

# Thought leader interview: Peter McCracken

**PETER McCracken**

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*The E-Resources Management Handbook – UKSG*

The UKSG Editorial Board decided it might be interesting to invite some key thought leaders in the information industry to be interviewed for *The E-Resources Management Handbook*. A list of five questions was drawn up, ranging from the reasonably straightforward – “How long have you been in the industry and what is the most significant change you have seen?” – to questions for the professional seer – “Where do you see the industry going in the future?” A number of professionals from varying backgrounds – Stephen Abram, SirsiDynix; Martin Marlow, Ingram; Peter McCracken, Serials Solutions; Jim Mouw, University of Chicago; Alison Mudditt, SAGE – agreed to be interviewed. The resulting material makes fascinating reading, giving a range of very different perspectives on the information industry at this time of change and upheaval.

## *Why are you in this industry?*

I started as a librarian. I came to the industry as a librarian, and it was as such that I saw the need and opportunity for libraries to be able to manage their electronic resources. I consider myself a librarian. I do miss the personal interactions with clients now but I think what I am doing now is having a greater impact. Working with people – discovering resources people never knew were there – there were some incredible moments and I miss that.

## *How long have you been in the industry and what is the most significant change you have seen?*

I worked as a librarian from 1997 to 2002, and started Serials Solutions eight years ago in 2000. The most significant change in the last eight years has unquestionably been a full-scale shift towards electronic delivery of resources in serials. Libraries, if given the choice, will go electronic, and if not given the choice, they may well choose not to buy. For books, it hasn't happened yet and we haven't gone over to e-books. We keep saying “maybe this year”.

## *What will replace Google?*

I sure wish I knew what would replace Google! I'd be buying stock right now! At the moment it is hard to imagine anything replacing Google. It seems to me that Google is on an upward slope, doing more and more every day. Yesterday they launched a new cell phone, and for libraries an API for searching Google Books. They haven't gone wrong yet. It's just incredible.

## *What has been your biggest disappointment (in a work context)?*

I suppose my biggest disappointment would be a shift – or rather the lack of a shift – to better management tools for all resources. We still use ILSs and libraries are still spending large amounts of money on managing print resources which are not being used nearly as much as they used to be. We haven't yet been able to save enough money and are still paying for these dinosaurs.

## *Where do you see the industry going in the future?*

We see that librarians are more interested in – and more willing to devote resources to – tools that directly benefit patrons. In the future, I hope that librarians will see value in devoting resources to things to make

their lives easier – management tools. I think that there's an opportunity to do a lot more in management. There is a whole bunch of information we haven't begun to mine, or even to collect, which is being overlooked. These are resources librarians need to collect. I hope in the future librarians will spend money on better tools for making decisions, which will end with them offering a better service to patrons.

*Peter McCracken was interviewed for UKSG by Catherine Jamieson on 24 September 2008*

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*The E-Resources Management Handbook*, published by UKSG, click here:

<http://www.uksg.org/serials/handbook.asp>