

## Reflections of an Early Career Professional attending her first UKSG Conference

*UKSG eNews 490*

30 April 2021

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**Lancaster University** has been a huge part of my life. The student turned staff story is not an uncommon one across the sector, rather a happy accident that has seen me enter my fifth year working in Higher Education. Library and Learning Development was a second accident. As part of the amazing [Ambitious Futures](#) University Management and Leadership Scheme (sadly paused due to Covid, but returning in the future I am sure), my third placement was in Research Intelligence. This was something I had little experience in, but I enjoy a challenge and I am so glad I went for it. Fast-forward eight months, being Research Intelligence Projects Officer has become a new passion.



Research Intelligence is only a small (but extremely important) part of the work of Libraries. I had heard of UKSG (with Andrew Barker as my Director how could I not) – but I confess the acronym did not mean much to me – what is a ‘serials group?!.’ This is the event of the year and my expectations were high. I was grateful to be given a free place due to my time limited contract. I’m not alone in wishing I had the opportunity to be there in person, but the online set up Underline provided was excellent.

Through the introduction from Andrew Barker I could feel a buzz in the virtual room. The chat was filled with people watching from across the globe, and there is something warming about that. I would be lying if I said I wasn’t a little overwhelmed by the breadth of information provided on day one; everyone was an expert in their field. Then I thought I’d give myself a break – less than a year into the library world, I think I’m doing OK.

Reflections from one speaker (**Manchester University**) highlighted one of our great challenges. “Publishing costs are rising, value isn’t.” Thinking as a student, I simply expected

all knowledge to be available to me. If I'd needed a book, article or something else, I generally went to the Library and it was sourced. The idea that publishing costs are going to limit the ability of knowledge sharing is horrifying – publishers need to re-evaluate 'business' and 'public good' as a balance – tell me you are not just in it for the money?

Linked to this is Open Access (OA). Reflecting on my perhaps naïve, or wishful, comments above, I also could not believe the backstory of OA. That is, the fact that public money is funding research that the public could not access – baffling?! Is Gold OA sustainable? This was raised in a Q&A. I am learning as I go with OA, but my ingrained passion for widening participation feels a certain pull towards ensuring OA. I'm not qualified to say if Gold OA is sustainable, but publication should be freely accessible from the moment of being first published, so I hope this becomes a standard requirement from funders (if only it was that easy).

So, at this point my takeaways were that I was going to be very busy for the next few days soaking up the information, opinions and discussion of sector peers. And at this point I was glad it was virtual because of the recordings, and ability to fit this in with competing priorities. Let's mention the Conference lounge too. It felt like networking through a game – what a cool way to talk.

I would not be staying true to Research Intelligence if I did not highlight the talk from **Lizzie Gadd** – “*Journal metrics: what they can and can't tell us.*” The SCOPE Model ([inorms](#) research evaluation working group) was interesting to hear about. Talking of the curated lists of Norway and Finland being human assigned, my first thought was *bias and preconceived ideas*, which Lizzie immediately picked up on (the preconceived ideas from JIF, for example) – I love when my thoughts are validated!

**Joanne Fitzpatrick's** “*Charismetrics: winning researcher hearts and minds with the Research Intelligence service at Lancaster University*” was also fascinating for me. Of course, I knew a lot of the content (but not all of the history), but was so proud to be the other half of our flourishing Research Intelligence Services. We have a growing wish list of ways to develop the service, and UKSG provided an opportunity to both showcase Lancaster, and take inspiration for the future. Another highlight for me was my impromptu support at Joanne's Q&A, discussing [Altmetrics](#) – an institutional roll out, training and engagement programme I am leading. My pet rabbit Ezra made a special appearance too – finding his [fame on Twitter](#) for asking difficult questions.

Robots were not something I'd expected to hear about at the Conference. I was fascinated at the link of robots and materials science, moving away from your classic metal robot to more malleable materials – and AI is finding its place in the Library world.

Editing down my reflections to editorial length is a challenge – there are so many sessions I could highlight as amazing, and several recordings which I still plan to watch over the

coming months. I of course had awareness of the ‘big issues,’ but, being in my first year of Library work, UKSG really framed these ongoing challenges. My role focuses on Research Intelligence, but the broad spectrum of issues covered are very important as I look to progress within the HE Library world, providing a deeper appreciation.

There was so much to read, watch and digest, the Conference won’t be over for another 6 months after I’ve watched them on demand. I look forward to Glasgow – and in the meantime please reach out on LinkedIn or via email.

These views are the authors’ own and do not necessarily reflect the views of UKSG.



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