

Profile – Mieko Yamaguchi



Mieko's involvement with the UK Serials Group goes back a long way — she attended the inaugural conference in York in 1978 and has participated in every conference the Group has run since then. As a Committee member and as a member of the Education Working Group Mieko devotes a lot of time to UKSG work and, when asked the motivation for such steadfast devotion to duty, responds "It gets me out of Bangor!"

Mieko works at the University College of North Wales in Bangor as Technical Services Manager for the Information Services Department. Whilst no longer officially working in the College library (Information Services at Bangor brings together the Library, Computer Centre and Administrative Computing Unit) she doubles part-time as a systems librarian which keeps her busy with blown fuses and broken lightpens, testing new software and

chasing the supplier when it doesn't work — not to mention evenings and weekends recovering lost data, though luckily this doesn't happen too often. All this rather keeps her away from the library and its users but the work she does ensures that they can rely on their automated systems.

Books and serials are pretty scarce on Mieko's desk these days. That is taken up by computer terminals — three of them at the last count! At one time she managed to whittle it down to two but they seem to be breeding and she's back to three again. Brings a whole new meaning to the term "computer overload".

At the start of her library career such automation was unheard of. Having completed an English degree at a Japanese university and spent a year working for a television company in Japan, Mieko came to the UK and started her career in librarianship scraping classification labels off book spines after a major re-classification exercise. (When I started in librarianship we were much less careful and simply stuck the new labels over the old ones - Ed.) This dogsbody existence (her words) continued for six months until she was "promoted" to the job of checking in scientific serials. This early exposure to the delights of serials librarianship excited an interest in the area which continues to this day and she has maintained an involvement in serials in one way or another ever since. Professional qualifications came from University College London where she spent a year studying for a Diploma and MA in Library and Information Studies.

Apart from the benefit of getting her away from rural Bangor, Mieko enjoys her involvement with the UKSG because it keeps her in touch with not just serials librarianship but with the rest of the library/information world. She joined the UKSG Committee three years ago because

she felt that it was important that practising librarians should be well represented and that this was lacking. Since then the situation has changed as new Committee members have joined.

Through her participation in the Education Working Group Mieko has tried to make sure that the basic concerns of serials librarians are properly addressed. Whilst the more “glamorous” areas — such as CD-ROM, electronic publishing, networks — are covered at the Annual Conference, she thinks that subjects like periodical pricing, collection maintenance, de-selection of titles and agents’ services must be of vital interest to all those involved in serials management especially those new to the area — hence the courses which the EWG runs are always popular events. It is, however, difficult to pitch these at the right level given the expectations of the audience, although the feedback received indicates that the courses are much valued. Longer-standing members of the UKSG may feel that such topics are old hat but they are still the bedrock of serials work.

One particular area which Mieko feels deserves greater attention is that of bibliographic control (or cataloguing) which continues to present problems. These include identification of certain serials whose titles are hard to discover because of

changes or through sheer obfuscation — where do you shelve a journal if you can’t tell what it’s called? Mieko is involved in the Working Group on Guidelines for Serial Publications — an attempt to rectify some of these problems at source with serials publishers.

The UKSG is not Mieko’s only escape route from Bangor. She is also active in Geac and OCLC User Groups and is a member of the national library staff committee of the Association of University Teachers.

Not that all Mieko’s interests are so serious — though they are certainly strenuous! Running seems to figure large and Mieko successfully completed the 1990 London Marathon. She is now unofficial coach for two first-time participants in this year’s event. Even when she goes on holiday it isn’t a relaxing two weeks on a beach somewhere. Recent destinations have included Eastern Turkey which she visited just after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and, even on holiday, the UKSG seems to crop up. In Andalusia she came across another UKSG regular — Sheila Adair of ITE — at the back entrance to the Alhambra Palace!

All in all Mieko manages to get about, and the UKSG is certainly very grateful that she is prepared to devote so much of her time and effort to its activities.