UKSG

UKSG Annual Conference 2015
The diaries of the sponsored students and early career professionals

At this year's 38th UKSG conference held in the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC) in Glasgow, SAGE and Springer sponsored places for three students: Lucinda May (Manchester Metropolitan University), seated in photograph; Saoirse Reynolds (Aberystwyth University), centre and Lucy Woolhouse (University of Sheffield), on right; and three early career professionals (ECPs): Jennifer Wright (Cambridge University Press), on left; Hannah DeGroff (University of York), second left and Eimear Blee (Queen's University Belfast), second right. They shared with us their first impressions and then reported their experiences of the three days packed with learning, networking and socializing at the conference.

The UKSG conference – first impressions

Arriving and the mentors

Lucinda was of course very excited to arrive in Glasgow and begin the conference, but she was also quite nervous. She was therefore very grateful to UKSG for putting her in touch with the other winners of the sponsored student and new professional places beforehand so they could meet up on the first night, and she was delighted to discover that her fellow sponsored delegates were friendly and down to earth. As a group representing much of the UK and Ireland, they are all employed in or studying different areas of library and publishing work so had a great deal to discuss. Lucinda also found the mentoring scheme was important in overcoming first-time nerves. She said: 'I really valued UKSG's focus on mentoring and nurturing first-time attendees, with more experienced delegates eager to share their experiences and advice throughout the conference.

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Being placed with a mentor is also a great way to try your hand at networking, as you introduce yourself and explain what you do on the first day. I would highly recommend that future winners of UKSG's sponsored places take advantage of this great opportunity, and I would definitely put my name forward to mentor first-timers if I'm lucky enough to return to the UKSG conference in future.' I am sure we will hold Lucinda to that promise!

A lesson about bags!

Lucy learnt a valuable conference lesson: never bring a big bag with you, as you will end up with a plethora of other bags and freebies that you then need to carry round all day! She and the other sponsored delegates registered (bag No 1) and were called up onto the stage to receive their presentations from Jennifer Hopkins of SAGE and Roné Robbetze of Springer (pictured right at either end), who sponsored their places, for which Lucy is eternally grateful (bags No 2 + No 3).

You can never have too many bags …

Soldiers, revolutionaries and the four straw men of the scholarpocalypse

This year's plenary speakers gave the students and ECPs all food for thought. Geoffrey Bilder's opening session, 'The Four Straw Men of the Scholarpocalypse', was one of the highlights of Day One for Lucy, as it really made her think about the state of scholarly communication and whether libraries are increasing the pressure on researchers with their penchant for measurements and altmetrics. Eimear also found Bilder's comments about the university as an 'anxiety-creation machine' insightful, as it does often seem to her that researchers are under increasing pressure to publish in order to stay relevant and justify their positions in a highly competitive environment. She wonders whether the quality of research is being compromised as a result.

Jennifer thought Geoffrey Boulton neatly described the barriers and benefits of open data. She explained that Boulton emphasized that there should be greater recognition of the fact that inappropriate metadata and data information is essentially scientific malpractice, but also mentioned that publishers may currently be obstructing the scientific process by inhibiting data and text mining.

Geoffrey Boulton inviting delegates to ponder the deep issues that must be addressed if the future is to be one of open science

On Day Two, one of the first plenary sessions was 'Innovation in non-fiction content', presented by Catherine Allen. Saoirse told us: 'This was a really exciting talk about apps which were demonstrated in the presentation. One of the apps was a Disney animated app which is like chapters of a Disney book but every element of it did something so it is totally interactive. You learn about how the animations are made so it is also educational. They are beautifully done and really capture the imagination. I think interactive books are a great way for people who dislike reading or find it difficult to become more engaged with reading and learning.' Lucy also liked this session and said: 'After seeing Catherine Allen's presentation I wanted to buy all their apps – especially the Disney one! However, the discussion of the potential of apps as learning tools provoked some strong reactions on the Twittersphere, as some people view them as information silos that close off resources and prevent access instead of freeing information. This is a barrier that needs to be overcome, and I'd be interested to see in the future if perhaps libraries could come to some arrangement with publishers and technology companies to license apps similarly to journals, so all users can gain from their content.' *[An article by Catherine Allen, based on her presentation, appears in this issue[1].]*

Catherine Allen's presentation about imaginative new apps was very popular and tweet-provoking

'I wanted to buy all their apps – especially the Disney one!'

Geoffrey Bilder (obligingly wearing the bunny ears) and Martin Eve catching up after giving their presentations

Lucinda said that it was a pleasure to hear the passionate and articulate open access advocate, Martin Eve, speak on his Open Library of Humanities model in the final morning's plenary session. *[An article by Martin (Paul) Eve, on which his presentation was based, appears in the March 2015 issue[2].]* She had first encountered Eve and this concept in Open Access Week 2014, and it was exciting to hear that, since then, 60 US institutions have signed up to the Open Library of Humanities. She said: 'I value the UKSG conference for providing a forum for live debate on open access from colleagues around the country and the world, adding context to my day-to-day work within my own institution'.

'I value the UKSG conference for providing a forum for live debate on open access'

Lucy had found it quite tough getting up on Wednesday morning, but her efforts were rewarded with the concluding plenary session by Rick Anderson. She said 'Rick asked the question whether librarians see themselves more as soldiers or revolutionaries within their institutions – I think I am definitely a soldier at the moment, but I will work towards becoming a revolutionary!' *[An article by Rick Anderson, based on his presentation, appears in this issue[3].]*

Twitter

Hannah said: 'As a keen user of Twitter, I delighted in coming across snippets, summaries and highlights of those talks I couldn't attend. I had no idea what the session was dealing with at the time but loved Ben O'Steen's analogy that PDFs are dead trees online. It was also the first time I had seen session chairs monitor what was being said online and then use these Tweets to ask questions and prompt discussion after the papers, something which cleverly curbs those awkward silences when no-one is brave enough to raise their hand. That people started to stream out of the auditorium midway through one plenary had nothing to do, I'm sure, with the fact that a Tweet duly notified us of the cheese and champagne now being served on the SAGE stand…' Lucinda also used her Twitter account to share the news about the lovely cakes on the OUP stand, and Eimear told us: 'Twitter was a brilliant way of staying connected with the conference. It gave an idea of what was going on at sessions I did not attend and allowed me to engage in a digital dialogue with other attendees. It acted as another arena in which to network.'

The breakout sessions

A highlight for Jennifer (and not just because of the clever Beatles puns!) was the talk by Andrew Barker and Anthony Cond on the collaboration between the University of Liverpool and Liverpool University Press. Andrew and Anthony discussed their Jisc-funded pilot project exploring how the Library and the Press can work together to co-publish open access textbooks – a fascinating insight and model seeing as her current role is in academic textbook publishing. In particular, Jennifer thought it was great how this model of publishing encouraged pro-active, dynamic and teaching-focused academics to use their already developed teaching resources to benefit a wider community, when ordinarily they may not have thought to approach (or have been approached by) a publisher.

Liverpool-based breakout leaders Andrew Barker and Anthony Cond giving their group a fab time

'I will work towards becoming a revolutionary!'

Rick Anderson quietly firing up the soliders and the revolutionaries to take their stand

Lucinda May
@Churlish_May

Cakes @OUPAcademic stand almost too pretty to eat. Almost! Loved demo of Scholarly Editions Online as well! #UKSG15

Glasgow, Scotland

'Twitter was a brilliant way of staying connected with the conference.'

Lucinda supports academic authors in making their research outputs open access, so she enjoyed the interactive breakout session by Jill Emery and Graham Stone on 'OAWAL – Open Access Workflows for Academic Librarians'. She said: 'It was cathartic to share concerns, gripes and hopes for the future of open access with colleagues at other institutions. I was pleased to be able to contribute to a group activity, in which we sought to identify the path from problems to solutions. I was initially hesitant of making suggestions, surrounded as I was by more senior and experienced library colleagues, but it was worth plucking up the courage to note down the need for consistency in publisher processes and licence forms, as others expressed agreement with my suggestion.'

This breakout session was also very significant for Eimear as it made her aware of this openly accessible and evolving resource that she can consult when managing workflows in her team. Eimear said: 'Graham Stone was keen to receive our feedback on OAWAL and our local practices. I feel that this was very beneficial as it encourages collaboration and conversation between universities, given that we are all working under the same mandates. Since returning to my University I have spent time examining the resource in more detail and have found the advice on advocacy particularly useful. I have suggested that we implement some new approaches in our Open Access Communication Strategy for the year ahead as a result of this.'

Saoirse was very excited to attend the breakout session 'Screen vs. paper – what is the difference for reading and learning?', and was not disappointed. She told us: 'It was a very interesting discussion about the difference between screen and paper and how it affects learning. Tests compared those learning with paper to those with screen. At the beginning those learning from paper performed better in these tests than those using the screen. After a number of tests those who were using the screen got similar results to those with paper. This suggests that as people get used to screen they will be able to use it to learn effectively. This seems to be true. As a student I used to prefer studying with paper and had to print out any articles that I used, but now I find that I can learn just as well with a screen. It is all about practice and change in perception. Using the screen can be interactive (highlighting, making notes, linking to videos, etc.) and this can actually aid learning.' *[An article by Caroline Myrberg and Ninna Wiberg, based on their breakout session, appears in this issue[4].]*

The quiz and the dinner

Eimear making her mark at the Glasgow Science Centre

Monday evening brought with it the UKSG quiz night, which was held at the amazing Glasgow Science Centre. The sponsored delegates had offered to help with the running of the quiz, and this turned out to be a lot less strenuous than they were anticipating, as the teams were very good at handing in their quiz papers on time! Lucy said: 'The chance to explore the Science Centre after hours was great, as I love that kind of interactive science, but under normal circumstances I always feel guilty about preventing kids from getting to exhibits so it was exciting to just be able to explore the displays without that worry. I discovered that I am very good at identifying brain lesions and tumours, and that I can only jump a paltry 18 centimetres high! The whole evening was really fun, and I'd love to participate again.

Potentially the highlight of the whole conference, though, was Tuesday night's conference dinner and ceilidh *[photos on next page]*. The Merchant Square venue was stunning, and entertainment was provided by a succession of fire-jugglers, drummers and a ceilidh band, who ably guided us all through some simple dances. It was fun to be able to let our hair down and relax a bit after two busy days, and somehow the drinks tokens never ran out!'

Tracy organized the quiz helpers and totted up the scores – duly rewarded with some Easter goodies

Final thoughts

All the sponsored delegates enjoyed the plenary sessions, the breakout sessions, the social events and, of course, all the bags! But Hannah summed up for us just what it is that makes UKSG so special: 'The highlight of my first UKSG conference was having the opportunity to meet face-to-face those industry professionals who I have been in touch with sporadically (and sometimes not so sporadically) over the past two years. As one of those annoying people who always gets up to speak to someone rather than sending an e-mail, meeting these colleagues was invaluable. Seeing them on the dance floor even more so! When I first mentioned to my Head of Department that I was particularly interested in attending the annual UKSG conference for networking opportunities, she soon pointed me in the direction of the student and early career sponsored places application form. I am grateful that she did so not only because winning the award enabled me to attend useful and insightful talks but because it introduced me to other like-minded people with whom it was a pleasure to spend three days.'

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References

1. Allen, C, Apps: a new medium for non-fiction innovation, *Insights*, 2015, 28(2), 28–32; DOI: **http://dx.doi.org/10.1629/uksg.241**

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3. Anderson, R, A quiet culture war in research libraries, *Insights*, 2015, 28(2), 21–27; DOI: **http://dx.doi.org/10.1629/uksg.230**

4. Myrberg, C and Wiberg, N, Screen vs. paper – what is the difference for reading and learning?, *Insights,* 2015, 28(2), 49–54; DOI: **http://dx.doi.org/10.1629/uksg.236**

Images by Simon Williams Photography

Hoping to bump into you again next year …

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