



Jazz, fireworks and food for thought

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The annual UKSG conference took place in Harrogate from the 10th to the 12th of April and as ever proved to be a very lively, informative and inspirational gathering of like minds from the library, information, publishing and scholarly publications worlds. The conference was a huge success and below are some musings about the highlights and inspiration experienced by some of the attendees.

Romey Macdonald, Information Assistant, Amersham and Wycombe College

“The whole conference was a high point for me, and the feeling of inspiration and excitement still lingers. Having gained a theoretical understanding from my LISM studies of topics such as open access and data management, I learnt so much from listening to professionals talk about the key issues and developments from a practical perspective. I have come away with a book crammed with notes, ideas, follow up reading, websites and interesting blogs to follow, and can't wait to start working my way through it all! Zelda Chatten's humorous approach to engaging students in social media encouraged me to take a fresh look at finding the right voice to address the students in my own workplace, whilst Jennifer Bayjoo's insightful advice about bridging gaps in open access knowledge for new professionals, and Danny Kingsley's enlightening talk about the changing academic library skill set encouraged me to reflect on ways to develop my own skill set beyond my LISM qualification in order to develop the 'hard skills' needed to thrive in an open access world.

I enjoyed learning about the exciting developments in technology such as The University of Manchester's Checkout App, Barend Mons's fascinating talk about the future potential of Open Science and Tasha Mellins-Cohen's talk about CASA and off campus access, whilst Donald Samulack and Stuart Lawson's talks about ethics, privacy and predatory publishing raised some fascinating issues and discussion.

Attending the UKSG Annual General Meeting to learn about all the support, sponsorship and events they offer to all in the profession, experiencing first hand the passion and knowledge of the speakers and attendees, and learning about the exciting developments taking place, made me feel so excited to be on the cusp of entering the profession myself. I'm so grateful to UKSG for making it possible for me to experience UKSG 2017, and for making me feel like a member of this wonderful community.”

Chris Ashton, Head of Content and Collections, University of Sheffield

“I thoroughly enjoyed the conference, and found it informative and rewarding. A major bonus for me was the time spent networking with colleagues and in meetings that had been able to organise both within and outside of the Exhibition. To arrange that number of meetings in house would have taken up weeks of my time. Harrogate is an excellent venue for the conference. The

location is great in terms of both the Conference Centre itself plus the close proximity of such a large number of good hotels to offer accommodation. Ridding Park was an inspired choice for the conference dinner and the fireworks were spectacular. Finally a big thanks for all the hard work put in, both in advance of and throughout the event. I am always impressed by how smoothly the event runs for us attendees, it is very much appreciated.”

Frances Cassidy, Information Officer, Bank of England

“This is the first UKSG Annual Conference I have attended, having been to a few one-day events since starting working with serials and e-resources. As someone who is relatively new to the world of serials management, I learnt a great deal from attending this conference, not only about serials and e-resource management, but also about issues affecting the wider scholarly communications community.

I met many professionals from both the library and the publishing world which is one of the features which makes the UKSG Conference so unique.

The conference was very well organised and the topics covered varied; it was useful to be able to attend large plenary sessions as well as breakout sessions more specific to my role. The high point of the conference, from my perspective, (apart from the Ruby Tuesday dinner!) was the final plenary by Charlotte Roueche on the role of academics, librarians and publishers in a world of alternative facts. The talk itself was very interesting and the interaction with the audience afterwards together with the twitter feed displayed on the screen was really valuable. This demonstrated how passionate people who work in this field are. The session that had the greatest impact was the breakout session on the power and potential of value-based leadership; this was quite different to all the other sessions offered and really thought provoking as it made you reflect on own values and ethics and how they can differ between your professional and your personal life. All in all a very enjoyable experience!”

Melissa Good, Publishing Manager, ARM Education Media

“What a difference a year makes! The 40th UKSG conference was the second one attended by ARM Education Media. Between Bournemouth 2016 and Harrogate 2017, ARM Education Media went from a twinkle in the eye (well, a business plan), some productive meetings and some fascinating sessions, to a fully-fledged exhibitor with flashy demos, a catalogue and some online course and textbook publications on offer.

From an exhibitor point of view, Harrogate had a great buzz. The ARM Education Media stand was consistently busy with fixed – and impromptu – meetings, and numerous useful connections and leads were established and relationships cemented. The variety of delegates we met, from online platform providers, to librarians representing national library consortia, to editorial services managers, was a real eye-opener. A high point was demonstrating our Rubik’s Cube solver (which we had on the stand to demonstrate the types of skills that ARM Education Media publications teach) to a delegate who asked for the underlying algorithm (we are following up). The Rubik’s Cube solver was also tweeted by a Cambridge University librarian as the best gadget at the conference. Looking forward to Glasgow 2018!”

Heather Whitehouse, Director of Information Resources and Research Services, Aston University

“As an experienced UKSG attendee I went to Harrogate with high expectations and the conference delivered. It offers an insight into possible futures and challenges our established, everyday perspective but when you look back to past conferences you realise that today’s ‘everyday’ was the future from past conferences.

This year we heard that whilst we are all concerned about the piracy of sites like Sci-Hub they are a result of problems in our scholarly communications system; we need good open access with a legal framework to license and control reuse. We heard about the future form of publications, the growing importance of research data and making research open to facilitate the use of computers to speed scientific progress. I made a note to make sure that our researchers are aware of this probable future. We talked a lot about the skills that our library staff need now and into the future which are very real concerns to me. We also talked a lot about open access: business models, the UK Scholarly Communication Licence, self-publishing and university presses. Or is open access a phase rather than a destination?

At the same time we were working with publishers and intermediaries on future plans and the problems of today and we exchanging experiences with colleagues to reassure ourselves that we are all facing variations of the same problems. Congratulations to UKSG for excellent organisation of everything from the programme to the food, the beautiful little 40th anniversary cakes and of course the superb 40th anniversary conference dinner complete with fireworks. My high points are the quality of the discussions and the chance to share and take away ideas.”

Chris Balmforth, Curriculum Support Librarian, Wakefield College

“One of my aims as a delegate to the conference was to identify good practice and take new ideas back to the workplace. I found some of the lightning talks a great format for grabbing innovative practice and adopting it to suit our current delivery systems and methods. We are currently looking at improving the way we use social media to promote and raise the profile of the library. The Tuesday lunchtime session from University of Liverpool Library staff was not only entertaining but also informative. Using humour to get a serious message out is a tried and tested tool but it is always beneficial to get a reminder of ways to attract users to the service.

One of the decisions to make at conference is that of selecting appropriate breakout sessions. Do they have to be unequivocally relevant to your particular sector and job description? Are you allowed to take a wider perspective and broaden your horizons? I suggest the aim should be to achieve a healthy balance but do try to identify at least one session that may allow for personal development and self-reflection. I decided to attend a session led by Jo Alcock and Sarah Durrant dealing with the subject of value-led leadership. This interactive session allowed for personal reflection and discussion with colleagues during which I realised that my beliefs and attitudes have changed over the last few years. The exercise gave me the opportunity to look at myself in a way I rarely, if ever, do. As in the title of the session, a little bit of naval gazing may help to ignite the ‘spark inside’.

The rather splendid conference dinner again provided an informal networking opportunity in the grand setting of Rudding Park. The pyrotechnics, jazz band and marquee dining area provided a fitting tribute as celebration of UKSGs fortieth anniversary.

Having now experienced a full conference for the first time, I can fully recommend the experience to any academic Librarian who is undecided about attending. The diversity of subject matter pertaining to scholarly communication provides scope for sessions varying in both length and intensity. Vendors and suppliers are accessible at any time, as is plenty of food and refreshment, and always appear happy to have a chat and give as much information as possible. UKSG are well practiced, and seem to have the balance just right between formal and informal opportunities for discussion. I found the UKSG Conference a welcoming experience in which to do business, learn something new, make some new contacts and bump into old acquaintances. A full on but rewarding few days!”

So, all in all, a hugely successful conference, and we would just like to echo the sentiments of the delegates: “Well done UKSG for another fantastic and illuminating (in more ways than one!) conference! Here’s to Glasgow 2018!”



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