this strikes me as something that could be said of so many of the different members of the scholarly information community today. Where once there was a coherent information supply chain with clear boundaries between funders, researchers, publishers, intermediaries and libraries, there is now an environment which is more akin to an information ecology, with many areas of overlap and dependencies which are not always obvious until changes are made which reverberate in unexpected ways. This is a major challenge for all concerned, and one which UKSG is well placed to address, as a neutral

organisation which exists to connect the information community and promote mutual understanding and exchange of ideas. At the end of 2015, UKSG carried out a wide-ranging survey of our members, as well as some guided brainstorming amongst committee members, the results of which will underpin a new set of strategic objectives which we aim to release in time for the 2016 Annual Conference in Bournemouth. So 2016 is looking set to be a visionary year all round, and I am looking forward to getting stuck in, both as Chair of UKSG and as an Associate Director of Library Services at King's!

Charlie Rapple, Kudos

In 2015, I had my first chance to visit Australia and was honoured to participate in the thought-provoking Sydney Conference. The conversations there drew together and articulated well many of the topics that seem to be bubbling most vigorously at the moment - from research containers (what forms might prove to have long-term value when it comes to the creation, sharing, evaluation and preservation of knowledge) to research processes (and the extent to which processes and containers that are currently bundled are likely to de-couple). I might be under the influence of Miles's Law ("where you stand depends on where you sit") but it seems that across many content and services providers, we are seeing polarisation - the big continue to get bigger, but the small business scene is increasingly thriving nonetheless. I guess this is ultimately a result of the digital era - is it easier to turn ideas into reality in an era of open data, digital communications, cloud software and so forth? - but my expectation for 2016 is to see more small companies providing niche services around different stages of the research process.

Steve Sharp, Leeds University

2015 was the year that we saw the green shoots of progress in the subscriptions community as things began to settle down following the sad demise of subscription agents, Swets, in late 2014. Libraries began to build or consolidate existing working relationships with subscription agents, and the world seemed to make moves towards returning to 'normal'.

In my role as Co-Editor of UKSG's journal *Insights*, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that 2015 was also the year that saw UKSG say goodbye (and happy retirement) to long-serving member and contributor, John Jardine. The 'People' page that he had edited for both *Serials* and later *Insights* over many years is sorely missed by many, and his cheery and encouraging presence will be equally missed if the very positive comments that were submitted for his farewell 'Profile' are anything to go by.

2015 also saw many changes within the publishing industry, with further mergers and acquisitions within the journals marketplace and long-standing educational publishers such as Pearson experiencing serious problems. From a Yorkshire perspective, we waved goodbye to Leeds based publisher, Maney (though their legacy lives on under the T&F umbrella).

And so, I wait with baited breath to see what 2016 has in store for us!



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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