



Editorial

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As the March 1998 issue of *Serials* goes to press, it is an appropriate time to think about the aims and objectives of the Group. That we are filling a need is apparent from the steady growth in membership, currently over 580 organisations with an estimated readership of *Serials* of over 5,000.

The Group exists to encourage the exchange and promotion of ideas on printed and electronic serials and the process of scholarly communication. In a dynamic and rapidly changing environment, UKSG aims to promote discussion and the free flow of information on serials matters and associated new technologies; develop personal and formal links between all parties in the serials information chain; encourage professional awareness; stimulate research and, provide a programme of training and education.

In 1998 we will see further rapid changes in what has been referred to as the chaotic electronic environment. There will be no shortage of conferences and seminars to discuss the issues. Policy decisions made by those in charge of the National Electronic Site Licence Initiative will have far reaching effects.

Let us hope that the UKSG, with its unique ability to span the wide range of interest and activity between serials producers and readers, will bring some order to the chaos. Managing change is an awesome task. My late boss had two favourite sayings: "God save us from the dew-eyed idealists", and, "the desert is scattered with the bleached bones of the pioneers, and I do not wish to join them."

We do need idealists and pioneers. Unfortunately, they often ignore the knowledge and experience of those who have worked in the field for many years, which makes their projects disaster-prone. A very senior executive in the

information industry said recently, "in times of rapid change, experience can be your worst enemy". There may be some truth in this, but a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing, and the UKSG has an important role to play in education and increasing understanding.

At least, we thought we were important until we were cut down to size by a column in that organ of the book trade *The Bookseller*. A regular contributor is William Boot, well known for his shrewd comments on the foibles and eccentricities of the trade - someone reckoned to have his finger on the pulse. This is what he recently wrote: "There are those cynics who would say that the seminar to be held in Manchester called 'A Day in the Life of a Librarian' does not sound like the most exciting way to spend a Wednesday, even in Manchester. But I am sure that the lives of librarians are very exciting nowadays, surrounded as they are with CD-ROMs, the Internet, compact discs, microfiches and even - *mirabile dictu* - the odd book. The really puzzling thing about this seminar, though, is the organisers, who rejoice in the name of the United Kingdom Serials Group. What, please, is the United Kingdom Serials Group? I am sure what they do is highly worthwhile, and I have no doubt that they do it excellently, but what do they do? And what does it have to do with libraries? I await enlightenment."

Finally, the 21st Annual Conference and Exhibition of the UKSG returns to the green pastures of Exeter University from 30 March to 1 April 1998. Already the 400 delegate places have nearly all been booked. I hope that those attending will have a rewarding and enjoyable time.

Maybe we should invite William Boot!