North American Serials Interest Group

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Interview with Anjana Bhatt, the 2013 Merriman Award Winner

Please start by describing your current position and how you've been involved with serials?

I work as an electronic resources librarian at Florida Gulf Coast University. I manage more than 100,000 online journals through Serials Solutions and work with print journals as well. I work with my assistant, and together we are responsible for getting the quotes for journals, comparing the cost from various vendors, subscribing and renewing online and print journals through our agent, extracting usage data, negotiating licenses, and setting up electronic access to the journals.

What initially led you to NASIG and why do you continue to stay involved?

I had heard about this group and their expertise in matters related to journal management. I have attended a NASIG conference in 2009 at Ashville, North Carolina. Although I was unable to attend subsequent conferences, I did keep a track of what is being presented at every NASIG or UKSG conference. I have stayed involved because these two conferences provide a perfect forum where a serials or an e-resources librarian can hope to hear about international initiatives and learn from proven solutions and research-based, practical tips that library practitioners present. Later, I applied for the position of NASIG conference planning coordinator as well (did not get selected) as I wanted to get involved with the group and the conference organization.

What prompted you to apply for the Merriman award?

I work for the Florida State University system and I was aware that two of our librarians from University of North Florida and Florida International University have already won this award. I had a talk with them about their amazing experience and I was determined to apply for this award. I have attended several conferences in Asia and here in US. The possibility of learning new things about serials management and experience the European perspective on these issues was too tempting a chance to let go.

How did you react when you found out that you were the recipient?

I literally jumped with joy and could not believe my good luck. I had an inclination that I was going to win the award because I had put in my 100 percent in the competitive essay so I was very happy to learn that my gut sense proved correct.

What were your first impressions of the UKSG conference?

I liked the idea of a small conference. It was encouraging to see that it was possible to network and attend the conference without running around too much in the cold weather and rain. I had gone through the schedule and I liked the types of presentations that were scheduled. Also, I was very encouraged to see a healthy mix of publishers and librarians in the audience. Several publishers and exhibitors not only attended the

sessions and social events during the conference, they also presented a few sessions and welcomed the opportunity of a healthy dialog.

While I certainly appreciated the fact that all the sessions were provided at a single venue, I especially noticed and liked the conscious efforts the conference organizers made to protect the environment and provide healthy food at each and every dining event. They provided regular lunches (very small portions not like huge portions in US) in small bamboo plates along with wooden spoons/forks and our TO GO lunches on the last day of the conference were provided in a very cute jute bag. They even collected back the plastic name tags for use at future conferences! I was happy to see no plastic waste.

How do you think the experience of attending the UKSG will affect your career?

Winning this award is definitely an achievement and a great addition to my resume. At this time I am not looking for any jobs but having this award in my kitty definitely improves my job prospects. I was able to learn new stuff and for me, sharing this information with my colleagues was a great accomplishment. I have also written a report on this conference that might be published in the journal, *Electronic Resources Librarianship*.

How was the UKSG conference different from the NASIG conferences that you've attended?

Other than meeting European professionals I did not find much difference. The quality of papers and topics was pretty much on the same lines. NASIG conference people also have as much fun at the conference and provide ample food, so it was all great.

What was your favorite USKG session and why was it your favorite?

My favorite presentation was: The Student-Information Relationship: a Perspective of its Evolution by Joshua James Harding (Warwick Medical School).

Joshua is a second year post graduate medical student. While listening to his brilliant presentation, I was amazed at the paperless world that he has created for himself. His normal studies and research day is full of technical gadgets. He uses several e-products or apps that help him study, research, access full text content, take notes, download e-book chapters to his iPad, use GoodReader for adding annotations, save his work on Dropbox and records (voice and video) his lectures.

He believes that an e-book "should study him while he studies it". His idea of a smart and interactive text e-book is that it would study with him, inform him about his progress, adapt the content of the book by adding what he needs, be a personal study buddy, compare him with his peers, remind him to learn a technique, provide a true personal learning environment, alert him to the areas that he needs to learn more efficiently and finally, tests his knowledge as well.

He believes that a digital environment savvy student's workflow should allow him to purchase an interactive text e-book from a universal store and view it on a universal platform. He should also be able to use it to export content in PDF format to his notes applications and be able to apply learning analytics skills for his scholarly efforts.

Are there any barriers to this dream workflow? What can be done to remove them? According to Joshua, future digital-literate librarians, publishers who provide free or low cost text e-books with print orders, and institutional subscriptions to learning and research apps are the answers.

In my opinion, this was a star presentation from which the librarians and product developers can learn a lot about the future digital students and "on demand" information seeking behavior. I have observed that his presentation is currently being discussed on several library blogs. It has been viewed 1329 times on YouTube, and I urge you to view it at your earliest convenience. I strongly believe that to keep pace with digital students, academic libraries will start subscribing to learning apps instead of conventional subscription to

e-resources and e-journal packages.

Presentation video is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-QmslBH7NY and the slides are available at http://www.slideshare.net/UKSG/0930-harding

What are the differences between the two organizations, USKG and NASIG?

In my opinion UKSG is heavily involved in developing standards for serials management, while NASIG essentially is a group of people who are involved with Serials management and emerging technologies for better management of serials.

For those who might be interested in going to UKSG and perhaps applying for the Merriman award, what advice would you give them?

Do not hesitate….submit your application….it is well worth your effort. Attending a UKSG conference opens up a completely new direction in your professional life.

Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about your experience as a Merriman award winner?

Yes. Here are some of my observations about this conference:

Conference organizers truly believe in their open access endeavors. UKSG members paid a hefty registration fee of 550 British pounds. Non-members paid around 700 British pounds. What pleasantly surprised me was that within 24 hours after a talk was presented, it was uploaded online and available to all. As of now, free access to several presentations and videos is available on the following web sites:

Presentations slides:
http://www.slideshare.net/UKSG/presentations
Videos:
http://www.youtube.com/user/UKSGLIVE?feature=watch

UKSG conference organizers really plan well. Soon after the 2013 conference got over, a call for suggested topics for plenary sessions, breakout sessions, and lightning talks for the 2014 annual conference at Harrogate went up at http://www.uksg.org/event/conference14.
UKSG conference bloggers were equally active and writing their posts simultaneously on their blogs and tweeting about it.