

Six students and early career professionals at the 2017 UKSG Conference and Exhibition



Pictured with the students and ECPs are, from left to right in the top row: Steve Sharp and Lorraine Estelle (*Insights* Editors), Jane Harvell (UKSG Education Officer), Liam Earney (Jisc), Hilary Schan-Martyn (SAGE Publishing) and Jon Reid (LM Information Delivery)

Our 40th Annual Conference was held in Harrogate in April. Jisc, LM Information Delivery and SAGE Publishing generously sponsored places for six students and early career professionals (ECPs). They are (from left to right, front row of photograph) Amanda Brennan (Glasgow Caledonian University/City of Glasgow College), Amy Campbell (University of Sheffield/Leeds Beckett University), Mary Murray (Leyton Sixth Form College), Hannah Broadbent (Leeds Beckett University), Dominic Walker (University of West London) and James Barnett (University of Sheffield/University of Birmingham). They all kindly shared with us their conference experiences.

53 'UKSG is to conferences what Glastonbury is to festivals!' Hannah told us. 'I haven't been to many conferences but it would take a lot to beat this one in terms of scale, breadth of subject and spectacular social events. I learnt loads from the three days of listening to the inspirational speakers at UKSG. The conference took me away from my usual world of work and made me aware of other library practices and wider issues. Attending also gave me a whole host of new people to follow on Twitter to keep up to date with library matters in the future.'

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The plenary sessions gave plenty of food for thought, particularly a talk entitled 'Access, ethics and piracy' by Stuart Lawson from Birkbeck. [An [article](#) written by Stuart on this topic was published in the March issue of *Insights*.] Stuart himself was a winner of a sponsored place in 2012. Now as a plenary speaker he discussed how, because many journal articles are still behind paywalls, frustrated students turn to Sci-Hub for quick and easy access. James told us, 'Lawson did a good job of stressing that all stakeholders need to take responsibility for addressing the underlying causes that make piracy possible if the issue is to be tackled at all. However, what resonated most for me was the extent that the desire for "frictionless" access plays in making websites like Sci-Hub an attractive prospect. Indeed, the challenge of making access as frictionless as possible for researchers was a recurring theme throughout the conference. As an eResources Specialist I know first hand the value and necessity of authenticating access to scholarly content, but have equally seen how frustrating it can be for researchers to have to negotiate layers of authentication in order to get to the content they need. Clearly one of the ways publishers and librarians need to combat piracy is by working together to identify solutions that make the "legal" access routes as "frictionless" as possible.'

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A light-bulb moment from 'controversial' Barend Mons

Amy Campbell told us about another plenary session which grabbed her attention: 'In a (purposefully) controversial talk, Barend Mons [pictured] argued that current publishing of research where the text of the article is primary and any data is secondary must be reversed. This session was a light-bulb moment for me, particularly when Mons highlighted how if we create digital objects that can be read by computers from the offset, there'd be less need for retrospective data mining. Of course! All that time we spent on RDF on my course began to have a lot more meaning and context to me. There was one slide in his presentation that showed Europe minus the United Kingdom and this caused an audible rumble amongst the audience, but it was important to have future challenges highlighted.'

54 'What was particularly interesting and persuasive however was Mons' description of a near future where machines read research data for us and create a text article to enable humans to understand what the machines have done. Amazing (but also a little scary) to think of the possibilities. This raised all sorts of questions for me regarding the purpose of researchers, publishers and librarians in the future.

'a near future where machines read research data for us'

'This was a primer for other sessions regarding the skills library and information professionals need, and whether Information Schools are teaching the right skills. As a student who is about to finish my course from the University of Sheffield, these conversations were of real interest but also disconcerting. Danny Kingsley's breakout session argued that many library courses do not teach students enough about scholarly communication. Whilst acknowledging that the University of Sheffield and University College London *do* teach students about this area, the talk prompted a real focus from delegates on what courses don't teach and what skills aren't taught. This was a real shock to me to see the value of academic qualifications discussed in such a negative light, particularly from people who predominantly work in universities.'

Dominic noticed that throughout the conference, alongside the rapid expansion of the range of scholarly communication services, several breakout sessions highlighted that a librarian's skillset and knowledge is also shifting. 'I think this should be seen as an opportunity. The library community is well positioned to take advantage of the opportunities offered by new products and services (such as those offered by various altmetrics providers, collaborative authoring tools, and pre-print servers). In helping researchers to navigate the plethora of services, and identifying those which are most useful and cost-effective, librarians become even more essential in the scholarly landscape.'

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Amanda Brennan pointed out that choosing which breakout sessions to attend is a difficult task given the huge range of interesting topics, but she attempted to focus in on sessions that were directly relevant to her current role. 'In the first, Helene N Andreassen from the Arctic University of Norway discussed her library's work with PhD students as well as giving a wider perspective on the experience and challenges faced by postgraduate researchers and the areas where the library can provide extra support. I was particularly interested to hear about the credit-bearing course they've developed for these students, covering academic integrity, literature searching, open access, research data management and referencing. I have already shared her presentation with my own colleagues and hope that we might be able to adopt elements of this approach in our own practice. Likewise, the research carried out by Loughborough University with Taylor & Francis exploring the user experience of postgraduate research students using academic journals provides interesting avenues for future study using their forthcoming DIY Library UX Toolkit. In the meantime, their results provide interesting insights into the research habits and workflows of postgraduates and useful suggestions as to how librarians can contribute to this process.'

Breakout sessions at the UKSG conference often provide hot topical tips as Hannah found when she attended a session that provided some interesting insights on how to make decisions when there are budgetary restrictions. 'Yvonne Nobis at Betty and Gordon Moore Library, Cambridge highlighted the need to be creative on a shoestring budget. They added plants and bean bags to the Library which increased the footfall of the Library tenfold. They added fiction books and this proved popular as well and helped as 50% of the fiction books stock was borrowed. Very inspirational as it shows that small changes made a big difference and I will inform those at Leeds Beckett about this example as something similar could make a big difference to the overall feel and experience of the library.'

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Amanda, as a member of her institution's Twitter team, found Zelda Chatten's lightning talk on social media fascinating. 'I found it incredibly reassuring that Liverpool University Library's (@

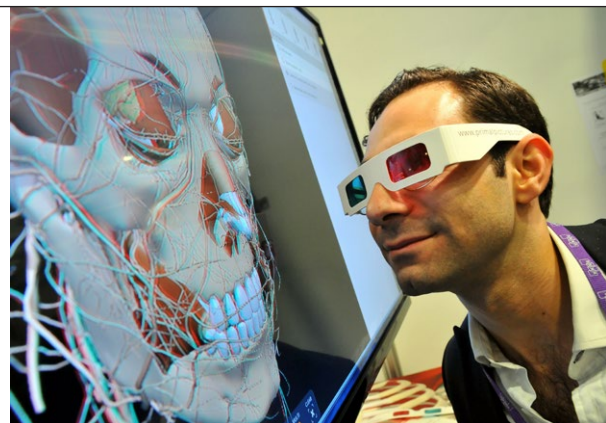


Zelda Chatten's poster session was very popular with those wanting to engage more productively with social media

LivUniLibrary) now immensely successful Twitter account had faced many of the same difficulties we've encountered while rethinking our approach to social media and trying to engage more effectively with our students and academic staff. It was also great to get the opportunity to talk to Zelda afterwards and I left armed with several ideas to try in the coming months.'

The two breakout sessions that appealed to Mary, who works in Further Education (FE), were 'Jisc's Digital Content Services for FE' and 'A tale of two systems: discovery at the University of Derby.' 'Due to budget constraints in FE Karla Youngs from Jisc spoke about how Jisc is helping FE colleges by providing low cost and sometimes free electronic resources. James Kay informed us of his project implementing discovery services across the FE section of the University of Derby and how this then progressed to the HE section. This was most interesting to me as we are thinking about a similar project down the line.'

As interesting and stimulating as the plenary and breakout sessions are, the UKSG conference is about much more. Mary told us, 'Shortly before the 70s disco (a great night), my time was spent in the exhibition hall participating in the photography game. I was determined to tick off as many of the requirements as possible'.





There were freebies, food stations and fun competitions in the exhibition hall – but also plenty of opportunity for networking and getting down to serious discussions



The 'bombastically gilded Royal Hall, complete with a giant glam rock boot on stage', venue for Monday night's entertainment

Amy also had a great night! She told us, 'The first night's entertainment was held at the bombastically gilded Royal Hall, complete with a giant glam rock boot on stage and an enthusiastic DJ. Amidst crowd-pleasing tunes by ABBA and the Bee Gees we enjoyed prawn cocktails, chicken Kievs and black forest-style puddings. Somehow it took me a while to cotton on to the fact that the food was 70s-themed too!' (A fact most evident to some of the older delegates.) 'There were some excellent costumes on display, and some particularly authentic ones from those who may have witnessed the 70s for themselves. I was surprised at just how many songs of that era had defined dance routines to go with them and did my best to keep up. A theme emerged that night of epic dancing which continued throughout the conference.'

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On Tuesday night, the fun continued, as Amy explained: 'There had been much debate leading up to the big conference dinner as to what exactly the theme was – Google the meaning of the Rolling Stones' Ruby Tuesday and you'll see why. Attired in a red dress I was looking forward to my first trip to Ridding Park, a gorgeous stately home set in stunning parkland. Initially everyone crammed into one of the ballrooms and there was a real buzz of conversation amidst cava and canapés. Gradually we spread out through other rooms, admiring classic country house paintings of horses and pale women. A crack in a curtain tantalisingly hinted at the dining area beyond in an enormous marquee attached to the main house. Before I could do any further snooping however, we were ushered out, down the front steps whilst a jazz band played. There followed a firework display which grew bigger and bigger, delighting delegates. I was very impressed by the spectacle and it really felt like a fitting celebration for 40 years of UKSG. After this we entered the marquee which had been decorated throughout with ruby red flowers and lights – a really impressive sight. There was a lovely meal and then a Rolling Stones cover band played on into the night. On the coach back to Harrogate, one delegate had some reservations about the Mick Jagger impersonator's attire, leading to the memorable summation: "Too much buttocks". What a way to end the night!



The fabulously decorated marquee with its hundreds of ruby red lights was eventually revealed!
Photo: Hannah Broadbent

'A crack in a curtain tantalisingly hinted at the dining area beyond'

UKSG rocked Ruby Tuesday – with added jazz and fireworks!



59 Despite the late night, all agreed there was no better way to end the conference than have Charlotte Roueché present an ever-topical discussion on Fake News and the information professional role in recognizing it. 'The final plenary session on Wednesday was in many ways the highlight of the conference', James told us. Entitled "Post-Truth: debating the role of academics, publishers and librarians in a world of 'alternative facts' ", the session considered the role the scholarly communications ecosystem might have, not just in combating "fake news" but in the ways stakeholders can influence the public in being able to delineate between modes of "real" and "fake" knowledge. For me, as an Early Career Librarian, it was a clear call for the library profession (noted in the session as the second "most-trusted" profession in society) to consider the actions it can take in helping to preserve a flow of knowledge throughout society that is trustworthy.'

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Charlotte Roueché and guests discuss the very topical issue of post-truth

The last word on the Conference goes to Hannah: 'Overall, it was a brilliant experience! Thanks very much to UKSG and the sponsors. It was an honour to receive the sponsorship award and a privilege to be able to attend the conference, especially as it was such a special conference celebrating the 40th anniversary!'





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UKSG 2018 Annual Conference and Exhibition
 9-11 April 2018
www.uksg.org
 Scottish Event Campus (SEC), Glasgow

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