

# Reports on briefing sessions and workshops held at the 27th UKSG Annual Conference

## **A problem shared – lis-e-journals@UKSG**

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lis-e-journals@jiscmail.ac.uk is an informal mailing list set up under the auspices of the UKSG. It now has more than 1,500 members from 33 countries, and is composed of librarians, publishers, learned societies, agents, aggregators and many others with an interest in electronic journals.

The main function of lis-e-journals is to provide a forum where issues relating to electronic journals can be discussed openly. As such, the list has raised a wide variety of issues over the years, including publishers' pricing policies, gracing periods, communication between publishers and librarians, open access, tracking journal changes, access issues, archives, authentication issues and usage statistics. There is no doubt that such discussion has provided publishers, intermediaries and agents with useful feedback on the services they provide and how they can improve the way they do things. An increasing number of publishers now provide newsletters, alerting services and dedicated areas on their sites to provide support for librarians. It has also helped in the development of standards, such as gracing policies.

The list has proved a valuable support mechanism for many librarians as they realize that the problems they face are not always unique to them or their institution. Off-list feedback to the list owner indicates that issues raised on the list have been used by librarians to aid discussions in their own organizations about how to deal with particular issues, even though many members are 'lurkers', who do not necessarily post messages themselves.

The aim of the workshops at the UKSG Annual Conference was to bring together list members to look at how the list could be further improved and

developed, and how more active participation by all the members could be encouraged.

The dynamic of the three workshops proved successful, with representation from librarians (both academic and corporate), large and small publishers, intermediaries and subscription agents. Delegates from the US and Europe were also present.

The workshops began with a general introduction and explanation of lis-e-journals. Following this, the group divided into two to discuss relevant issues. These were then presented to the whole group at the end of the workshop. Similar themes became apparent in discussion.

The general consensus was that lis-e-journals was a useful tool, seen by some as a community. However, both publishers and librarians reported that posting to the list could be intimidating, because of fear that comments could be misinterpreted or may be perceived to convey ignorance. Some members of the group used the archive to find answers to more basic questions. It was agreed that there 'was no such thing as a stupid question' and many welcome this level of discussion. It was felt, however, that the archives could be improved to allow easier searching by topic.

There were concerns about the negativity of some comments to the list, although it was felt that the list had not deteriorated to a level of pettiness and therefore did not need moderating. Questions were raised about the point at which a problem should be brought to the list, and it was suggested that some dialogue between those parties directly involved might be more helpful. However, one publisher commented that they found this useful for monitoring issues with their services. It was agreed that positive experiences should be posted to the list, such as examples of good practice. 'Quiet can be good' was another valid comment.

There seemed to be a misconception that the list was a librarian's tool and the lack of contributions

from other sources was noted. One challenge was determining whether a comment represented an individual or an organization. The general view was that librarians spoke as individuals, whereas publishers, intermediaries and subscription agents were seen, both by list members and employers, as representing their company. This resulted in some parties not feeling at liberty to comment publicly.

This area needs to be reviewed by the list owner. In the short term it was felt that summaries of all feedback, both on and off the list, from the list member responsible for the original query, would be very helpful.

Other general comments included a plea for meaningful subject lines to be used.

*The scope of lis-e-journals* The overwhelming feeling of those who attended the workshops was that lis-e-journals was an excellent forum for publisher news and alerts, such as changes to services including cessations, new titles and migrations of titles. In this respect news from smaller publishers was very welcome. It was suggested that the UKSG web site could host information on title changes with announcements on lis-e-journals, although some saw this as a role for subscription agents. The emphasis needs to be on information sharing, not marketing.

As important to the group was the role of lis-e-journals to promote awareness of current problems and possible challenges and as a tool for constructive feedback. Suggestions below demonstrate the eclectic nature of the list:

- practical issues
- theory
- large and small issues
- statistics
- archives
- value
- unbundling
- features and functionality required by librarians.

Interestingly there were calls for more UK industry issues to be discussed, including more interaction from the JISC, but also for more international postings, reflecting the membership of both lis-e-journals and UKSG and the fact that the same issues are shared in different countries.

Corporate libraries were represented in the workshops, although this is not always reflected in the discussion on the list. A survey to find out

more about the members of lis-e-journals was suggested in order to promote further discussion in relevant areas. It emerged that corporate members felt discouraged from contributing to the list as they were unsure if it was the correct forum for their comments.

*Suggestions for publishers* There was concern amongst all parties about the fine line between current awareness and direct marketing. However, all agreed that increased input from publishers and subscription agents would be difficult without a list moderator, unless clear guidelines were available. It was agreed that publishers should respond to complaints and that a reply, even if it was seen as negative publicity, was probably more positive than the lack of interest perceived by not replying. However, this was also difficult without guidelines on use of the list (see below).

#### *Recommendations for UKSG*

Throughout the three workshops two key issues were identified which need to be addressed by UKSG in order to promote more open discussion and the inclusion of all list members.

- *Survey lis-e-journals members* UKSG should survey the 1,500 members of lis-e-journals to establish a clearer picture of geographical and occupational demographics and to investigate the wider needs of the lis-e-journals community.
- *Publish guidelines* In addition to improving the initial welcome message to new list subscribers, UKSG needs to establish clear guidelines on its web site to encourage further contributions from publishers, intermediaries and subscription agents. Guidelines need to be clear, outlining appropriate, ethical use of the list. In addition the difference between information sharing and direct marketing needs to be defined with examples of good practice.

All list members should also be made aware of an 'honour contract' whereby questions are answered, either on or off the list and all discussions are summarized.

These issues will be addressed by UKSG, the outcome of which will be publicized on lis-e-journals at a future date.

To subscribe to lis-e-journals please visit:

<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/LIS-E-JOURNALS.html>

**Using COUNTER statistics:  
a practical perspective**

*Simon Bevan, Cranfield University and*

*Louise Jones, University of Leicester*

This well-attended workshop was based on the experiences of two COUNTER pilot library sites. It covered the aims of the COUNTER project, a brief description of COUNTER reports, the role of the pilot sites, a break-out session on whether and how attendees had used or implemented the COUNTER Code of Practice, and concluded with suggestions for a librarian toolkit. Participants were a healthy mix of publishers and librarians.

The two themes that came out of the discussion groups were a) the difficulties faced implementing or using COUNTER statistics and b) how such usage stats are being used.

Difficulties for librarians included identifying staff with the time and the appropriate IT skills to be able to manipulate and analyse the data, how to cope with different figures for the same resources provided by both publisher and aggregator, and the need to ensure that spreadsheet formats were identical for the purposes of merging. It was reassuring to discover that people were experiencing similar problems, but it was felt that these were teething problems that can be resolved.

Publishers and vendors described the need to actually re-engineer or in some cases 'dumb down' many of their usage statistics so that they would be COUNTER compliant. It was emphasized that there was a cost involved in becoming compliant. One interesting issue was a concern that small publishers may feel vulnerable to journal cancellation if their relatively low usage figures are compared with those of larger publishers. However, it was generally accepted that usage figures alone do not provide the whole answer – for example, where the use of a few choice articles has helped win a significant funding bid.

Attendees were using COUNTER stats in a number of ways: to justify purchases of resources using cost per download (librarians), to consider new purchases using TOC and abstract COUNTER figures, to see the usage via different routes/interfaces (librarians/publishers), and publishers also used the data to aid their editorial decision-making.

A number of other issues were also raised, such as the requirement for usage bench-marks to be calculated so that institutions could compare their

usage with other similar institutions, and the need for COUNTER to consider working with system suppliers. Another issue concerned the need for COUNTER-compliant figures for electronic book usage.

Although there was little time to discuss in detail the concept of a librarian toolkit, there appeared to be some consensus that there was a need for standard Excel macro programmes to aid in any usage analysis, as well as the availability of resources that would help the administration of and access to stats – a single web page containing access to all COUNTER-compliant vendors, with named COUNTER contacts, etc.

**Widening participation and the use of  
electronic resources**

*Glynis Platt, Widening Participation Co-ordinator,*

*John Rylands University Library of Manchester*

This workshop covered the Widening Participation (WP) work done in John Rylands University Library of Manchester. It started with a brief history of the WP work of the University and how the Library became involved. The Library operates its own WP scheme allowing access to the University Library to sixth-formers and college students across the North West. Library cards are issued to students who are doing A/S levels, A levels, vocational A levels and to mature students on Access courses. These are students who are considering entering higher education and we target young people from under-represented groups, particularly those students whose parents have not experienced HE. The teachers and librarians who support them are also able to have library cards. Since the Library is very large an induction session is offered to groups of students to introduce them to the Library and the resources available. Normally, access is after 4.00 pm on weekdays but includes all weekends and vacations. Access during May is not allowed as this is the busy exam period. The students have access to our printed books and journals and also, unusually, access to virtually all our electronic journals and a few of our electronic databases where our licences have given permission for walk-in use. Many HE libraries allow some form of access but to my knowledge JRULM is unique in offering induction sessions and the use of electronic resources.

I gave three workshops which were well attended and produced many interesting questions, especially about how we negotiated walk-in usage for electronic journals. One reason for this was our move en masse to an off-site store of long runs of print journals which were now held electronically. Publishers accepted the fact that as a major research library we were heavily used by external users who would be disadvantaged when our print stock was off-site and would not be retrieved. There were also questions about the operation of the scheme and how it was monitored. In the last academic year over 900 cards were issued although only 18% of those who had cards actually came back to use us. Although this seems low it was nearly double the usage from the previous year and also from a library management standpoint we were not overrun by sixth-formers demanding help. In conclusion, the workshop participants seemed interested in the scheme and wanted to know more about access to electronic resources.

**Resource discovery and e-journal linking services – issues for librarians, suppliers and publishers**

*Nicholas Lewis, Electronic Resources Librarian,  
University of East Anglia*

This workshop debated the effectiveness of resource discovery software, such as library portals and link resolvers, in promoting electronic resources. The sessions were attended by librarians interested in implementing this kind of software and publishers who wanted to learn more about how to ensure their products were compatible. It was agreed that the question of how best to present electronic resources, and make appropriate links between them, is now a major concern not just for academic libraries but across the library sector.

There was consensus about the value of link resolvers in addressing this problem. In particular, linking software that is 'context-sensitive' was seen as most beneficial because it directs users to the most 'appropriate copy'. The products that seemed to work best were those based on the OpenURL standard, allowing the metadata from a citation in one database to be used to link to the full text for that citation in another. A number of librarians shared their experiences of using link

resolvers and there seemed to be significant differences in the workload involved depending on which product had been chosen. This highlighted the need for careful evaluation before embarking on the purchase of such software and the inclusion of some kind of preconfigured 'knowledgebase' was seen as essential.

Within the remit of the workshop, the discussion on portals was mostly limited to library portals, those focused specifically on managing access to electronic resources such as databases, e-journal collections and library catalogues. Most delegates agreed that the use of paid-for databases was often lower than expected within their institutions. This was partly owing to the number of different database interfaces and partly to the difficulty in presenting links to these databases in ways that are as straightforward as services like Google, Amazon or eBay.

The similarities between web gateways and library portals were discussed. It was generally recognized that it was the localization, personalization and cross-searching (also known as meta-searching or federated searching) functionality that distinguishes a portal from a gateway and makes it more attractive for accessing subscribed databases.

The disadvantages of cross-searching, particularly its imprecision, were discussed in some detail, but evidence from recent implementers also highlighted the benefits of library portals. These included their resource discovery potential (e.g. the inclusion of lesser-known databases when cross-searching), their use for finding incomplete citations and references, and their inclusion of linking functionality to access the full text. On the whole, it was felt that the advantages of portals outweighed the disadvantages but that it was important to manage expectations and not exaggerate the benefits of cross-searching.

The handouts from the session are available from the UKSG web site at:

<http://www.uksg.org/events/previous.asp>

**Making the most of digital readings – obtaining and accessing materials**

*Helen Pickering, HERON, a division of Ingenta plc*

In this workshop we aimed to cover how librarians and lecturers can make the best use of their digital course readings, and how to go about

getting hold of materials which were originally published in paper form.

The main issues were identified as:

- timescales and the need for advance planning and lecturer education
- the need to set a budget which is realistic for the long term and scaling up versus buying initial content for a pilot project to see how it works
- who pays? (Libraries? Departments? Students?) management of e-texts and access – who is responsible for this (e.g. lecturers or librarians, VLEs or basic web pages) and how is the provision of electronic texts managed?
- what format is needed (taking into account download times and the requirements of visually impaired students)?
- the need to check existing availability to avoid duplicating resources, or use beyond the limitations of the licence.

However, with the mix of publishers and librarians who attended the workshop varying wildly, the discussions tended to focus on areas of particular interest to the individuals. For example, how to catalogue extracts and a possible need for chapter/article level catalogue records to be provided by publishers was raised in one workshop, and use of VLEs was raised in another. All workshops had participants who wanted to know more about HERON.

**'Getting to know you': helpful advice,  
useful tips and practical solutions for those  
new to serials**

*Jayne Everard, Manchester Metropolitan University and  
Paul Harwood, Content Complete Ltd*

This briefing session ran on all three days of the conference with around 16 people attending on each day. The participants were mostly librarians, although every session did have at least one publisher and intermediary present, which ensured that all parts of the information chain were present.

The session attempted to provide those attending with a general overview of the scholarly communications process and some of the key developments in recent years such as online journals and the open access debate. It also covered some very specific points relating to managing a

hybrid journals collection at a major academic library.

The format appeared to work well. At the beginning of the session, participants were invited to identify something that they wished to learn more about, and the nice thing was that in most cases these issues were covered in the session and not always answered by the two people running it!

It was particularly interesting to note how many librarians still had questions and queries relating to the management of print journals, although inevitably the focus was on learning more about the online equivalents.

Participants engaged in discussion with the presenters and shared knowledge and experience. Based on the numbers who attended, it would seem that a session of this kind needs to be a permanent fixture at each year's conference.

**Print on demand for books and journal issues**

*Paul Williams, Sales Development Manager,  
Lightning Source UK Ltd.*

Print on demand (POD), has traditionally focused on the printing and distribution of book titles (publications with ISBNs). More recently Lightning Source have begun printing journal issues for publishers wishing to keep tight control over their print runs. This allows journal publishers to print exactly the quantity they require to meet the subscription run, safe in the knowledge that, should they require more of a particular issue, they can print to meet the increased demand in quantities of 20, 10 or even a single copy.

A further advantage of POD for journal publishers is the ability to print journal issues closer to their customer rather than ship physical journals from one location to another. As the files are held digitally they can be printed wherever is closest to the customer: printed in the USA for US customers and printed in the UK for European customers, thus keeping shipping costs to a minimum and reducing the number of issues kept in valuable storage or warehouse space.

Journal subscriptions starting mid year can be fulfilled without publishers holding any back issue stocks. Simply print the issue when it is required.

For libraries POD makes a wider range of books and journal issues immediately available. Hard-to-find or out-of-print titles become 'in-print' titles,

and journal back issues become more readily available.

For UK book publishers POD has enabled immediate and affordable access to the US marketplace and vice versa. POD has also increased book publishers' net revenue through a wider distribution via channels such as wholesalers, distributors, library suppliers and retailers.

### **The SUNCAT project**

*Nathalie Schulz, EDINA and*

*Liz Stevenson, Edinburgh University Library*

The University of Edinburgh, operating through EDINA, is working with Ex Libris to develop a Serials UNION CATALOGUE for the UK. SUNCAT is funded by JISC and the RSLP, and Phase 1 of the project runs from February 2003 to December 2004.

SUNCAT has two primary aims:

- to provide an online tool to help researchers locate serials throughout the UK
- to provide librarians with a central source of high-quality bibliographic records for upgrading local catalogues.

SUNCAT is a centralized union catalogue which, by the end of 2004, will contain serials records from 22 UK research libraries, as well as those from CONSER and the ISSN Register. The main areas of work to date have been data loading, the testing of the matching algorithm and the development of bibliographic standards for SUNCAT. Work is also underway to establish work flows for the processing of matching results and to develop procedures in the following areas: future updates and deletions, the upgrading of records, the downloading of records and notifications of changes to records.

Electronic journals present particular challenges for a union catalogue. Current policy and practice relating to electronic journal management within the Phase 1 libraries is being surveyed, with a view to making recommendations for development work in Phase 2 of the project.

Ex Libris' Aleph 500 software is being used to host SUNCAT, and is adopted by other union catalogues, most notably that of the California Digital Library. The SUNCAT team is currently customizing the out-of-the-box Aleph interface to fit the needs of the UK user community. This work is informed by UK-based studies of user needs and

user behaviour and by iterative testing with information professionals and end-users.

Phase 2 of the project has not yet been commissioned, but is scheduled to run from January 2005 to December 2006, when SUNCAT will scale up to include serials holdings from over 200 UK libraries.

For further information about the project, please see the SUNCAT web site ([www.sunecat.ac.uk](http://www.sunecat.ac.uk)).

### **Link resolvers**

*Simon Inger, Scholarly Information Strategies*

Link resolvers (or link servers) direct users to content appropriate to them.

This usually means content that the user has a right to read, normally by virtue of institutionally-subscribed resources, such as journals, full text databases or even via links to library catalogue. By working with publisher, A&I and aggregator web sites, they are able to suggest more appropriate links for a user to follow than the ones embedded in documents, references or any kind of gateway to content.

The system depends on a standard called the OpenURL, which contains metadata describing the item requested, rather than a link to one particular manifestation of the article. The link server analyses the content of the OpenURL and calculates appropriate incarnations of the content for the user and displays them as menu items for selection.

Link servers are a great enhancement to the library's chosen starting point for its patrons. In setting up the link server, the librarian indicates which content the library holds subscriptions to. The link server software cross-references this information with its knowledge base of journal article locations on the Internet and produces a linking framework appropriate to each library, or even for classes or groups of library patrons such as graduates, undergraduates or researchers.

The library usually selects one or more starting points for its patrons that are OpenURL compliant, such as major A&I databases (like ISI and CSA) and then as users follow links from those products to the full text, the link server assists the user in finding the version of the full text appropriate to them. That usually means the version subscribed to by the library.

There are now many suppliers of link servers. These are stand-alone products (such as SFX), products integrated with library systems, or products integrated with content gateways such as EBSCO's LinkSource. The potential for link servers is very great. Full presentation available online at: [www.scholinfo.com](http://www.scholinfo.com)

### **Metadata – it doesn't have to be boring!**

*Terry Hulbert, Institute of Physics Publishing and  
Mieko Yamaguchi, University of Wales, Bangor*

Over 70 people in all braved these metadata briefing sessions, duped, one suspects, by the entirely misleading title! Although it may well be an unappealing subject for many, a quick glance at the other sessions was enough to convince you that it is becoming an increasingly important one.

Mieko opened each session by highlighting how librarians have always produced metadata, even if they didn't know it was called that. She explained how librarians were interested in metadata as a direct consequence of spending large sums of money on A&I services: metadata helps to make dynamic linking possible. Further slides

illustrated her experience at Bangor in exploiting metadata with the deployment of OpenURL.

She further demonstrated how an increasing number of organizations were helping librarians to exploit the increasingly rich metadata that was becoming available, and was pleased that publishers too have offered help and assistance in this area.

Mieko closed by stating how libraries still need stable and persistent URLs and even more quality metadata – the richer, the better.

Terry addressed the briefing session from a different angle, by showing how publishers were exploiting the rich granularity provided by metadata, together with emerging technologies, to improve user experience. Clustering technology, such as that provided by Vivisimo or Verity, helped make it easier for users to find relevant and related content. There was also a demonstration of how the OpenURL standard can be used to pass metadata and offer 'See Also' links to users.

It was generally concluded that there was much work to be completed in this area, that many parties have an interest, and that everyone was making attempts to both apply and utilize metadata in an effective and useful manner.

## **Conference 2005 and Exhibition**

11–13 April 2005

Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh

[www.uksg.org](http://www.uksg.org)



### **On your marks ...**

It was a full house at UMIST, Manchester this year with delegate places and exhibition stands completely sold out.

### **Get set ...**

The conference programme and exhibitor prospectus will be available by early January 2005 so don't miss out this time around.

### **Go!**

Book early via [www.uksg.org](http://www.uksg.org) to avoid disappointment. See you in Edinburgh!

