



NASIG Newsletter

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Interview with Kathleen McGrath, the 2014 Merriman Award Winner

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

I am currently the acquisitions librarian at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, Canada. In this role, I oversee monograph and serial acquisitions, and provide leadership and support for the library's e-preferred collections program. I've worked at UBC for over twenty-five years with a few title changes, but have always been involved in some aspect of serials management.

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

Shortly after I began at UBC, I recall receiving a bulletin, possibly from one of our subscription agents, introducing NASIG and announcing the conference at Oglethorpe. As a new serials librarian, this seemed like the perfect organization for me. I joined immediately and was hooked after attending my first conference at Claremont College in Scripps, California in 1989. Hosting the conference at UBC in 1994 has been one of the highlights of my career and led me to the privilege of serving a term on the NASIG board. Through NASIG I have developed professionally, travelled to places I'd never imagined, and made lifelong friends.

What prompted you to apply for the Merriman award?

I have longed to attend a UKSG conference ever since I first heard stories from John Merriman himself at Claremont. I've always enjoyed meeting the UKSG

delegates when they attend our NASIG conference and listened wistfully as they described their event. My fantasy was fed by UKSG e-news bulletins that kept me informed of the activities of the organization and UK/European counterparts. Receiving the Merriman award was a dream come true.

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

I was absolutely thrilled. I received the email on my birthday. I can't imagine a better gift.

What were your first impressions of the UKSG conference?

UKSG staff members Karen Sadler and Alison Whitehorn gave me a warm welcome. I had the chance to meet them and the UKSG Continuing Education Committee at dinner on the evening before the conference. I was keen to learn more about how UKSG provides its impressive roster of [CE events](#) throughout the year.

Harrogate is a lovely spa town. It was looking its sunny best during the week before Easter and gearing up for the excitement of being host site for the [Tour de France Grand Depart](#) in July. The Harrogate Conference Center is a lovely facility and the main auditorium was very grand and comfortable – despite the unreliable Wi-Fi!

Throughout the conference, the Exhibition Hall served as the centre of activity. Space here was coveted, and word has it, booths were sold out months in advance on

the day they were released. The large hall featured spacious and attractive booths, plus plenty of room for demos, formal business meetings, and casual conversations with vendors. Delicious noontime meals and cocktail receptions were served here each day.

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

I hope this won't be the last UKSG I attend. It has stimulated my curiosity about UK and European academic libraries and desire to learn more of the different approaches they are taking to serve their users.

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

The UKSG conference is clearly an important venue for doing business. It has developed as a strategic opportunity for vendors, publishers, and librarians in the UK and Europe to meet collectively. The sharing of ideas, professional development, and networking are equally important; however, these goals are also met by UKSG continuing education events and a one-day conference held in the fall.

The NASIG conference is more informal, though that has certainly evolved as we've moved from dorm room to hotel accommodations. One feature of the NASIG program I value is the many occasions it offers delegates to get together outside the sessions – providing time and venues for informal discussions, late night socials, and exploring the local sights.

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

There are so many highlights to mention.

David Nicholas and Carol Tenopir's insightful investigations of trust and authority in scholarly communication are touchstones for all aspects of the academic enterprise. In his talk on the "Impacts of impact," Ernesto Priego, City University of London,

delivered countless quotable quotes, though his comment, "Publishing: where content goes to die," is one that haunts me still.

I was especially taken by the presentations of Anders Soderback of Stockholm University "The Library Happens Elsewhere," and Simone Kortekaas of Utrecht University's "Thinking the Unthinkable – Doing Away with the Library Catalogue." Their message to "focus on delivery" has stayed with me. Anders peppered his audience with provocative questions and enthusiastically led us through a series of 2-minute breakout sessions that contributed to a lively discussion.

It was fascinating though sobering to hear Guilhem Chalancon, a data scientist and PhD student at Cambridge, describe his knowledge management habits. He didn't mention a library once.

Ed Pentz, of CrossRef served as an ebullient Master of Ceremonies for the traditional Quiz and Curry Night held in the fabulous [Royal Hall](#).

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

UKSG is not just the elder sibling NASIG; there's also a hint of old world, new world realities – just as we've come to appreciate in fine wine. UKSG operates within a comparatively small geography, and serves many institutional and organization members.

NASIG membership is diverse in institutional size and geographical range. The professional development focus is more centered on library practices and standards.

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

Go for it! UKSG will be held in Glasgow next year.

As the date approaches, review the program and list of exhibitors to discover what interests you. I enjoyed meeting some of the UK and European-based vendors whom I have worked with by email and phone. I can now place a face to a name.

The UKSG website has heaps of information, including a [conference website](#) with the full program, and links to presentation videos and SlideShares. It's definitely worth checking out.

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

I feel very honored by this opportunity. John Merriman was a special individual. I was lucky to have had the chance to meet with some who had known him well and related fond memories of bygone years in serials publishing and the founding of UKSG.

His spirit lives on, as NASIG and UKSG continue to do wonderful work in bringing people together to debate and address common problems, and ensuring that fun be had in the process. Congratulations to David Walters of Kings College London, my UKSG counterpart, who had the good fortune to go to NASIG this year in Fort Worth, Texas.

My sincere thanks to Taylor and Francis for their generous sponsorship of this award.