

# SCONUL Summer Conference & AGM 2014

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On the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, thanks to a generous UKeiG grant, I was able to attend one day of the SCONUL Summer Conference taking place in Glasgow. The theme of the conference was The Open Library: Collections, Collaborations and Challenges, a very topical and sometimes controversial topic in library and publishing circles at the moment.

Before the conference began, Alison Stevenson from the Glasgow School of Art Library was given a few minutes to talk about the tragic event that has befallen the Glasgow School of Art's Mackintosh building and to highlight the Mackintosh Library wants list, currently available online at <http://lib.gsa.ac.uk/update-on-fire-affected-library-services/>, to help replace some of its priority collections.

The conference started on an international note with Laine Farley from the California Digital Library talking about the challenges of managing print and digital collections across a consortium of academic libraries spanning a whole state. This was followed by a talk by Anja Smit from the Utrecht University Library, who explained how having been sharing their catalogue on a national level for some time now, Dutch libraries are now looking into making it available on an international level using WorldCat. The California Digital Library case was interesting as many libraries already have experience of working in consortia to manage their digital subscriptions, but the CDL are also trying to apply the same processes to managing their monograph and print collections, an experiment worth keeping an eye on. The Dutch libraries talk was also interesting, particularly when it comes to managing inter-library loans, which they currently run as an unmediated service nationally, where customers simply create an online account and manage their loans on a pay as you go basis. Even more interesting is the idea that the Dutch Libraries are hoping to extend that service on an international level once their catalogue is transferred over to WorldCat.

Following on from these opening speakers, the rest of the conference was very much focused on the issue of Open Access. The keynote speaker, Mark Thorley, chair of the RCUK Research Outputs Network, made some controversial statements, calling on all librarians to become the guardians and champions of open access. This statement received mixed responses as many in the room felt that there are contradictory messages coming from RCUK: on the one hand open access is now a mandatory component of accessing research funding, but then it is evaluated against REF standards that continue to favour publication in reputable academic journals that don't operate an open access mandate.

Throughout the conference, the issue of Gold versus Green OA models was ever-present. There was a collective sense that although everyone agrees with the principles of open access, there's still a lot of work to be done, not least in terms of figuring out the right incentives for researchers and the right business models for universities and publishers.

As an early career professional, attending this conference has been a great opportunity for me to learn more about the background and future directions of open access publishing from a library perspective. It was also very interesting to think about the rising demand for published open data in research as well as published outcomes and the ensuing challenges this will bring in the humanities field where I currently work.