

NASIG Newsletter

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Interview with Alice Eng, the 2012 Merriman Award Winner

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

I am the electronic resources librarian at the University of North Florida. I make sure users have access to electronic resources including serials.

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

When I was deciding which associations to join, I asked other librarians for recommendations. There was an overwhelming response to join NASIG. The librarians I spoke with always have great things to say about the conferences and the members.

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

I applied for the Merriman award at the recommendation of 2011's recipient, Elizabeth Siler. She spoke highly of UKSG and the quality of its sessions. When I received the message that I was the recipient I had to listen to the message twice. I was certain there was a mistake.

What were your first impressions of the UKSG conference?

Initially, it was overwhelming to go to a country, city, and conference I had never visited before. But everyone was so accommodating and genuinely nice.

Carolyn Alderson and the Education Subcommittee invited me to dinner the night before the conference began which definitely helped to ease my anxiousness. Many of those members helped shepherd me through the conference and the city. Additionally, NASIG President, Steven Shadle, acted as an informal conference mentor, which was great!

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

This is my first year in NASIG, and due to prior commitments, I was unable to attend NASIG this year. However, I think the obvious difference is comparing and contrasting what the issues of relevancy between Europe and the U.S. are. As the electronic resources librarian, much of my time is devoted to the topic of web-scale discovery. There did not appear to be as much interest in that at UKSG as other topics such as the relevance of publishing.

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

There were two: Stephen Abram's, "Sharing-The foundation of social institutions," and Stephen Buck's "The emotional consequences of the idealization of the elderly married academic librarian (male) by the elderly unmarried academic librarian (female)-A study." Abram was an amazing presenter, so as an audience member I felt like he was sharing a story. The topic of his presentation was about change and the necessity to accept and integrate things like social media to increase

the worth of libraries. Buck's presentation was a mock study and the last presentation of the conference. It was one of my favorite because it was so original. Buck's "study" was about two librarians and their unfortunate love story. Buck found a way to use metrics to cleverly measure abstract ideas like handsomeness in his presentation. I think he called it the Pitt/Clooney scale.

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

Conferences are always great for forming new relationships and learning what the "hot topics" are. I have already contacted some of the conference attendees for advice regarding work and concepts with which I am less familiar. Knowing people who are willing to help you when you are lost is always a positive impact on one's career.

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

Besides being in different countries, I think both are more similar than different. Both organizations try to accomplish the same thing which is facilitating communication among all information contributors. I do think UKSG expects vendors and publishers to participate more actively in conversations than NASIG.

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

I would encourage anyone to apply. There are not many opportunities like this and it is so much better than a webinar or conference call.

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

I'm so grateful for the opportunity. Thank you, NASIG, for providing such a great and rare experience.