

# The students' view

The sponsored student places at the UKSG Conference were this year awarded to Graeme Boyd (Strathclyde University), Helen Harte (Manchester Metropolitan University), Chang He and Annie Ridgion (University of Bristol), and Alison Sutton and Niamh Leonard (City University). Each covered a different aspect of the conference in their following reports, in which their enthusiasm for food features almost as prominently as their clear appreciation of the packed programme.

## The trip to Murrayfield Stadium

*Annie Ridgion*

I was not sure what to expect from the UKSG annual conference because I had not attended a residential conference before. I was slightly worried that I only knew one delegate before I went. However, the evening excursion to Murrayfield Stadium on arrival put me completely at ease. Not only was it a chance to see the famous home of Scottish rugby but the trip was also the perfect opportunity to get to know people. The bus journey to the stadium was full of chatter, which totally disproved the myth that librarians like quiet at all times! There were delegates from many countries, and everyone was really friendly. I realised what a small world it is when I met lots of people who knew my lecturers at Bristol University, and others that had studied or worked with contacts that I have at home in Surrey.

The food was much more exciting than I had anticipated from 'an informal gathering with a buffet', as stated in the programme! Overall, the evening was a great introduction to a worthwhile and enjoyable conference. I intend to keep in touch with some of the friends I made at the conference, and hope to be able to see them again at another UKSG conference in the future.

## Plenary sessions – Day 1

*Niamh Leonard*

Despite our UKSG novice status, the topics addressed in the five plenary sessions were of great interest, covered a broad range of issues and really gave us an idea of the future direction of the

serials field. Particular highlights for me included David Seaman's presentation on reshaping the serials 'data silos', in which he presented some of the findings of a recent survey by the Digital Library Federation and called for a move towards greater data integration across publishers, aggregators and services through the use of data and metadata standards, in order to meet user needs. Another personal highlight was Rick Anderson's presentation on serial check-in. I can't really comment in a professional capacity on the novel approach to serial check-in introduced 18 months ago at the University of Nevada, but I think it's fair to say that he struck a real chord with the audience and that there was an awful lot of empathy for what he had to say. The various presentations were pitched at the right level for us newcomers to the serials environment and I think it's true to say left us with plenty of food for thought and an understanding of both the bigger serials picture and some specific issues that are being faced.

## Plenary sessions – Day 2, and general overview

*Helen Harte*

Until 18 months ago the E world for me did not exist. I am a mature student studying for a degree in Information and Library Management at Manchester Metropolitan University and as with many other students, in whose footsteps I have followed, this was my first occasion to attend a conference and I did not know what to expect. So after weeks of meeting deadlines for coursework, I arrived for my first visit to Edinburgh. My immediate reaction on reaching Heriot-Watt was

that I had found peace and tranquility. On my arrival I familiarised myself with the venues for the plenary and briefing sessions I was to attend. This done, I proceeded to visit the exhibition hall. This was personally a particularly useful exercise, as my only introduction to e-journals thus far was as a student and then to use only recommended journals relevant to my studies. So, to actually meet and chat to the people behind Emerald, Ingenta, and Blackwell Publishing and – as I grew more daring – those who were not relevant to my studies, proved to be beneficial. To do this tour before the first of the plenary sessions was useful as it gave me a feeling of the context of the UKSG conference and I found that people were genuinely eager to chat and to give advice on anything that may be of interest to the individual.

The plenary sessions I attended on that first day of the conference only served to reinforce the currency of information my degree course is offering. As a student delegate attending the conference I quickly realised I would be viewing things from a different perspective from the majority, as my work to date in the Library and Information sector is mainly theoretical. However, when Lynne Brindley began to speak about issues regarding changes in research behaviour, library management and the extensive networking of electronic access, I began to relax a little and thought to myself, yes I do know about these issues. I realised that there is a huge international industry out there and I had only seen the tip of the iceberg; this is where my 18 months of study has brought me.

At dinner on that first evening I found fellow delegates friendly and willing to invite those who



Above, entertainment for the ladies. Left, Aliza Friedman and Fytton Rowland – from Aliza's gleeful look, this must be when the kilt flew up

Photos: Chris Leamy

*Right, quiz winners  
being presented with  
champagne by  
Lawraine Wood (Sue  
Hill Recruitment).*

*Below, nobody  
believes that Kristiina  
is REALLY a loser!*



were obviously first timers or on their own to dine at their table. So surrounded by peaceful settings, excellent company and good food my first day was drawing to a close and it was one that had been thoroughly enjoyed. The following and final evening, bagpipes were on hand to greet us on our arrival at Prestonfield House for the Conference Dinner, and lead us into a stunning marquee accompanied by a very welcome three-course meal.

Attendance at the UKSG was highly recommended by my tutor Peter Lea at Manchester Metropolitan University. His advice that it could be very beneficial proved to be prophetic, for as the conference unfolded I found the plenary sessions, briefing sessions and the exhibition all complemented each other.

Before my letter arrived confirming a place at the conference, I had to submit my choice of dissertation topic. 'E Publishing' was the topic I chose, so the combination of my degree course, the current and extremely well presented wealth of material available at UKSG, combined with the knowledgeable people that I met, strengthened the flagging spirits of a second year mature student.

### **Networking and socialising**

*Graeme Boyd*

Still recovering!

On our first day we were greeted by Paul Harwood. Paul introduced everyone and took us to the canteen for a welcome lunch. Most of us had travelled a long distance so a nice bite to eat and a cup of tea made us all feel a little better. Paul made us feel really at home and told us what to expect



and what to make use of. Likewise, over the three days both Alison Whitehorn and Karen Sadler were always around to help us if we were lost or if we had no-one to talk to (being 1st conference timers!)

On the second night the renowned UKSG quiz took place. It was the hardest quiz I have ever had the pleasure to be part of. I will hold my hands up in shame and admit I did not get one single question right. Indeed, knowing the level of expertise was far above my calling (MENZA members only please), I switched to barman duties and made sure everyone on my team was properly refreshed. Get those brains working!

The food was fantastic. Catering staff were always on hand and delighted to assist.

Each night we sat at a table with different



Left, Asher Sofrin (TDNet), and Kristiina Hormia-Poutanen (FinElib) marvel at the kilted dancers. Below, piping into the reception

people, which was ideal because it meant we got to meet new people and introduce ourselves. Over dinner I found it amazing just how international the conference was. I was sharing conversation with people from the USA, Norway, Sweden, Germany and Ireland. Many delegates had been library studies students in the past and they were only too happy to offer advice and help in shaping my future library career.

Disco disco disco! Each night and until the wee small hours the dance floor was packed with the serial industry's finest shakers and movers. From us disco beer mad students to the chief publishing house executives in their expensive suits; everyone enjoyed a boogie and a little dram.

On the final night every delegate was taken aback by just how much effort and generosity the UKSG had shown. We were greeted by open decked buses for a thirty minute ride through the beautiful city of Edinburgh on a sunny early evening. The destination was Prestonfield House, a beautiful country house estate set against the dramatic backdrop of Arthur's Seat. It really was quite spectacular. To start off with we were ushered in to a wonderful white marquee by a lone piper. We felt like we had arrived at the wedding of Posh & Becks! Then we were plied with drinks and chat and nibbles before entering the main dining room for a fantastic meal. But it didn't stop there...

That evening's entertainment just got better and better. After the meal three Highland dancers (two gorgeous girls, one blonde and one brunette, plus a handsome young fella) danced away to the loveliest of Scottish traditional ceilidh music. Most of the UKSGers were in their element. This type of entertainment doesn't happen every night! Cameras were clicking and folk were singing and



dancing away like there was no tomorrow.

Finally two hysterical muso comics, who ridiculed poor Bonnie Scotland to the point of no return, clambered on to the stage. Now was the time for the bad language and rude jokes... However, their joking and singing did the trick and the crowd was in stitches.

Whispers spread round the dinner table that there was still one more surprise. Surely not? What else could we expect to match the class of the night already? Fireworks? A bonfire of duplicate serials? Gavin Hastings? Out we went to the chilly starry Scottish night where we stood around gripped with anticipation. Then, as if from nowhere, a full blazing Scottish pipe band marched right through the grounds. What a surprise! William Wallace would have been proud. Even the deer and rabbits scattering around the grounds took notice. It was poetic, romantic and a little bit emotional. What a way to finish! As the pipers marched off, the buses drove straight up as if on cue, and chauffeured us back to the beautiful tranquil grounds of Heriot-Watt University.

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

UK serials industry. What better way to do this than over a glass of wine and a lovely meal or by having a natter on the dancefloor. Everyone was friendly and delighted to engage with us mere students. The conference showed me that there was a massive amount of innovation and development happening within the field of scholarly publishing.

I would recommend the conference to anyone, especially if you are a student (I've not eaten so well in months!). I know I will be back next year for more boogie on the dancefloor – I just hope I can keep up.

### **Conclusions**

*Alison Sutton*

The UKSG conference was an excellent opportunity to see all the theory of the previous few months put into practice. The impetus for me to attend came from a desire to see life beyond the lecture theatre, to gain greater experience in the 'real world' of information. It was both comforting and stimulating to see that the very issues and

problems addressed at university were highly relevant topics on the outside, and to hear all sides of the story from librarians, publishers, agents and aggregators. Mark Rowse of Ingenta caught my imagination when he outlined the early information adrenalin and current content chaos of the serials industry. But he also summed up the ultimate aims of the serials industry: Nerd-free Nirvana; a place where technology is so clever that the user is unaware of it; of easy access, de-duplication and connectedness.

The whole conference was infused with a positive view of the industry's ability to embrace the challenges of the future. By the end, all six student delegates were quick to agree that the whole experience had been greatly beneficial, highly entertaining and very interesting. I don't think any of us really knew what to expect, but we were all given a great deal of food for thought (as well as food for the stomach) and all left having learned a great deal of the practice to go with our theory.

*With thanks to Alison Sutton for co-ordinating these reports.*