

UKSG Annual Conference 2016

Highlights from the sponsored students and early career professionals



Jisc, SAGE and Springer Nature kindly sponsored attendance at the conference for six early career professionals and students. The lucky winners of these places were students Susan Hill (Aberystwyth University), Amy Rippon (City University London) and Beth Tapster (University of Sheffield). The early career professionals were Jennifer Bayjoo (Leeds Beckett University), Ruth MacMullen (York St John University) and Sam Nesbit (University of Sussex). They are pictured with their sponsorship goodie bags above, between *Insights* co-editors, Lorraine Estelle and Steve Sharp: from left to right: Sam, Jennifer, Beth, Amy, Ruth and Susan.

The winners of the sponsored places all had a remarkable time. Susan summed it all up when she said, 'I would say that the conference was a real eye-opener for me, showing how libraries and publishers interact, taking me out of the cocoon of distance learning and my own work place. It really was a revelation, not least that Dream Circus – still can't get over the size of the venue, the sparkly elephant dangling above Kate Price, and the marvellous entertainment put on for delegates. *Thank you UKSG and sponsors.*' We interviewed them all to find out about their highlights; this is what they had to say.

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The opening plenary speakers



Ann Rossiter and Donna Lanclos opened the first two plenary sessions with their fascinating and frank exploration of the sometimes messy state of 'libraryland'

Susan: *Ann Rossiter*, the Executive Director of SCONUL (pictured above left), gave us a rousing speech, a snapshot of the current state of 'libraryland' as she so dubbed our sector, declaring that, 'Libraries are at crunch point' and urging publishers to adjust their business models and improve the quality of service that they provide. Among the pertinent questions she posed was, 'What conditions would be needed to stop publishers worrying about sharing?' A fantastic start to UKSG 2016! [An article by Ann Rossiter, based on her presentation, appears in this issue.]

Beth: The very human issues involved in scholarly communications and academia were particularly brought to the fore by *Donna Lanclos* (pictured above right). I enjoyed the way that she looked at this topic from an ethnographic point of view, something that I would like to bring into my own future research and practice. So much of what I learnt at UKSG brought home to me that many of the key issues that have to be dealt with as we seek to transition to a more open system of scholarly communications relate directly to people's different motivations, identities and values. These are challenging things to address since, as Donna so convincingly pointed out, 'people are messy'. However, being aware of the importance of these factors is vital in order to successfully engage and advocate, which I see as one of the most important and interesting aspects of library work. I was also delighted to hear her suggestion that instead of asking 'Why should we make things open?' the pertinent question is 'Why do we make things closed?' An honest consideration of this question seems to provoke some rather uncomfortable answers, yet it is surely key to understanding many of the issues around this transition period.

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Ruth: *Michael Jubb's* talk about how far the UK has moved towards open access, and the costs and implications, revealed the rather shocking statistic that there are 447 policies across Europe regarding funders and open access. He also talked about compliance being a turn-off for academics, which is definitely something I can identify with. This shows the dual challenge of having to devise coherent, realistic workflows that match the requirements of national bodies, whilst getting messages across in a positive and inspiring way.

Amy: *Charlie Rapple's* plenary session on reputation management was eye-opening. The proposed spectrum for metrics seemed an interesting and innovative development from traditional citation impact. I think that it's important for institutions to place a higher value on the work that researchers conduct alongside writing papers – much of which currently goes unnoticed. The AIDA measure Charlie presented seemed to encourage a more well-rounded appreciation of the research process – rather than purely acknowledging the number of citations. This is definitely a promising move for academia.



Michael Jubb and Charlie Rapple presented in the first day's plenary session on 'Impact'

The exhibition: meeting the publishers and vendors



Jennifer: Our first lunchtime brought our first tour around the stalls. It was a great feeling to speak to some of the publishers and vendors; I realized that they actually wanted to speak to me as a librarian, and were keen to demonstrate their products and hear my opinions. This definitely made me feel less guilty for loading up on freebies! I loved meeting everyone at the Digital Science stand, and the people from Wiley (with their amazing colouring-in wall) and Oxford University Press were extra friendly. Out of all the fancy swag, I must say my favourite is a pencil with a double-ended rubber like a gavel, which I gave as a present to a pencil-fanatic friend.

Amy: There were so many rooms, people and exhibition stands! Yet despite the size of the conference, it felt a very welcoming atmosphere and people were happy to chat. I enjoyed having the opportunity to meet with exhibition vendors and find out more about what services they provided and how their work related to my role.

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The quiz night

Jennifer: That evening five of us headed over to Bournemouth Pavilion to help out with the famous UKSG quiz. This was a great evening, and I was secretly relieved, as a quiz runner, not to have to take part officially in the quiz because the questions were so tricky! I got one right about Lady Gaga but the classical music and first-century poetry questions were a bit out of my league. The school days theme was really fun – the dress-up items provided us with a lot of laughs (it was a challenge getting Sam to don the mortarboard. . .) and the retro sweets were a fantastic addition to the evening. It was also a great opportunity to socialize with my fellow award winners and chat about more than our jobs and publishing. We've all kept in touch since the conference and the quiz night went a long way to making us great friends.

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Special congratulations to winning team 'The Ranting Shoe Flies', but it appears there were lots of winners at the UKSG quiz (including runners-up with their chocolate fish, chips and peas)!

The breakout sessions

Sam: As with all the breakout sessions, questions were forthcoming, and a spirit of debate certainly seemed to prevail. 'Help me, data! How library analytics tools can help you in your role' made a great case for JUSP and IRUS as centralized data repositories, and had particular relevance to my current role in helping maintain and develop the analytical outputs of our new LMS. A common thread throughout was what you do with your data, and how to ensure its veracity.

Beth: I enjoyed *Stuart Lawson's* breakout session on 'Open Scholarly Communications Data', and the interesting discussions that took place following his presentation. I appreciated the combination of 'hard facts' and expertise with thoughtful analysis, and the way that this highlighted some key questions about different underlying interests that exist, and the different social, economic and political issues with which these intersect. Another breakout that really made an impact was the 'Meet the New Professionals' session. Not only was it fascinating to hear how other people have progressed in the early stage of their careers, but it also led to some very interesting conversations about the challenges and shortcomings in some librarianship education, and made me think about what I want to focus on getting out of my current course.

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Jennifer: My first breakout session was 'figshare in the wild – university case studies'. I had heard good things about figshare but wasn't really sure what it does or how it would fit in where I work, so this session was really useful. Hearing *Jez Cope* from the University of Sheffield and *David Clay* from the University of Salford talk about their experiences of using figshare and their journey towards a working research data management policy was enlightening. This is something I am actively involved in and I was pleased that my first session was something I could take back to share with my colleagues and use in a practical way.

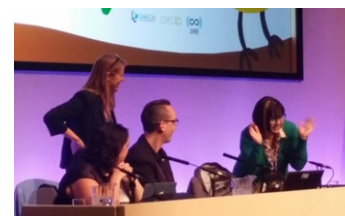


Stuart Lawson, who was one of our six sponsored students and ECPs in 2012, now speaking as a 'new professional'. It was also rewarding to see that several other previous sponsored delegates had been inspired to return to the conference this year

Ruth: The final breakout of day two was on the psychogeography of libraries – another topic that I had never previously considered. This session was fantastic! *Dave Parkes* offered so many ideas for helping students to familiarize themselves with the library space. Many of these ideas can easily be transferred to the context of library induction sessions and may help to make these more dynamic, for example asking students to explore the building and create an A–Z of things that they find, or encourage them to take and share photos of the spaces using social media tools.

Jennifer: In the 'What do all these services do anyway? – An introduction to the unseen infrastructure of scholarly communications' breakout session, a question was asked about what we will call these new librarians who have to use new tools such as DataCite, ORCID and Crossref and how we can persuade our managers to recruit. This came as a bit of a surprise to me, as this is my job already! Up until this point, I had been too nervous to ask or answer a question so I don't know what came over me, but I ended up being invited onto the main stage to share my experiences. I spoke (well, rambled) about how librarians act as an intermediary between tools and the academic staff who need to use them, as translators and advocates and trouble-shooters; nothing new in theory, it is only the tools that are changing. It was so daunting to speak into the main microphone in the huge auditorium but I'm glad that I did – at the very least I have a great anecdote to share.

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The conference dinner

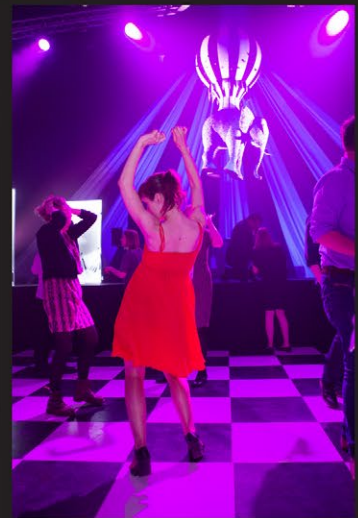
Jennifer: I let my hair down at the spectacular conference dinner that evening; it was such a sight to see dodgems and fun-fair swings inside, populated by librarians and publishers alike – all with Prosecco in hand! My highlights include the delicious circus-themed dessert, with candyfloss and mini toffee apples, dancing the night away with my fellow student and ECP winners (especially when we got a bit of Michael Jackson..!) and meeting some new faces that I had been speaking to on Twitter throughout the conference.

Ruth: The conference dinner really was incredible and really surpassed all expectations. The dining room was beautifully decorated, and the circus-themed acts were brilliant! The various rides and activities – dodgems, death-defying swings and hook-a-duck, not to mention a very enthusiastic disco – presented a great opportunity to mingle and chat to people and, most importantly, to relax and have fun after two rather intense days.

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Welcome to the Dream Circus

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The final day

Beth: *Cameron Neylon's* closing plenary was (despite my post-conference-dinner headache and fuzziness. . .) one of the highlights of the conference for me. He incisively identified and questioned underlying issues of different interests and motivations, and the complications that have arisen as a result of this. His explicit acknowledgment of the political dimensions of scholarly communications resonated with my own interests and it will help to inform the direction of future research that I would like to pursue. I particularly appreciated his framing of the controversial current issue of Sci-Hub as an important way to get a deeper understanding of people's beliefs about the politics of academic publishing, and the dichotomies that can arise around this. He was amongst a number of presenters who used this issue to raise pertinent questions, which impressed me considerably given how much of a 'taboo' this subject generally is in library circles. These questions fascinate me, and I hope to have the chance to pursue them further in the future.

Amy: I think that my favourite line from **Cameron's** talk was 'if you want to find out someone's true feelings on scholarly communication, ask them to speak about Sci-Hub'. Whilst that got a laugh from the audience it helped to emphasize that dramatic changes are happening in this area of scholarly communications.

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Cameron Neylon was not afraid to get to the hub of controversy

The last word

Sam: Overall, the conference experience was fantastic from start to finish, and was made even more enjoyable and interesting by spending time with my fellow award-winners. I met a lot of lovely people from all around the world, heard speakers on a multitude of fascinating subjects, learned so much from the sheer variety of brilliant breakout sessions, and had a ball at all the social events.

How do you follow that?

**By a return to the ever-popular HIC to celebrate
The 40th UKSG Annual Conference and Exhibition!**



Diary dates: 10–12 April 2017
See you in Harrogate!

Main images by Stuart Lane Photography

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