For those involved in Information Resources in the UK and Ireland, UKSG is perhaps the most important event in the conference calendar. It gives delegates the opportunity to network with colleagues from around the world and to meet with publishers, content providers and subscription agents.

With over 900 delegates to network with, 3 days of plenary sessions, dozens of lightening talks and breakout sessions to attend and numerous publishers to meet, UKSG is not for the faint hearted! I will not attempt to condense the whole conference into this report and will focus instead on the standout talks and themes.

* United Kingdom Serials Group
A theme which surfaced throughout the conference was the relationship between publishers and libraries. It is a challenging time for this relationship; new subscription models are emerging, open access journals are growing in importance and publishers are looking to sell large expensive bundles while libraries are looking for more tailored content.

Dominic Broadhurst (University of Manchester) discussed the ‘Books Right Here Right now’ project, a radical new subscription model. This was initiated at the University of Manchester in order to bring about an improved and more equitable student experience; in this model students do not pay for their core text-books.

The project meant a move away from licences or credit systems and instead gave one copy of core e-books to each student – these were accessed through their virtual learning environment (VLE). The books they had access to depended on their course (so students did not have access to all core textbook, just the ones they need for their specific courses). Overall feedback has been positive, the fact that there is no direct cost to students and that there is 24/7 access to their core textbooks are major plus points.

Student engagement was another theme which came up throughout the conference. Sarah Pittaway (University of Worcester) spoke about how her library had been engaging students. Sarah began by admitting that student engagement can mean all things to all people but she defined it as ‘the participation of students in quality enhancement and quality assurance processes, resulting in the improvement of their education experience’. The library has hired two student engagement co-ordinators who liaise between students and staff, allowing students to have their voice heard by the library. Students have worked, in partnership with library staff, on various projects such as the creation of a ‘top-tips’ sheet for the library and the development of a self-guided tour for new students.

The reaction to the engagement project has been positive, it has allowed students to become stakeholders in the library and to feel like an important part of it. Sarah did however raise a note of caution; there is a possibility of raising student expectations too high - not everything students want can be delivered.

Another topic which cropped up throughout the conference was the continuing importance of print books. While e-books continue to grow print books are not going away – there will always be an important place for them in libraries. A number of speakers mentioned that patrons use the formats in different ways; e-books are largely used for quick reference while print is often preferred for in-depth study of a topic.

I found the social aspect of the conference of major importance. As an Information Resources librarian, I spend much of my time communicating with reps and product managers over the phone or by email. UKSG attracts all the major players in the field and allows you to put faces to email addresses; chatting to these contacts leads to a strengthened relationship between librarians and vendors and ultimately translates into a better service for patrons.

Attending UKSG was a great experience: several days of networking with colleagues, talking to publishers and attending talks and breakout sessions left me ready to return to Ireland inspired and ready to implement what I had learned.

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