21ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORT

University of Exeter, 30 March to 1 April 1998

Two students' perspectives

Each year the UKSG offers a number of free places to library school students to give them an experience of the world of serials. They are each required to submit a report on the conference, and this year we are pleased to publish those from Steven Glover of Manchester Metropolitan University and Jackie Toyne from the University of Sheffield.

The Streatham Campus of the University of Exeter proved to be an ideal venue for the 21st Annual UKSG Conference. Situated in the Peter Chalk Centre, the conference provided delegates with an attractive setting and first rate facilities to ensure a pleasant working environment was enjoyed by everyone.

The conference once again attracted over four hundred delegates, with representation from all sectors of the information community, including a number of delegates from overseas. The main issues addressed in the conference were electronic journals: the challenges that face publishers, subscription agencies, librarians and users in this volatile period of change.

The conference featured daily workshops covering a wide range of serials-related topics. These workshops allowed people from different backgrounds to compare and contrast current practices and exchange ideas. For myself, as one of five student delegates, these workshops gave me a practical insight into the 'real world' of information work.

Prior to registration on Monday morning, I met my fellow student delegates at breakfast in Lopes Hall, giving us the opportunity to get to know each other and exchange views about why we had applied to come to Exeter and what we expected from the experience.

On arrival at the Peter Chalk Centre we were greeted at registration by Margaret Croucher, UKSG Education Officer, and Richard Hodson,

the UKSG Chair. This created a relaxed atmosphere for first time student delegates finding themselves in somewhat daunting surroundings.

The theme for Monday morning's keynote session was 'Mapping the futures' and consisted of three papers offering different perspectives on the future of electronic publishing from the standpoint of the subscription agent, the publisher and the academic library

James T Stephens, President of EBSCO Industries Inc, opened the session with the paper 'Serials happenings: the industry in transition'. The paper highlighted the tighter margins forced on subscription agencies by both libraries and publishers. He also suggested that electronic publication would allow publishers to directly enter the market, thereby threatening the position of the traditional subscription agent. Transition within the industry has led to major online providers needing to supply more full text journal coverage as technology has advanced.

Robert Kiernan, Chair and CEO of Routledge Publishers, followed up the theme from the publisher's standpoint with a paper entitled 'The next five years: a publisher's ambition'. This proved to be an excellent paper and discussed the value of the publisher in the publication of the scholarly journal in a presentation and marketing sense and how the evolution of the electronic journal will change the way that academics write their research. The editors of academic journals will be able to assess which companies can offer online versions when selecting a publisher. Electronic journals can provide fully indexed retrieval with hyper links and graphics. The online versions will need to be accessible but the academic content must be paid for, as between 60% and 70% of journal

costs are fixed, such as peer review and refereeing.

The final paper in the keynote session was titled 'Signposts to the future: the librarian's direction'. It was presented by Alan MacDougall, Director of Library Services at Dublin City University. The paper highlighted the increased importance of education in the future such as lifelong learning, skills-based learning and information literate society, leading to an increased demand for access to information networks and the delivery of content in whatever format is desirable. The paper also discussed globalisation coupled with accelerating technology and its effect on the future requirements for librarians: the need for librarians to be flexible, multi-skilled, team players with the emphasis on developing their own careers.

The keynote session was followed by lunch in the Peter Chalk Centre with time for exhibition viewing. There was a vast array of online products available for demonstration, with notable stands by BIDS (Bath Information and Data Services) and Swets Subscription Service.

Knowledge management was the subject for the afternoon session. Nigel Horne of KPMG opened the session with his paper, 'Managing information as a corporate asset'. The paper gave recognition to the need of the corporate world to manage its information as a resource. The KPMG IMPACT Programme has developed a tool to assist managers in measuring their information management performance, the Information Health Index. This index allows a manager to gauge a company's information management status and progress.

Jacqueline Cropley's paper, 'Sharing expertise in practice: the way forward for knowledge management', looked at different approaches to knowledge management and how sharing of information could assist organisations in achieving good knowledge management practice.

The final paper of Monday's programme was delivered by Suzie Alexander, Ovid Technologies and was entitled 'The long road to information integration: suggestions for the way forward'. This session gave an interesting insight from the viewpoint of a software provider and looked at how information integration was the answer to satisfying the end user's needs. The paper examined three models of information access: the Web-based publisher model, the intermediary distributive model and the aggregated model, and

highlighted the need for integration to be a combined effort.

Monday's programme finished with a set of workshops. I attended that dealing with the bibliographic control of serials. It revealed a diversity of practice between the different types of libraries represented in the group. This was also influenced by the technological capabilities of the library system being employed by the various organisations. The workshops gave a practical edge to the conference which was complementary to the 'lecture style' of the papers delivered in the main sessions.

Monday evening's programme began with a reception for first-time delegates held in the Gallery at Devonshire House. This was followed by dinner in the Great Hall and a quiz, which allowed delegates to meet in a less formal setting.

'In the market for electronic products' was the theme of Tuesday morning's set of papers. Peter Leggate opened the session with his paper 'Acquiring electronic products in the hybrid library: prices, licences, platforms and user'. The paper addressed the issues faced by academic libraries in acquiring electronic products such as costs, licenses, cataloguing, registration and access.

Mike Johnson's paper 'Dataset purchasing options: united we save, divided we pay' described the work of the Combined Higher Education Software Team (CHEST) when providing software packages for HE institutions. This was followed by John Fielden and Fred Friend who discussed developments in the UK Pilot Site Licence Initiative (PSLI) and the proposals for the National Electronic Site Licence Initiative (NESLI).

Julia Gammon from the University of Akron, Ohio, USA, closed the morning session with 'Consortial purchasing: the US experience with electronic products'. She described the Ohio initiative in creating OhioLINK, a statewide consortium of 56 academic libraries.

Serials in public libraries was the subject of the first two papers following lunch. Margaret Evans of Loughborough University introduced the theme in her paper 'Switching on serials: the British Library's Electronic Serials in Public Libraries Project'. The project has used case studies and postal surveys to indicate the current trends for the provision of electronic serials in

public libraries. Hugh Marks followed up the theme by introducing MagNET, a public libraries serials database and location finding device.

Following another set of workshops, the final two papers of an action-packed day, focused on the concept: 'The cost of quality'. In the first of these papers, 'Scientific publication and the UK Research Assessment Exercise: an assessor's view', Professor W F Vinen, Chair of the Physics Assessment Panel, looked at the way in which subject panels assess the evidence of scientific publication in UK universities. The second paper, from Griffith Edwards, Editor-in-Chief of *Addiction*, entitled 'Journals: what makes the added value?', examined the impact of the journal on the raw material of submitted manuscripts and whether the journal had an active influence on its field of coverage.

The UKSG Annual General Meeting closed out Tuesday afternoon. In the evening the Conference Dinner was held in the Great Hall. Claus Pedersen, Chair of the European Federation of Serials Groups, and Susan Davis, President of NASIG, brought greetings from their respective organisations. This was followed by a popular lesson in line dancing.

The final Wednesday morning session provided four interesting and varied papers finishing off a very successful three days. Michael Mabe discussed the 'SuperJournal Project' which involves investigating the reading habits of journal users. This has been achieved by monitoring clusters of journals being tested in a dozen universities throughout the UK. This was followed by Simon Tanner of the Higher Education Digitisation Service (HEDS). His paper highlighted current initiatives being undertaken by HEDS, such as digitising the science journal *Nature*.

Malcolm Smith of the British Library Bibliographic Services raised the question of collection management in his paper, 'Hanging on to what we have got: economic and management issues in providing perpetual access in an electronic environment'. He addressed the question of long term access in a world of rapid change, where technology can fastly become obsolete.

An excellent paper given by Sally Cartwright, Publishing Director of *Hello! Magazine*, was a light-hearted close to the conference, in keeping with last year's paper by Hazel Hall on 'Football fanzines'. The paper included the impact on the publishing and logistical operations in times of breaking news, such as the death and funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales.

On the whole, the conference proved to be an interesting and informative experience. It gave me a glimpse into the information world outside academia, along with the opportunity to meet people working within this field.

Steven Glover
Manchester Metropolitan University

I am studying for the MA in Librarianship at the University of Sheffield. My working experience includes a six-month contract in which I was employed within the areas of serials management on a project team based at one of the 'new universities'. Although my role was purely clerical, I witnessed daily many of the challenges faced by librarians in the 'electronic age'. My application for attendance to the UK Serials Group Annual Conference was based on my desire to broaden my expertise and working knowledge in this area.

Having received the documentation sent to me prior to the conference and also having read the information contained in the delegate packs, I was prepared for a stimulating and somewhat hectic few days - and this proved to be the case.

The setting of the conference in Exeter University proved to be idyllic and the splendid grounds could be enjoyed in between lecture sessions. As a student I particularly enjoyed the hospitality and the excellent meals and buffets provided throughout the conference.

The opening session, 'Mapping the future', immediately brought focus and raised the central issues and topics which were developed in later sessions. As a newcomer, I found the opening session particularly useful and informative. Over the three days the half hour papers were very well presented and the accompanying overheads/ Powerpoint presentations very useful, helping to keep the listener's attention. Having a comparatively limited background, I found the range of speakers very interesting. For example, it was the first time that I had heard the publisher's point of view. I was particularly interested to hear Tuesday's session on 'Serials in public libraries'.

To date, public libraries have largely been excluded from the information age and to my mind their representation at the conference was encouraging on two levels. It was good to hear that there were projects being undertaken within public libraries, and that the UKSG recognised the role of public libraries and were actively encouraging the 'togetherness' that was repeatedly discussed throughout the few days.

On both afternoons I attended a workshop and, unfortunately, I found them both disappointing and difficult, an experience shared by other student delegates. The workshops provided a great forum for debate for those with a working knowledge, but as students we did not have the working experience to contribute and were forced to spectate. Although there was discussion, the workshops lacked structure and did not seem to achieve any conclusions or any best practice models which we could take away. However, I am sure that this criticism is only pertinent of the 'student perspective' and that the sessions were beneficial to those delegates who wished to discuss their working practice.

During my time at the conference I visited the exhibition several times. Although once more I had to play the role of an observer, as clearly the products were of limited interest to a student, I did enjoy seeing the marketing strategies employed by each company represented.

Undoubtedly the most pleasurable aspect of the conference was having the opportunity to meet other delegates, from fellow student to presidents of large companies. As I am coming to the end of my time as student I welcomed the opportunity to talk to people who were already working, and in many instances had been working for several years, in areas in which I hope to be soon employed. I heard very interesting first hand accounts which I am sure will be part of my own future experience.

Overall, the conference proved to be a worthwhile and stimulating experience, and I left with a much greater appreciation and awareness of the complex issues involved in serials management. I would like to thank the UKSG for giving me the opportunity to attend the conference. My lasting memories will be of the enjoyment I had and the new and lasting friendships I have made.

Jackie Toyne
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