

JOHN MERRIMAN: AN APPRECIATION



John Merriman was Editor of *Serials* from 1993 to 2000. During his period as Editor, John developed and nurtured the journal through a time of great change within the serials industry. He began when serials were firmly rooted in the print environment and the information supply chain was relatively straightforward – author, publisher, subscription agent, librarian, user. By the time of his retirement, electronic journals were a significant force in the land and a host of new aggregators and intermediaries were delivering serials content in a variety of different formats. Such has been the rapid pace of change in less than a decade.

Newer, or younger, readers of *Serials* may only know of John's UKSG involvement as the editor of the journal. However, John has certainly played a much greater and more important role in the UKSG: indeed he is the 'founding father' of the group. In 1975, already a Director of Blackwells Periodicals, he felt very strongly that the major players in the serials information chain – librarians, subscription agents and publishers – would benefit from communicating more effectively. He persuaded Richard Blackwell to support a meeting of university serials staff, with presentations from leading publishers such as Robert Maxwell, to "discuss the important issues of the day". Delegates went away talking enthusiastically of the need to form a Serials Group – but nothing happened. In 1977 John organised a follow-up meeting with an even wider audience. This time a Working Group went away to form the UKSG and the first conference was held in York in 1978. John was involved from the very beginning and became Conference Organiser until 1990. A highlight he remembers

with pride was the 1984 conference where he welcomed sixteen US librarians to the conference. With John's advice and fellowship, this group formed the nucleus of the North American Serials Interest Group (NASIG) – now a thriving sister organisation to UKSG.

In 1989, John was awarded the Bowker/ Ulrich Serials Librarianship Award for "leadership in serials-related activities" and for the fostering of "advances leading to a better understanding of the serials field". He was the first recipient outside the USA and the first non-librarian – a most significant and well-deserved tribute.

When he left Blackwells, he became the Secretary of the Association of Subscription Agents bringing that to life and prominence. John is now retiring completely from UKSG, but as an Honorary Life member of the group he says he will "stagger to UKSG conferences as long as he is able". As a keen walker and gardener with a love of good food, this probably means for many years to come. Indeed, he has just embarked upon a new 'career' – as Branch Chairman of the North Oxfordshire Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale. John has been passionate about real ale for many years (for connoisseurs, his favourite brews are Hook Norton Best Bitter and Archers Golden) and many meetings of the *Serials* editorial board have regularly taken place in real ale pubs across the UK. The editorial board will miss his dedication, breadth of knowledge and sense of humour but we wish John a long and healthy retirement and every happiness. Whilst John remains typically modest about his own contribution, there is no doubt that without his foresight and dedication the world of serials would be much less cohesive and a good deal less active.