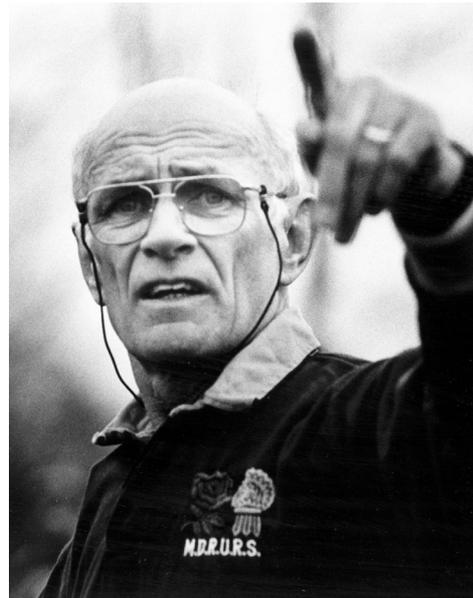


Profile: Peter Lea



When Peter Lea received an invitation in 1975 to attend a meeting organized by John Merriman of Blackwell, intended – for the first time – to bring together publishers, librarians and subscription agents with an interest in serials, he could not have imagined in his wildest dreams that some 30 years later in 2005 he would be attending his last ever annual meeting of that group before his retirement. But that is what happened. Peter is one of the few real veterans of the UK Serials Group – having served as a member of the UKSG Committee, latterly on the Education Subcommittee and attended virtually every conference since 1975.

Peter found his way into librarianship after leaving Ulverston Grammar School at the age of 16 and getting a job in a local tannery. Six months of hard labour convinced him that this was not the career path he was seeking and he was fortunate enough to find a library assistant post at Barrow Public Library. After studying part time he took his first professional exam and then moved to Manchester College of Science and Technology, followed by moves to Manchester and Oldham Public Libraries and onto ICI Dyestuffs Division. In 1967 he accepted a job as an Assistant Lecturer at the School of Librarianship, Manchester and, as many readers will know, Peter is still there, albeit having metamorphosed into a Senior Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University.

In his first years as a teacher of library studies, Peter specialized in the area known then as bibliographic control and this, of course, included

serials. He became particularly interested in serials publishing and scholarly communication, and as a student on the first intake of the Master of Library Studies course at Loughborough University in 1976, he carried out a study of alternative methods of periodical publishing. One of his tutors – Stella Keenan – encouraged him to apply for funding to extend this study. He was successful in obtaining funding from the British Library and spent seven weeks in the US.

So what are Peter's recollections of UKSG over the years? As mentioned earlier, he attended the first two Blackwell Periodicals Conferences which led directly to the formation of UKSG. He comments that the second of these was the one and only time he has stayed at an Oxbridge college and, as he was surveying the quad from his bedroom window, he was amused to see a young American boy pointing at him and saying "Gee, Dad – there's a real don"! At the conference at York University in 1978 Peter saw the setting up of the first UKSG Committee and the election of the first Chair – David Wood from the British Library. Quite what the group survived on is unclear as the first issue of the UKSG Newsletter produced in November 1978 records from the AGM: "The Group intends to be self-financing and initially there shall be no subscription".

But survive it did. Interestingly, many of Peter's best recollections focus on social events such as the famous party evenings with Langley Shearer on guitar and liquid refreshment being supplied from

car boots. The 10th Anniversary Conference dinner at Blenheim Palace stands out in his memory (as I'm sure it does for all of those who were present) as a fabulous evening with delegates splendidly attired in evening dress and dinner in the library. And the Sunday night of the Warwick Conference when he and two other delegates discovered that there are no taxis in Kenilworth on a Sunday night and they ended up having to walk back the three miles to the conference centre!

Other notable UKSG events include the 1984 conference when 16 American librarians attended the conference and went back to the States to form our US sister organization, NASIG (North American Serials Interest Group).

Peter has seen a lot of changes in the conference topics over the years. In the early days the focus was entirely on printed journals. Alternative publishing models included synoptic journals and serials automation was the buzz topic (in terms of automating serials processes in libraries). But some issues have been enduring. The cost of acquiring journals (whether in print or electronically) is still

a hot topic; collection development is still of concern to librarians and, as Peter observes shrewdly, we are still no nearer to seeing the end of the printed journal. "It always seems to be predicted as five years in the future."

Peter is retiring from Manchester Metropolitan University in December 2005. He has hugely enjoyed his time there and says he will really miss the teaching and interaction with students ... but he will not miss the bureaucracy. He feels fortunate to have travelled widely in his role as Admissions Officer with the University's International Office but at the end of the day he feels that he is a "librarian who teaches rather than a true academic". He will now find time for his various hobbies – many of which are sports related. They include refereeing rugby union matches, supporting Manchester United and, latterly, golf. He also enjoys county and test cricket, gardening, wine, eating out and listening to jazz. One suspects that in 2006, Peter will wonder how he ever had time to go to work.



Peter entering into the spirit of the 27th UKSG Annual Conference at UMIST