

# UKSG Annual Conference 2018

## A report from the sponsored early career professionals

Sponsorship by SAGE made it possible for six early career professionals to attend the UKSG Annual Conference and Exhibition in April 2018 in Glasgow. They are Isabel Benton (University of York), Jessica Edwards (Gale, a Cengage Company), Alice Hughes (Goldsmiths, University of London), Laura Palmer (University of Huddersfield), Salah Seoudy (The American University in Cairo) and Seth Thompson (Glasgow Caledonian University).

### **Keywords**

UKSG Annual Conference and Exhibition 2018



*The early career professionals on the first morning of the Conference, already in good company – from left to right: Steve Sharp (Co-Editor, 'Insights'), Seth Thompson, Lorraine Estelle (Co-Editor, 'Insights'), Alice Hughes, Jessica Edwards, Salah Seoudy, Isabel Benton, Laura Palmer and Anna Grigson (UKSG's Education and Events Officer)*

- 2 Alice Hughes explained that the number of people her institution can send to the Conference is limited and usually reserved for people in more senior positions. She said, 'The sponsorship provided the chance to attend and take part in wider conversations within the knowledge community. I would like to stress just how valuable these sponsored places are, not only for the individuals personally, although that benefit is clear, but also in terms of widening conversations and engaging every level of the community.'

The venue for the first-timers' Sunday evening buffet was hung with attractive strings of sparkling lights that lit up the River Clyde outside the window. It was already abuzz with chatter as Jessica Edwards stuck on her sticky name label and helped herself to a refreshingly cool glass of wine. She told us, 'There were lots of friendly faces – many of whom were members of the UKSG committee, and I quickly bumped into fellow sponsored attendees who were a lovely bunch and great company over the next few days.' She also chatted with two friendly staff from PSI (Publisher Solutions International) who run TheIPRegistry.org and IP-intrusion.org and learnt more about the use (and misuse) of IP addresses, as well as career progression in sales and marketing at other companies in the publishing industry.



*It may have been Scotland in April, but first timers were able to take advantage of the riverfront terrace on a balmy Sunday evening  
Bottom photo: Steve Sharp*

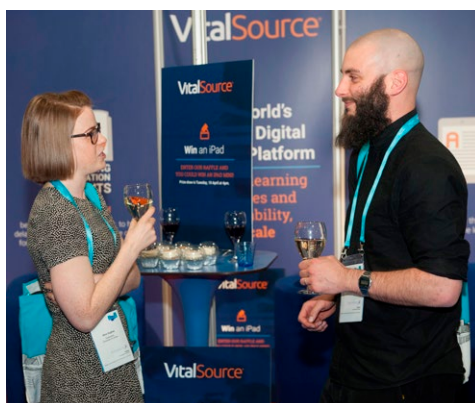
Monday dawned a bit grey and chilly, but not to worry – the sponsored attendees were lucky enough to be accommodated within a stone's throw of the Scottish Event Campus, where the Conference was held. Walking towards it on the first day, Jessica was led to ponder how useful it is that architects of important buildings seem to ensure their buildings are bizarre enough to be unmissable; spotting the giant armadillo-croissant structure, she knew she must be heading in the right direction. Her morning kicked off – not quite with the fascinating opening plenary (though that was to follow shortly) – but with taking photos of the inside of her bag, her delegate badge and, of course, straight down at her shoes. (How else does one start a conference?!) Following this, she was extremely excited to see her face pop up on the Click photo game leader board: she was in eighth place already!



Getting the important photos out of the way first  
 Photos: Jessica Edwards

Laura Palmer was also in a competitive mood and loving the JoVE photo challenge. She found it made a good ice-breaker for talking to exhibitors. As a result, she had some interesting and enlightening conversations with publishers and suppliers, who perhaps otherwise she wouldn't have thought to approach. Her 'best stand activity' photo was of the colouring canvas provided by Gale Cengage. 'Tapping into the adult colouring craze by asking delegates to colour in the protagonists from their newly-digitized Stuart archival papers was really clever and attracted plenty of delegates seeking to relax after taking in so much information in the sessions.' Laura had quite a lot of success in the Exhibition Hall. She won a prize draw for champagne and Finnish chocolates from LM Information Delivery (and is keeping the champagne for her graduation from her LIS MA!). If that was not enough, she also won £100's worth of library books from Oxford University Press.

'Laura won a prize draw for champagne and Finnish chocolates'



The bumble bees from Manchester University Press to promote their new content delivery platform Manchester Hive also rated highly on quirkiness! Tweet shared from @shellyt2101

Jessica trying out the Gale Cengage colouring activity (photo: Laura Palmer) and Alice taking advantage of the Civic Reception to catch up with exhibitors (and competitions)

The Conference Programme was well constructed, with just enough room swapping and breakouts to split the day into manageable chunks, and to keep each new day fresh and energised. Although the early career professionals (ECPs) were familiar in some degree with many of the topics and issues discussed, a great deal were new to them (and certainly they had moments of feeling completely out of their depth in a few technical talks!). However, they learnt fast and, with similar issues and arguments appearing in different guises, or from different angles and perspectives throughout the Conference, they found their knowledge and understanding built cumulatively. Jessica described it as a 'web or network of ideas' and found she was making new connections of understanding as the Conference progressed. Unsurprisingly, this applied particularly to discussion around open access (OA), which was one of the hottest, most frequently discussed topics, appearing consistently throughout the Conference – from the political considerations, incentives and directives,

'The Conference Programme was well constructed ... to keep each new day fresh and energised'

- 4 to exactly what it means for researchers. Ralf Schimmer's plenary session talk, 'Just how open are we?', attracted a lot of interest on Twitter. He used visual slides and language to great effect to advocate advancing the OA cause beyond its current state, providing some memorable soundbites, including 'the paywall is the stagnant inertia at the eye of the open access storm' and 'the paywall must come down'. Isabel Benton noted that Ralf Schimmer's presentation offered an interesting alternative to the current model of paywalls by suggesting that money should be redirected away from subscriptions and towards openness. The presentation developed her knowledge of this topic, which previously she was aware of, but did not know a great deal about.

## The breakout sessions

Alice found the breakout sessions were particularly helpful as she could immediately see how they could be applied in her institution, and how the ideas discussed could directly improve working practices in her department. They also provided her with the chance to talk collaboratively, not only with librarians, about ways to improve services.

Seth Thompson, Salah Seoudy and Isabel found Matt Borg's 'User experience in libraries' breakout session absorbing and amusing. Matt explained several techniques to gather user experiences, or 'UX', and spoke passionately about the need for libraries to place the user at the centre of service developments. Seth really liked the idea of asking library service users to write a 'love letter' or a 'break-up letter' to the library to identify something they really like, or something that they would like to change. He thought this was an engaging approach to capture library users' thoughts and feelings about services. 'Your library is people' was a quote from Matt's presentation that really resonated with him. Salah rated this session as possibly his favourite of the whole Conference. It gave him new insights and ideas on service improvement and development that could be implemented at his university library. He enjoyed the illustrations used by Matt to demonstrate differences between user experience (UX) design and user interface (UI) design and also between behavioural and attitudinal research in libraries. As part of her internship, Isabel will be working on a UX project and so found this session not only incredibly relevant, but inspiring. It was useful in exploring methodologies and how they have been put into practice, and she particularly liked the idea of digital mapping using the 'visitor or resident' framework, as well as the concept of a contextual interview. Attending this session raised some interesting questions, which Isabel thinks will prove helpful when exploring UX in the context of her own workplace.

Jessica attended Nikki Rowe's session which drew on her experience negotiating Chest agreements. Her light-hearted depiction of a librarian's relationship with publishers was welcomed; though highly amusing, it was equally insightful. Nikki conveyed this relationship as a tale of romance (and heartbreak), complete with 'Moving to First Base', 'Meeting the Parents', 'Moving in Together' and 'Renewing your Vows'. Creatively illustrated with emotive images of romance blossoming and breaking down, it was certainly unique! Slotted throughout were numerous hot tips about how to make library-publisher relationships work better (and why not to despair if they don't), such as appreciating when a publisher is approaching their year-end, knowing who's who in their organization, never slamming the door if a negotiation breaks down, and what may cause pressure points, from FTE changes to staff movements. As with all the talks, Jessica found viewing publishers (with whom she currently works) through the eyes of the librarian a fascinating and valuable exercise. As Nikki's presentation clearly demonstrated – we're all human, and 'companies don't talk to one another; people do'.

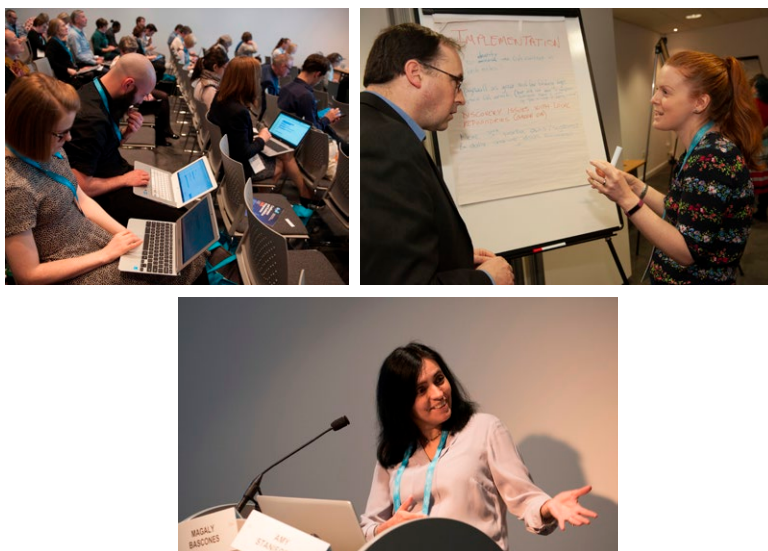


Hot tips in Nikki Rowe's breakout session on how to improve library-publisher relationships  
Photos: Jessica Edwards

The talk which challenged Jessica's existing perceptions the most was that by Helen Dobson on predatory publishers. She had previously heard the term and, influenced by the negativity of the term 'predatory' (as many people probably are), saw such publishers in a largely one-dimensional way. Although Helen's talk did not entirely shift Jessica's sense that predatory publishers can be sinister, it certainly widened her perspective and made her think about whether there is also a serious (sometimes unjustified) bias about what constitutes a predatory publisher. Beall's list was, after all, compiled through one individual's subjective interpretation of what it means to be a predatory publisher; many accusations may be more down to opinion than the behaviour of the accused publisher. The fact that many journals starting out in non-Western nations may be more in need of support and guidance from the publishing establishment on their methods of practice, rather than being ostracized and blacklisted, was a thought-provoking challenge to the traditional depiction of predatory publishers. Indeed, the suggestion of power in the term 'predatory' would be turned on its head if this alternative interpretation is to be believed, because these new, non-Western publishers are far from powerful. Is any established publisher entirely free of unethical behaviour? Helen provided great food for thought.

'a thought-provoking challenge to the traditional depiction of predatory publishers'

Seth found Ted Spilsbury's breakout session 'Reducing waste on e-book acquisition to zero (PDA)' fascinating as the project Ted spoke about placed students from the University of the West of England, Bristol at the centre of e-book acquisition processes. He thought the use of patron-driven acquisition as the major e-book acquisition strategy was an innovative and user-focused approach to purchasing e-books.



There were so many breakout sessions to choose from!

6 Seth, Salah and Isabel all attended Magaly Bascones and Amy Staniforth's breakout session 'What is all the fuss about? Is wrong metadata *really* bad for libraries and their end users?' Seth found it extremely insightful and applicable to his current role as a library assistant. The recommendation to negotiate with publishers regarding a basic level of required metadata, and possibly utilizing software such as Knowledge Base+, were two suggestions he had not considered, but which he will be passing on to his colleagues. Salah usually deals face to face with patrons as part of his job, so he was glad to see more about what happens (and can go wrong) behind the scenes. The session gave him a comprehensive approach to the different functions of an academic library and how metadata is used differently and for varying purposes, and how accurate metadata is essential for the mission of his library.

Laura's favourite breakout session was Joanna Ball and Bethany Logan's '(Book)sprinting towards open publishing: developing strategy and tools to support digital scholarship'. This focused on how the University of Sussex's Research Hive is finding innovative ways to support researchers and work with them to provide OA publishing opportunities which meet their career aims. Open access is generally supported by librarians, but Laura found it interesting to see how libraries can work with researchers to provide OA publishing models that are tailored to their needs, allowing them to make the most of its benefits. It provided useful material for her assignment discussing library OA support for researchers too, as it was an example of going beyond simple advocacy to involving the researchers in making the system work for them.

## The UKSG quiz

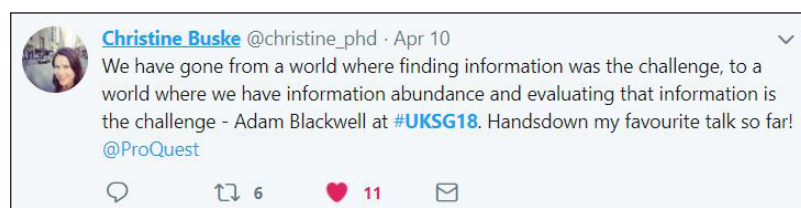
The annual UKSG quiz proved to be another lovely evening. Jessica had been warned to expect an intense, winner-takes-all mentality from some participants, but only one quiz answer was challenged (undoubtedly because quiz master Richard Gedye had ensured his quiz was watertight!). Sharing a table with several long-standing members of UKSG, the ECPs learnt of the gossip and scandals of previous UKSG Conferences, from rowdy publisher tiffs to being awakened by the snoring of senior librarians blasting through the thin walls of the student digs previously used to accommodate delegates. A far cry from the sparkling glasses and rich carpets they were enjoying at the Glasgow Marriott! Even so, she sensed a certain nostalgia for the early days of UKSG, including the cramped university common room disco.

'a certain nostalgia for the early days of UKSG, including the cramped university common room disco'



Essential refuelling before engaging brains for the quiz

## The plenary sessions



The Twittersphere was buzzing during Adam Blackwell's plenary around fake news  
Photo: @christine\_phd on Twitter

- 7 The second day plenary session included a very topical presentation by Adam Blackwell from ProQuest on the fake news debate. The interest generated by his title 'Guns, Lies and Sex Tapes: how the primacy of emotions over reason gave us fake news (and Trump!)' was not wasted – Adam's talk turned out to be just as engaging. As is often the case, an anecdote went a long way in capturing the interest of the audience. In this case, The Strange Case of Dr Lott, which was almost as unbelievable and outlandish as that of Dr Jekyll. Even after Lott forgot the names of every single survey participant, lost his data in computer crashes and fabricated his own reviews and publication credits – academics continue to cite him. Via this anecdote, Adam presented a powerful and thought-provoking explanation for the prevalence of fake news; sometimes as prevalent in academia as in the frenzied press we are so quick to condemn. It made for a compelling argument for why it is necessary to help students understand the role their emotions play in their interpretations. As Adam argued, it is the primacy of emotions over reason that creates the climate for fake news. Consequently, he concluded, the solution to fake news won't be tweaks to Facebook algorithms; it will be educators, not engineers. (His presentation was stuffed with just such juicy soundbites!) It is perhaps testament to the importance of this topic that this was echoed in the final plenary session. 'You're the people who connect common sense and knowledge', said Vijaya Nath of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, 'you have a hugely significant civic leadership role'.

'You're the people who connect common sense and knowledge'



*Vijaya Nath fired delegates up to go out and fulfil their civic leadership role*



*Seeta Peña Gangadharan encouraging her audience to confess their position on privacy*

Presentations from David McMenemy and Seeta Peña Gangadharan made Seth think about the amount of data we, as library professionals, present to external or third parties and the complexity of this information flow. David and Seeta's talks highlighted the importance not only of the librarian's role when holding other people's personal data, but also in educating our library service users in good practices to protect their personal data. An idea presented in David's talk was if learner analytics are not used appropriately, it could possibly be

8 construed that the library might be 'spying' on patrons' activities. This made Seth consider the approaches libraries take to service analysis and if the feedback they gather is too personal. Privacy in relation to the library patron is an ongoing ethical challenge as we develop valuable services while ensuring that we respect privacy and personal data.

## Food, glorious food

The ECPs learnt that at UKSG you will never be hungry! Not only were they consuming a hearty breakfast at their hotel each morning (the delicious, creamy porridge particularly impressed Jessica – maybe this 'Scott's Porridge Oats' business really does equate to porridge-excellence), followed by numerous refreshment breaks and chocolate from exhibition stands, but some even found themselves consuming two lunches. After some delicious door-stop ham and mustard sandwiches at a publisher presentation lunch, finding fried, cheesy gnocchi still being served at the main lunch counter was too much to resist! (Although Jessica admitted to slightly regretting this decision as she sat through all that afternoon's sessions feeling stuffed to the rafters ...)

## More breakout sessions

Not only did it enable two lunches, popping into an additional lunchtime event allowed them to hear all about the Wiley Digital Archives collection 'Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland' (RAI). One of the things which impressed Jessica was the deep, personal relationship an archivist develops with their archive after working so closely with the material for many years. Sarah Walpole, Archivist and Photo Curator at the RAI, spoke very highly of other individuals who had worked on and dedicated a large part of their life to the RAI collection; there was clearly a great bond of respect and affection both between the archivists and for their collection.

This was also perceptible at the Adam Matthew/University of Sussex talk about *Mass Observation Online* in which the Curator of the Mass Observation Archive, Fiona Courage, admitted that, although excited more people would get to experience the archive, the idea of digitizing the collection and sending it out to the world to be used and explored without the protective hand of an archivist was also a daunting and slightly disquieting prospect for someone who had spent so long preserving and protecting the documents. She had, after all, long been gatekeeper and protector of the legacy of the individuals who had contributed to the Mass Observation projects. Isabel particularly liked how the presenters were making the past more accessible using modern technologies such as handwritten text recognition technology. Salah had direct experience of this project, having helped with inputting the biographical data of the volunteers and writers in the project during his final year at the University of Sussex. However, he thought that the presentation did not delve enough into the ethical issues and agreed with Fiona Courage's view that 'not all archives should be digitized'.

## The lightning talks



Katherine Stephan's talk inspired her listeners to try new ideas



- 9 Seth, Laura and Salah enjoyed Katherine Stephan's lightning talk 'Creating communities with Research Cafés: how libraries can connect the University'. Katherine is clearly passionate about her role in library research support, so provided a valuable and motivating insight. The Research Cafés at LJMU are a seemingly simple but highly effective way to engage researchers, by providing them with valuable presentation opportunities and encouraging networking and social support for researchers across the University. Seth, who was inspired by this session, feels the ideas and strategies outlined in Katherine's talk are something he would try to implement as a research librarian to help foster a togetherness between the library and researchers.

## The Conference dinner

The ECPs, who had by now become friends, attended the Conference dinner. It was an atmospheric evening – dinner in a grand Scottish hotel with bagpipes and ceilidh, and a fun and appropriate way to round off the Glasgow UKSG experience. Laura's food highlight was the spiced lamb, a great warmer on a blustery day, although the cranachan, whisky jelly and cheesecake dessert was very artistic, and hearing the bagpipes take on some iconic rock tunes was also memorable! Alice is certain that the ceilidh was the most confused yet courageous attempt at mass-organized dancing by the knowledge community that she will ever witness. Salah's favourite performance of the night by the Scotsmen in kilts was their cover of 'Wonderwall' by Oasis.

'encouraging networking and social support for researchers across the University'



*The ECPs at the Conference dinner, with a detail of their favourite spiced lamb dish in all its glory  
Photo (left): Jessica Edwards. More photos of the dinner and ceilidh follow*



*The Conference dinner was rounded off by energetic dancing in every style imaginable (and some not) to a very eclectic mix of tunes*

## Last words

This report of the 2018 UKSG Conference would not be complete without mentioning the excellent use of a video clip in Mike Cannon's plenary session on the last day, 'From journal production to content marketing: transforming roles in a changing landscape'. The clip showed a man gaining momentum on a giant swing in an attempt to go all the way round: to check the video out, just search for '**Kiiking**'. It grabbed everyone's attention and was the perfect way to wake everyone up after the Conference dinner the night before. The final word goes to Alice, who said, 'In a fairly cheesy way the analogy can be extended to the UKSG Glasgow Conference, as a great deal of preparation from the organizers and speakers led up to an exciting and energising three days, which have hopefully provided the momentum for us all to implement new ideas in our daily working roles.'

*All photos are by Simon Williams (simon@simonwilliamsphotography.co.uk) unless otherwise stated*



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