

Interview of Elizabeth Siler

**Electronic Resources Librarian, Florida International University
and the John Merriman Joint NASIG/UKSG Award Winner for 2011**

Sandy Folsom, Cataloger, Central Michigan University

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

I am currently the Electronic Resources Librarian at Florida International University and have been at my position a little over a year. Much of my job consists of ordering, licensing and managing the access to our electronic journals and databases. I maintain the libraries knowledgebase and ERM as well as collect and analyze the usage statistics for our electronic resources.

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

While I was studying to earn my MLIS, I worked as graduate assistant and intern in the Electronic Resources department at the University of Kentucky Library. My supervisor encouraged me to attend the 2009 NASIG conference in Asheville. At the time I was determining whether or not to take a summer class and I decided instead to use the funds to attend the conference. I am especially glad that I did. Many of the sessions covered current issues that libraries were facing involving serials and electronic resources, that had not yet been introduced into the classroom. I felt the conference introduced me to the world I would eventually enter upon graduation. Once I graduated, I knew NASIG would be an important resource for learning about the latest trends concerning serials and electronic resources and I have continued to be a member.

What prompted you to apply for the Merriman award? How did you react when you found out that you were the recipient?

I received the call for applicants for all the NASIG awards and was perusing the different opportunities when I came across the section on the Merriman Award. Since starting my position, I have realized that the issues I face every day when working with electronic resources are the same issues librarians deal with all over the world and I was interested to see how librarians from different countries handled these issues. I thought by attending the UKSG I'd get a different perspective on the work that I do. When I received the news that I had been selected as the recipient, I was absolutely shocked. As someone who is new to librarianship and has only just started my career, I was honored to be selected for such a prestigious award. I was also a little nervous because I did not know if I was fully prepared for this new conference experience, but I figured I would gain new and valuable knowledge if I jumped right in.

What were your first impressions of the UKSG conference?

My first impression, after leaving the fog of jetlag, was that Harrogate was beautiful and I couldn't believe how unbelievably lucky I was to be able to attend a conference in such a wonderful place. Once I actually stepped foot into the conference center, it felt very similar to other conferences I have attended, but different because I was surrounded by accents from countries that would normally not fill up the room at a conference in the U.S. At first I was a little uneasy as a newcomer, but I met some very friendly delegates who put me at ease.

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

I have only been to one NASIG conference so this would be a one on one comparison. One difference I noticed was there were more group plenary sessions and less breakout sessions at UKSG than at NASIG. The plenary sessions that included several different speakers on similar subjects were especially interesting and informative. On the more social side, another difference was the big party at the end of the conference. It was a beautiful dinner and a fun night of dancing that I really enjoyed. Unfortunately I didn't realize I needed to dress up in sparkles and left all my sparkles in the States.

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

There were many sessions that I really liked so it is hard to choose. One that I especially enjoyed was the chaired debate between Steven Hall from IOP Publishing and Alma Swan from Key Perspectives during the plenary session 5 about open access publishing. Open access publishing is a newer concept that is in its early stages and it was interesting to hear from a publisher and an OA advocate about where they felt the future is heading and how we are going to get there. I think the debate format is an exciting way to discuss current issues librarians and publishers are facing in the ever changing world of serials.

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

Attending the UKSG conference has encouraged me to attend more conferences in the future as well as get more involved in different library organizations. The chance to work with colleagues from different types of libraries and different places around the world is invaluable and necessary to be an effective librarian and to serve my local library properly. I also realized just how much fun you can have at these conferences and I can't wait to attend another one soon.

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

As I am new to both organizations, I do not think I can pinpoint anything specifically, as they are both organizations of librarians and publishers dedicated to tackling the complicated issues involved in working with serials and electronic resources. I did notice that UKSG has many organizational members, including universities, publishers and other interested organizations, whereas NASIG primarily has individual members. This can definitely change the make-up of conference attendees.

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

If you are at all interested in attending this event, you should apply. Be sure to review the program, if it is available, and view video and documentation from previous conferences to make sure this conference will benefit you. Mostly, if you chose to go to the conference, try to get involved and talk to as many people as possible. There are so many amazing people at this conference with years of experience and expertise that you can learn from. I must admit that I did not follow this advice as well as I could have, because I was slightly overwhelmed by the entire experience, but if I had a chance to go back, and hopefully I will someday, I would try to get to know as many delegates as I could.

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

I feel incredibly fortunate to have been given the opportunity to attend the UKSG conference. It was a wonderful experience that I will always treasure. I would like to thank the committee for choosing me as the 2011 recipient of the award and I look forward to working with NASIG and UKSG in the future.