

Interview with Melissa Cantrell, the 2017 NASIG Merriman Award Winner

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

My current position is as the Scholarly Communication Librarian at the University of Colorado – Boulder. However, when I received this award I was still working as the Collections Analyst at the University of Colorado – Denver. My main role then was to provide assessment for our collections, including serials. My main role now is much more focused on promoting open access and open education.

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

My previous supervisor at the University of Colorado – Denver encouraged me to get involved in NASIG since I was just starting out in my career in my first job after library school. I continue to stay involved because I have moved on this year to become a co-chair of my committee and I have found that there is a lot of support and encouragement of continued professional development in the organization.

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

I can't say that prospect of going to England wasn't alluring, but I also applied because I thought it would be a great opportunity to get a sense of the big picture conversations going on in serials and scholarly communication. I think it is really important as an early career professional to try to reach into some of those broader conversations happening in the field, so in that way I thought attending UKSG would be a great learning

experience. I was quite shocked when I found out I was the recipient of the award. I was very excited but also a bit intimidated because I only had a little over a month to make travel plans.

What were your first impressions of the UKSG conference?

It was much bigger than I expected, and drew from a much more diverse crowd than I imagined. I thought that I would be one of only a few from the United States, but there were actually quite a lot as well as many people from across Europe and the world. I was definitely impressed by the scale and the organization of the event right off the bat!

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

I actually think that it already has! I just changed positions to become the Scholarly Communication Librarian at CU-Boulder, and attending UKSG gave me some valuable knowledge about current projects and initiatives underway in Europe that I can talk about which I likely would have been unaware of if I had not attended UKSG. I think the conference made me more informed about big issues affecting scholarly resources and communication that really helped me to be able to more effectively move into my new position.

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

I've actually yet to attend a NASIG conference. Last year was my first year as a member, and I was unable to

attend this year's conference. I am very much hoping to be able to attend next year's conference, though!

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

It's hard to pick just one! A plenary session by Barend Mons on open and interoperable data exploded my mind in a good way, and the closing session by Charlotte Roueché as well as a breakout session on values-based leadership by Jo Alcock and Sarah Durrant were both eye-opening and inspiring. As useful as practical guide sessions are sometimes, I prefer sessions that force me to think about issues in new ways and then I can take those ideas back and apply them in my own context. All of these sessions checked that box in a huge way.

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

It seems to me that the open access movement is more strongly emphasized at UKSG, but I think this is becoming increasingly important to NASIG as well. I also think they are different just because of the nature of publishing, policy, and education in Europe versus in the United States. There are definitely important overlaps in trends, challenges, and conversations that are being had, but the approaches are perhaps a bit different.

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

First of all, just go for it. As an early career librarian, I didn't think I had any chance of actually receiving the award, but I worked hard on my essay and tried to bring some originality to it so that it would stand out. I would also say to try to think about how you might use the experience of attending UKSG when you return to your home institution, and how it can benefit you and your colleagues in the future, then try to articulate that in the application as well.