



People in the News

Sarah Bull

UKSG recently announced the appointment of Sarah Bull as the first Executive Director of the organization. We caught up with her to ask about this exciting new role and to find out why she applied. 'UKSG has supported me throughout my entire career right from my first professional post and has remained hugely relevant to me nearly 20 years later', explained Sarah. She started her career as a serials librarian on maternity cover working for the Government quango, BECTa (dismantled in 2011), which supported ICT in education. Technology and information provision has categorized her career ever since! She went on to work in serials and information adviser roles in a law firm, and then to work at the library systems vendor Talis (now Capita) in business and support analyst roles providing technical support, consultancy and product development for library systems. For the last four years as Assistant Director at the University of Birmingham Sarah had responsibility for library collections and discovery, digital assets and open access. She was involved with the planning of one of the biggest projects in the University's history with the building of a fantastic new library.

A huge library project combined with all of the external policy changes and requirements affecting our community has certainly seen Sarah cope with rapid change over recent years. During this time, and indeed throughout her career, she has benefited from UKSG's highly regarded training portfolio and the opportunity to build networks and learn from thought leaders and practitioners at the Annual Conference. Your Editors were delighted that she also mentioned 'this marvellous publication' which allows her to keep up to date with research, case studies and developments in our community! She said, 'In recent years I have had the opportunity to volunteer for and contribute to UKSG in a number of ways, whether it is writing articles for *Insights*, speaking at training events and conferences, contributing to research projects or volunteering on committees. It has been integral to my career and having the opportunity to work for UKSG in a professional capacity is hugely rewarding. The role of Executive Director allows me to commit my expertise to UKSG full time and I'm really excited about the prospect.'

Sarah has not only worked operationally and strategically within library services but also across the wider industry and in transformative projects such as KBART and COUNTER where the entire community benefits from working together. There is no

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288 doubt that this experience will serve her well. Sarah agreed, explaining that UKSG was set up in 1977 to support the education, development and networking of the serials community and in 2016 this is still core to the mission, vision and values. 'Librarians are working in an ever-expanding scholarly communications community which is supported by a range of stakeholders: funders, publishers, content suppliers and aggregators, technology and service intermediaries and of course our producers and consumers, the "academic" and the "student". There are a variety of different library roles that attend UKSG events to contribute to and learn from the collective expertise of our community. Equally, there is a great balance of supply-side roles that participate in UKSG events. The value of UKSG is that it brings together the entire ecosystem and we all learn from and challenge each other's perspectives. I look forward to drawing on this to further build relationships and collaboration.'

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UKSG relies on the expertise, networks, knowledge and experience of volunteers. They are crucial to the alignment of UKSG with the community that it supports. This committee structure is expertly supported by a small team of professionals with much experience in areas such as operations and events management, marketing and membership management, publications support and administration. However, as the remit and membership of UKSG has grown over the years, capacity is needed both operationally and strategically to support the committees and work collaboratively to build and nurture relationships and oversee marketing, operations and governance of UKSG, hence the need for the new role of Executive Director of UKSG. Sarah said, 'For me personally, that means contributing strong leadership, developing excellent relationships with UKSG committees, engaging with our members and what they want from UKSG as well as developing collaboration with other organizations. The Executive Director very much works alongside the committees to achieve our strategic and operational objectives'.

UKSG has grown organically over the 39 years of its existence both in terms of membership (in geographic and sectoral terms) and the services and benefits that it provides to members and the wider community. Sarah explained that this growth means the need to sense check every so often our vision, mission and values and ensure that we remain relevant to our core community whilst also seeking opportunities for wider collaboration and growth. UKSG is just about to launch a new strategic and operational plan for the next three years in direct response to feedback from members and conference delegates. Sarah said, 'Key areas of focus include strengthening our engagement with the scholarly information community, facilitating dialogue and debate on issues affecting scholarly communication, and stimulating and supporting innovation. We have a strong track record and excellent community support and with greater capacity through my role and that of the team here at UKSG, we can do even better.'

UKSG does so much to support scholarly information that we asked Sarah what she sees as the priorities for the next few years. 'We have a lot of perennial favourites in terms of educational activities, publications and events that have been very well attended and read over the years, but we do need to ensure that we continuously review the form, function, marketing and feedback. This was done recently with the move of *Insights* to a new publishing platform, for example, and the results look great! With the launch of a new UKSG website we will have the opportunity to review the format and dissemination of our publications and facilitate greater feedback and ongoing dialogue through a review of our social media presence.

'We have a great free webinar programme which offers bite-size training on key areas of focus such as linked data, research infrastructure and learning analytics to provide desk-based opportunities for keeping up to date. We'll be reviewing if there is more that we can offer in this format and to specific audiences or in different time zones.

'Research and innovation will also be a key priority. We have a strong tradition of facilitating standards development and best practice in projects such as COUNTER, KBART and Transfer. UKSG is in a good position to support innovative ideas and projects and so watch this space for more on this through the next few months.

289 'Finally, there are some relatively new events such as the One-Day Conference and Forum in November each year. Reviewing the success of these events and potential for further improvement is important. It is a long time to wait until April for the Annual Conference. The November events have provided a good mid-year opportunity for networking and the exchange of ideas, which are central to the UKSG ethos.'

There certainly is a lot going on, but the UKSG Annual Conference is always a highlight in the calendar of *Insights* readers, and we wanted to know if Sarah is looking forward to attending the next Conference in Harrogate in her new role. 'I'm looking forward to it immensely,' she said, 'as I do every year – there are very few that I have missed in my career. However, to see the event with a fresh perspective and to get to learn about what delegates think of the programme, the exhibition, the administration, and the social and networking opportunities is really important. It will be the 40th anniversary of UKSG and so an extra special year. The planning for each Conference takes much hard work and time from both UKSG staff and volunteers to ensure that it goes well, but we also like to know what we can do to improve it for future years. So, if you see me around at the Conference then please do come and talk to me about your UKSG experience both generally and in terms of the Conference. We are also always keen to hear from your readers who might want to consider volunteering or contributing to UKSG activities so I am more than happy to talk to people who are interested in hearing more, whatever role, level of experience or sector they come from!'

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Anyone for a scholarly community walking group?!

It sounds as if the next few months are going to be as fast paced as ever for Sarah, so we asked what she will be doing to unwind and relax? 'I always dread these questions because some days it feels like time to unwind is in scarce supply!' she replied. 'However, over the last few years I have developed two very mutually beneficial hobbies – walking and youth hostelling! I love spending a couple of weekends every month on day walks or weekends in our beautiful countryside. The Lake District, Peak District and the coast of Wales and the South West of England are in relatively easy reach of the landlocked Midlands where I live. I've developed quite a collection of windswept and rain-soaked photos with me in exactly the same walking gear! And as for youth hostelling – it's not just for the young. I'm so obsessed with youth hostelling that it was kind of a theme for my wedding reception last year! Anyone for a scholarly community walking group?!' she asked. We certainly like that idea!

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