



A Profile of Tom Graham

Tom Graham is the University Librarian at Newcastle University, who has recently catapulted into the serials limelight as the new Chair of the JISC/DNER Journal Working Group that now incorporates the work of the National Electronic Site Licence Initiative (NESLI). However, Tom has long had an interest in serials and the process of scholarly communication. A particular claim to fame, he recounts, is that he managed to get the issue of journal pricing into the first Follett Report.

Tom comes from a fairly traditional Scottish background. He was brought up, and went to school, in Glasgow and like many people in Scotland of that generation went to University in Glasgow, where he got his first degree. Coming from a family of teachers, he went to university expecting to become one himself but fairly rapidly decided that he did not have the right temperament! Whilst still at university he became interested in the issues of managing a library service – recognising the wide range of service provision required to meet the needs of undergraduates, postgraduates and academics.

When he finished university, he went to the University of Strathclyde to gain his library qualifications. At the same time, the Department of Scottish History at Glasgow University asked him to do some research, on a part-time basis, on relationships between the Papacy and Scotland in the sixteenth century. This research started out as a M.Litt (a two year research degree in Glasgow). There is a very large collection of material in the Vatican archives which has considerable Scottish content, and just as Tom was finishing his Diploma in Librarianship, he

was asked to go out to Rome to do full time work for a year, gathering and identifying this material. He had a thoroughly enjoyable year in Rome, identifying large amounts of valuable archive material, calendaring it and having it microfilmed or both his own research and for future scholars. Due to the amount and difficulty of the original source material and the amount of analysis required, what began as a M.Litt, became several years of part-time research, and he was eventually awarded a PhD from Glasgow. .

Since his return from Rome, Tom has moved around quite a lot. He spent three years in the library at Glasgow University – mostly as a subject librarian in the Physical Sciences. That was followed by eight years in Aberdeen, as Head of Reader Services, a post, which embraced both conventional user services and developing subject liaison work. He then moved on to spend four years at Hull University as Deputy Librarian and then University Librarian at York, before finally settling at Newcastle University in 1997..

Tom's main passion (apart from his family and libraries!) is music: he plays the violin and while at school led the Glasgow Schools Orchestra. He says he contemplated a professional career in music but opted for a more academic option. As well as being a violin player, he also sings - his voice broke at an early age and he was a bass at thirteen. He feels that one of the advantages of working in a university environment has been the opportunity to play in high calibre amateur orchestras. Over the years Tom has sung in the Edinburgh Festival chorus, briefly in the Scottish Opera Chorus and most recently the Hexham Abbey Festival Chorus. He has also done a little

solo opera work at Hull and York. As an instrumentalist, he currently plays in a Tynedale orchestra. In an age of multi-tasking, he has even been known to sing in one part of a concert and play in another part (not recommended, he says!). He is also a member of the Iona Community, and was for a time chair of its publishing arm, Wild Goose Publications.

It was the world of music that brought his wife and him together. She also sings and they met when they were both singing in the Edinburgh Festival Chorus. They now have two sons, one who is an architectural student and one in his final year at school. Music has stayed in the family and his younger son plays the bagpipes and also plays the drums in a rock band. (One hopes that the house is well sound-proofed.) The older son's interests – as an architect – are more artistic, although he enjoys listening to music.

When asked about the future for librarians, Tom is thoughtful and perceptive. He believes that the future librarian is going to have to be

multi-skilled – it is not going to be a profession where you can focus on one activity. Adaptability and managing change are already key skills required by librarians – they must continue to be open to new ideas as the information industry changes at a rapid rate. And, he predicts, lessons will be learned from unexpected places. Skills relating to understanding information content and IT and how they relate to the business of information delivery will be essential. Looking back on his career, Tom believes that the challenges, arising from change, have made his job significantly more interesting. When asked what the highlights of his career have been, Tom is modest. He hopes that he has made a difference, but with a lot of small things – no 'big bang'. He describes himself as "a gradualist and infiltrator rather than a loud-mouthed revolutionary". We can only hope that he continues working so effectively in this way as he leads the Journals Working Group into new and exciting initiatives.