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25th Conference (2010) Wrap-Up

Interview of Selden Durgom Lamoureux, Electronic Resources Librarian at the North Carolina State University Libraries and the John Merriman Joint NASIG/UKSG Award Winner for 2010

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It was a pleasure interviewing this year's [John Merriman Joint NASIG/UKSG Award](#) winner, Selden Durgom Lamoureux. Selden shares with us not only her professional background and how she came to her current role as electronic resources librarian at North Carolina State University, but she also gives us a fantastic glimpse into the UKSG conference. We are fortunate to hear of her amazing time in Edinburgh, Scotland, despite her dealing with a rather exciting volcanic incident that impacted much of Europe. Yet, Selden took it all in with grace and cheer.

Congratulations Selden on being the 2010 Merriman award winner. Can you start by telling us a little bit about your current position and how you have been involved in serials?

I'm an electronic resources librarian and work in Acquisitions at North Carolina State University. Most of my career in libraries has been focused on the electronic side of serials, first with licensing and management, and now with an emphasis on tools, workflow, and distribution of work. I feel very fortunate to be in a setting with extraordinary colleagues, both professionals and paraprofessionals, with the

imagination and will to re-imagine what it means to be serialists.

Can you tell us what initially lead you to NASIG and why you continue to stay involved?

Like many of my colleagues, I'm an accidental serialist. I fell into Serials while working in a special library as a graduate student. We were short-handed and I wound up taking on serials management for a collection of 400 titles (what a shock to move to a university library with a print serial collection 50 times that size!). When I accepted my first full-time professional position eleven years ago, my boss, Janet Flowers, sent me to NASIG even before I had started my job. She thought then that NASIG was essential to my serials education and she was right. I have never missed a NASIG conference since.

What prompted you to apply for the Merriman award and what was your reaction when you found out that you were the recipient?

In addition to the obvious attraction of traveling to Scotland, I was hoping to be able to meet colleagues from JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee), the national UK consortium, and those from EDItEUR, the innovative standards body in the UK, with whom I'd had email and phone exchanges. We had not previously had much opportunity to meet face to face, and I wanted to be able to engage with them in a long list of conversations about what they had done to develop certain standards and what they were planning. In

addition, of course, I was really looking forward to meeting my counterparts from the UK and comparing notes.

Give us some of your first impressions of the UKSG conference. Was there anything that surprised you?

The multitude of languages! This conference attracts serialists from all over Europe, and I hadn't realized UKSG reaches so far beyond the UK borders. It was truly an international gathering. The next surprise was the ratio of publishers to librarians – UKSG has a more equal balance of the two. There were not quite so many subscription agents, but it seemed to me that half the attendees were publishers. At NASIG we have talked about encouraging more participation from publishers. After experiencing a conference where that is the case, I can confirm that it provided not only a good opportunity for exchange, but shifted my awareness of librarians' place in the serial community.



In attending NASIG previously, what were your expectations of UKSG and how were those expectations different from what you experienced?

I expected a whirlwind of sessions, racing from one to the next and never quite being able to get to everything I wanted. That's what a typical NASIG conference is like. At UKSG there was a more laid back schedule with plenty of breaks to socialize, and a vendor show ran for much of the conference. The content of the programs

and the opportunities for conversation, however, were top rate (as expected, of course!).

You were at the conference during all of the dramatic volcano action that was happening- can you tell us about this adventure?

If you have to send someone into an ash cloud, I'm your girl. I was in the very fortunate position of having no pressing personal or professional obligations waiting back home, so could enjoy the adventure. I did have a few grim hours when it was clear I wouldn't be flying back via my return ticket, and that passage on a freighter couldn't be had for love or money (or, no time in the foreseeable future, at any rate). But it wasn't long before I had a plan B. Throughout, there was a tight knit group of "the stranded" who offered email advice, updates and support from all over the UK and Europe (Todd Carpenter of NISO gets the award for the most convoluted and heroic effort to return – but that's a story you'll need to get from Todd). Best of all, Jill Emery was also stranded in Edinburgh. We teamed up on pub-night and travelled together to Ireland from where we each were able to get a flight home 10 days after the end of the conference.

Despite the volcanic ash adventures, what was Edinburgh, Scotland like for a conference location?

Fabulous!

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

That's hard; there were several. But if I have to choose, I'll say it was the session on scholarly publication. The room was crowded, but there were only a handful of librarians so most of the session participants were publishers. It was so interesting to hear what was on their minds, hear firsthand what puzzles them about libraries (and librarians). It was also gratifying to hear SERU (Shared E-Resources Understanding) mentioned as an alternative to the expense and labor of negotiating licenses. I loved being able to follow up afterward with publishers I had met during the session.

In fact, conversations outside of sessions are where so much of the value of a conference lies. I had a number of memorable conversations with librarians, publishers, and, especially, members of JISC and EDItEUR.

How do you think this experience in attending UKSG will change your career?

Probably, foremost, it strengthens my belief in the power of consortia. Seeing what JISC has accomplished was extremely impressive. It also pulled me out of a US-centric view of libraries. I'm not sure how long I will be able to sustain that perspective, but I hope for the rest of my career.

I think a lot of NASIG members would be interested to know, what are the differences between NASIG and UKSG?

Scale matters. I was very aware that England is approximately the size of North Carolina, and the UK about twice that. The geographic expanse that NASIG encompasses makes pulling the serials community together in one place every year much more of a challenge. The UK also enjoys much more homogeneity in their laws and government support than we do across North America. Combined with scale, that seems to make communal action easier. The other most

striking difference between the two organizations, I think, is the mix of people from the various parts of the serial community. As I mentioned earlier, the UKSG drew a more equal number of librarians and publishers. I will say, however, that the energy, commitment, and creativity of serialists seems absolutely consistent across organizations – being at the UKSG Conference had more in common with a NASIG Conference than any differences I can note.

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

DO IT! It's one of the best conference experiences imaginable.

Thank you so much Selden for allowing me to interview you and speak with you about your exciting UKSG adventures. It has been wonderful getting to know you and I'm thrilled that you were not only able to attend UKSG because of your Merriman Award but also that you were willing to share with me and our fellow NASIG members what it was like. Congratulations once again!