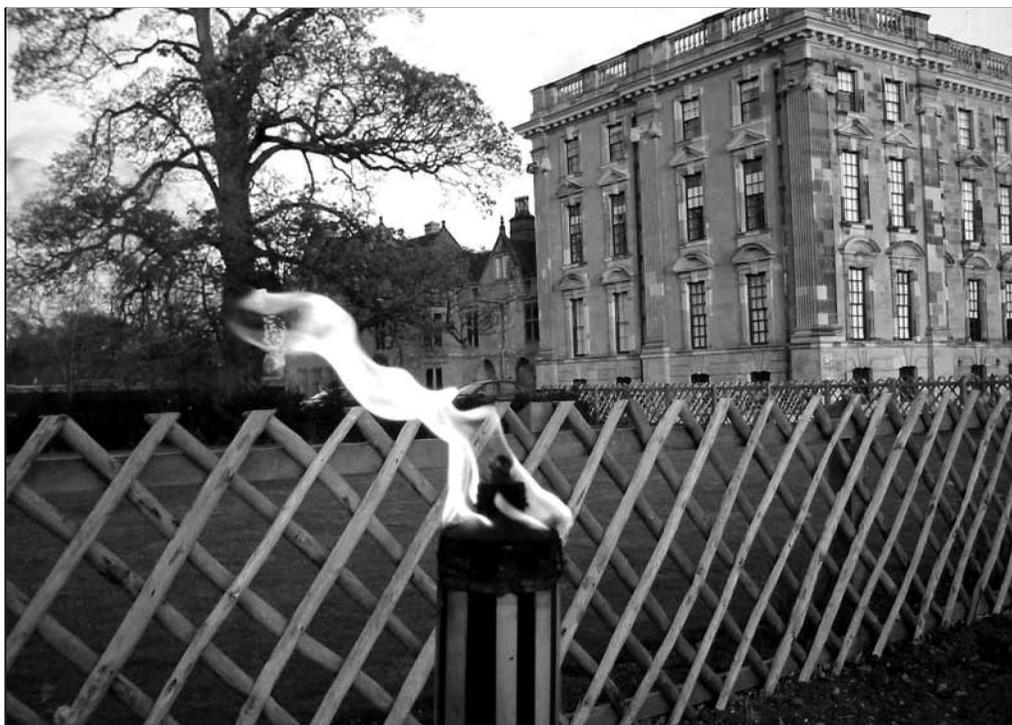


THE STUDENTS' VIEW



*Stoneleigh
Abbey*

Pictures by
Chris Leamy
and Sue Hill

There are three sponsored places at the UKSG Conference each year, and this year's attendees were **Esther Wilkinson** from Loughborough, **Chrysa Papatriantafyllou** and **Rachel Campbell** from Manchester Metropolitan University. The following are extracts from their reports.

How did they get there?

Esther writes: When Paul Harwood mentioned the sponsored student places at the UKSG Annual Conference during the UK Serials roadshow, my interest was immediate. I had spent part of my year as a Graduate Trainee in a university library working with serials, so I was well aware of their importance in the world of scholarly communication. The shift from paper to electronic journals had also been a topic that was of particular interest to me in the modules I had studied at Loughborough.

Chrysa writes: Things were running smoothly at Manchester Metropolitan University until late November when our collection management lecturer, Mr Peter Lea, keenly announced that the following week's guest lecture was going to be delivered by members of the UKSG. Let's be honest here. Name a student who is up for a guest lecture at 10 o'clock on a Monday morning!

Up to that point few of us knew what the UKSG was about, and most of us were dreading the thought of having a bunch of middle-aged professionals delivering speeches first thing on a Monday morning. To everyone's surprise the UKSG team consisted of young, energetic, and interesting people that seemed to get a buzz out of their jobs. Not long after that visit six sponsored places for the UKSG conference were announced for full-time MA students; Peter put on once again his 'UKSG marketing hat' and worked really hard to convince the whole class to attend. Somehow, with deadlines pressing and the prospect of spending time with 543 'librarians' cut-off from the outside world for three days, the idea did not seem very appealing, but Rachel and I decided to live life on the edge, put our names forward and found ourselves heading for Warwickshire.

Rachel writes: Serials management, on the surface, and from a novice's eye view, isn't

Sing a song of conference...

1986

*This year all the papers ran to the clock
For yesterday's people it was "Future Shock"
Frank's CLA fees make us shiver with fear
We'll have no money for the Conference next year
We could cancel from agents and save some and then
Invest in an orchestra going to Rennes
But whoever you are and wherever you be
The UKSG is the conference for me*

*Our Chairman's been busy and works with a will
Giving kisses of life on Cardiac Hill
The people who needed it came from afar
In a plane that was smaller than Merriman's car
The transport arrangements were good for a few
Doris sailed up the Exe aboard the QEII*

*We voted this year for nine women or men
The tellers could not count the votes up to ten
The rules of the Group came to us in a flash
You must be an Albert to handle the cash
The Workshops went on at a spanking good pace
With dinosaurs flashing all over the place
We're looking ahead to the Conference next year
We hear last year's Proceedings may even appear
Internationally speaking we're digging the trench
When the Tunnel is finished will Dawson's go French
Is it N.A.S.I.G. or NASIG please don't get it wrong
The success of your Conference depends on your song*



The conference exhibition

immediately the most glamorous aspect of the world of information management. Scratch the surface, and you discover (or, I did) that there's a massive amount of innovation and development, and a profession that wants to embrace the future and the challenges that lie on the way. Prior to starting my master's degree, I'd never heard of the UKSG, and had little experience of scholarly publications – other than as a user while doing my undergraduate degree (in the days of card catalogues, before Tim Berners-Lee's small contribution to the world, and when CD-ROMs were the height of technological innovation). I've always had an interest in publishing, news information, and current awareness services, so when the opportunity to apply for a sponsored place to attend the conference I thought I'd be a fool not to try.

Social Events

Esther: The social aspect of the Conference could not have been better. For those of us who arrived on the Sunday evening, a buffet dinner had been organised at two pubs in Kenilworth, an attractive village just a couple of miles away from the University of Warwick. This was a great opportunity to get talking to people in a very friendly, informal atmosphere, and I was amazed at how many nations were represented by the people present. I spent much of the evening talking to two librarians from Switzerland about the differences between British and Swiss

librarianship, and I was even able to make use of my undergraduate degree in German!

Chrysa: We arrived on Sunday at the Warwick Campus just in time for an informal night out at a nearby village. Everybody did their best to make us welcome and was keen to engage with us. After dinner we popped to the pub across the street where the first chat-circles started being formed. New recruits were quickly indoctrinated, by 'older UKSG goers', in what to expect. Everybody rejoiced!

Esther: A drinks reception on Monday evening preceded a very nice meal in the University's Panorama Suite. Again, this was a good opportunity to network with fellow delegates and exhibitors from all over the world, and the meal was followed by the renowned UKSG Quiz. The mental age of our quiz team became apparent when some of the only questions we could answer confidently were those on *Harry Potter*, *Playschool* and *Star Trek*, but we made up for this with some amazingly good guesswork in other areas! Needless to say, we came nowhere near achieving first place, but thankfully we did not get the booby prize. If I were to offer one piece of advice to future participants in the Quiz, it would be to join a multi-national team, as this certainly seemed to be a pre-requisite for success!

Chrysa: Tuesday night was the long awaited (quarter of a century) official dinner of the

conference. It was held at Stoneleigh Abbey, a fabulous mansion, which surpassed all my expectations and probably matched the much talked about tenth anniversary at Cambridge. After the reception in the State rooms dinner was held at a marquee with live music by a string quartet, followed by a fantastic fireworks display. The fireworks went on for at least ten good minutes, bringing out on the open even those afraid of the chilly Warwickshire night.

Esther: Tuesday evening brought the Conference Dinner at Stoneleigh Abbey, a beautifully restored 18th century mansion. The reception took place in the Abbey's State Rooms, and we had ample opportunity to admire the artwork and architecture before dinner, which was served in a marquee on the lawn by the River Avon. The food was fantastic – a far cry from the average student diet of pizzas and ready-meals! – and I quickly found myself engaged in a lively conversation about library systems with several of my fellow diners. The evening drew to a close with a very impressive display of fireworks over the river, which came as a surprise to most of us as it had not been mentioned on the conference programme. After this, we returned by coach to the university campus, where there was a disco for those who still had the energy to party the night away. In common with many other people, however, I was glad to



Enjoying the conference banquet

Sing a song of conference...

1988

The Palace last year was too grand for this choir

So our verses were all consigned to the fire

But now like a phoenix we rise from the ash

To suppress us you'll have to come up with hard cash

You may think at Blenheim the photos a steal

T'was the blackmail from them that paid for the meal

So whoever you are and wherever you be

The UKSG is the conference for me

For this year's music we got a good quote

The stranger the instrument the deeper the note

You may think the lyrics anonymous tosh

They were drawn piece by piece from Hieronymous Bosch

And speakers whose papers are boring and wordy

Will be locked up in hell with their own hurdy gurdy

We've a plan for disasters to cut down on risks

But nobody warned us about flying disks

The lectures were steaming the rooms they were not

Poor Margaret was wearing her coat in her cot

To wash in the basins we were quite unable

Which explains why the bath mats were placed on the table

Oh, Albert we're sorry about your grey hair

And the Grecian 2000 is getting so dear

The increased subscription put a bit on account

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John Merriman and Hazel Woodward at the banquet

be able to collapse into bed after a very enjoyable but exhausting day!

Exhibition

Esther: The Conference opened on Monday with registration and a first chance to view the exhibition. This was quite a daunting prospect at first: the exhibition hall was the centre of activity outside of the main conference programme, and as such it was almost always bustling with people. However, it provided an excellent opportunity for delegates (including myself) to view some of the latest products and services on offer from the major players in the serials industry. As a student, I found it particularly interesting to speak to representatives from publishers and subscription agents not just about their products, but also about the work that they do and their views as to how journals might evolve in the future. I was pleasantly surprised at how welcome I was made to feel by most of the exhibitors, despite the fact that I did not have access to a library serials budget, and in fact a few seemed happy to be able to talk to me about my views as an end-user of their products.

Conference

Chrysa: Next day the conference opened officially with the registration and a chance to browse through the exhibition. How was it? No jargon, no acronyms, in short warm people ready to help and most importantly in plain English. All guest speakers and workshops followed along these lines. You only needed to have a reasonable understanding of the serials world to be able to follow and enjoy what was presented and discussed.

Rachel: I've never been to any conference before, and anticipated that the content of the presentations and sessions

would go above my head...they didn't (the £3k I spent in university fees hasn't been wasted it seems). I already had a fairly good general background knowledge of issues relating to serials, and I can quite honestly say that I've learned more (by attending the Conference) than I ever would in any lecture theatre. (I still have my doubts about the practical application of Knowledge Management though – which, we were informed, has 5,442 different definitions.) I was surprised that I didn't hear anything about the issue of VAT being mentioned.

Esther: In addition to the Exhibition and plenary sessions, delegates were given the opportunity to attend three workshops or briefing sessions. It was difficult to choose which sessions to attend, as there were so many on offer which sounded interesting. In the end, I attended two briefing sessions – one for newcomers to serials, and another which provided tips and tricks for effective Internet searching – and a workshop on disability awareness and accessibility for the visually impaired. The workshop was particularly valuable (once I had found my way through the maze of corridors in the Arts Building to get there!), as the small size of the group meant that there was a chance for everybody to share their own views and experiences. However, the two briefing sessions were also excellent, and I will certainly be making use of some of the handy hints we were given for searching the Internet!

Conclusions

Chrysa: Overall, the conference provided a great opportunity to meet interesting people and get the insiders' view of the serials business. Contrary to popular belief librarians, agents, and publishers do have fun, and one only needs to look at the photos from the disco night, to realise. One can also engage in 'delegate spotting', as the vast majority of the profession's movers and shakers attend the conference, generously availing the 'picking of their brains'. Who would resist the opportunity to meet figures like Sir Brian Follett, the man to whom our occupation owes much of its present and future; or John Merriman, to whom we owe UKSG. Thus, I can only conclude that the UKSG conference is a valuable experience, especially for young professionals and

students of library and information management, and strongly recommend its attendance to future generations of students.

Esther: My main objectives in attending the UKSG Annual Conference had been to build upon my existing knowledge of the serials industry, particularly with regard to electronic resources, and to make the most of the networking opportunity. I would certainly like to believe that I achieved both of these goals. The talks were interesting and informative, as were the workshops and briefing sessions, and although I still cannot claim to be an expert in the world of serials, I am definitely a lot more knowledgeable about the industry than I was beforehand! The social events and the generous refreshment breaks meant that the conference was also invaluable for networking with information professionals from all over the world. I was made to feel genuinely welcome by everyone I met, and at times I was surprised at how much I had in common with some of the other delegates.

Rachel: Overwhelmingly, the aspect of the conference that I found most useful was the chance to meet and talk to delegates – to find out what they do, how they got to where they are, and what they think about the information industry in general. I had a very interesting conversation with Monika Bastian (Schering AG) where we discussed the differences between the UK and German academic systems, and library career paths. I was also baffled by an American delegate who was talking about "Library 101", which I eventually figured out, had nothing to do with Orwell! I spoke to Paul Pedley (Economist Intelligence Unit) about the commercial library sector – in particular media and legal libraries (three days after the conference I realised that I'd just read a book he'd written). Something else that I found fascinating was how international the conference was. I met delegates from the USA, Germany, Israel, Ireland, and Norway (among others). The "United Kingdom" of the United Kingdom Serials Group is deceptive. The people I met were genuinely interested in what I'm doing, and offered (unprompted) wide-ranging advice and help. All in all, I thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of the events, although it did take 24 hours for me to catch up with lost sleep! We arrived at the University of Warwick on Sunday evening, to find it basking in sunshine, and the sun continued

Sing a song of conference...

(From page 102)

*And darkened your hair by a trifling amount
The unchanged committee we all have to thank
And Serials we hope will take care of the bank*

*So now you'll soon leave us by plane, train or car
If you go home with Hazel you could travel far.
Together in serials we'll go on and on.
Birmingham is the new place for our song.
In case phone or mail doesn't reach your next year,
We've booked you with JANET to be sure you are here.*

1993

*It's some time ago this choir last struck a pose,
When we're told our singing got up someone's nose.
But we're back, by demand of the totally tone deaf,
To subject you all to a fate worse than death.
We'll sing of the venues palatial and small
Or we would, if we hadn't forgotten them all.*

*We've missed out on chronicling major events
Since the year that we met on the banks of the Trent
We've been on the Solent and then overseas.
While in Edinburgh the water came up to our knees.
Sink or swim Maxwell gave us advice that was fine.
Have we opened a bank account in Lichtenstein?
But wherever you are or wherever you be,
The UKSG is the conference for me*

*The Committee's emerged despite the ballot box,
Just who is this company Cox, Prior and Cox?
The Editor of Serials changes apace.
Is it time the Committee has found a new face?
John Merriman well may be up to the task
Of resisting a takeover from Haworth Press.*

*Now we're back in Southampton, we thought t'would be
nice.
Our philosophy is to try anything twice.
Familiar faces loom up left and right.
If they look more mature, 'tis a trick of the light.
By train, plane and car and by the power of prayer
At last we have managed to meet a Lord Mayor.*

*The speakers have talked about the crystal balls,
While we've frozen or roasted in residence halls.
The high tech that's coming is all very nice
But will it make plates that will take enough rice?
What is the real future we haven't a clue or we'd
Parcel it up and we'd sell it to you.*

to shine for the duration of the conference. I'd recommend attending to anybody with even a vague interest in serials and publishing, and if the opportunity arises, I'd more than happily attend again.

Finally, a few brief words in support of us beleaguered students...not all of us rely solely on Google for researching, as although it is a useful tool to have:

*"Doing research on the web
is like using a library
assembled piecemeal by pack
rats and vandalised nightly"*

