

Guest Editorial
NASIG Celebrates the Big 20!
Connie Foster, Western Kentucky University

If you link to the 10th anniversary special issue of the NASIG newsletter in 1995 (<http://nasig.org/newsletters/newsletters.1995/95spec/95special.pdf>), you will find a wonderful recounting of NASIG's history and growth. I won't reiterate most of those events but I marvel even now at the wonderful and special synergy that occurred in 1984 to bring into being the North American Serials Interest Group in 1985. While we owe much to the United Kingdom Serials Group (UKSG), we have indeed carved out our own niche in the serials community for twenty years. We have adjusted our internal and external purposes to meet changing issues, trends, membership needs, and to attack our growing pains.

My perspective has been enriched by service as a member-at-large, secretary, the presidential route, and deepened by chairing committees and serving on the latest Strategic Planning Task Force. As I consider what NASIG means to us all and what Susan Davis reflected upon in her anniversary editorial ten years ago, the strongest impact is still NASIG's members and networking. Some of my most memorable experiences (both positive and otherwise) and the friendships formed over the years and renewed annually, if not throughout the year, revolve around NASIG.

The Core of NASIG

While the executive board and committees labor over a myriad of details that keep NASIG up and running and reaching out, I believe that the core of NASIG is the annual conference. Despite or because of varied locations, increased costs for travel, lodging and general conference plans, the NASIG conference is a "professional must." The casual attire, the various levels of programming and events, the ability to ease quickly into committee work (nearly 10% of members serve on committees), the stability of the membership, and the volunteer spirit blend into the essence and indispensability of NASIG. The annual conference forms an organizational whole from the sum of its parts working diligently throughout the year.

In answering questions for the History Task Force interview (before I realized I'd be writing also), I found it difficult to mention "just one" or "your favorite" of anything. The NASIG experience captures so many professional opportunities under its umbrella. Sorry, I keep returning to the annual conference. The atmosphere of the conference, while changing with the times, still remains one of approachableness—deliberately sitting with different people, talking with "strangers," and yet renewing friendships. If anyone leaves not having met a new person, not having had at least one innovative thought or not having heard one dynamic or useful program, then we have failed you terribly! I even get to see my Kentucky colleagues at NASIG for a change! At my first conference in Denison, Ohio, I sat at breakfast with librarians from Eastern Kentucky University whom I had never met. In San Antonio (1991) we had an outdoor banquet where I sat across from Birdie MacLennan, who was quizzing those around her about the radical possibility of an electronic discussion list for serials librarians. Some people will remember heavy

rainfalls, no washcloths, late night socials, outstanding food, mediocre food. There just are certain factors that we have observed through surveys that cannot be addressed to everyone's satisfaction, but each board tries to minimize the unexpected.

Each conference brings its own identity, memories, and challenges. Each bears the stamp of the conference and program planners and the current board initiatives. The NASIG conference *is* the focal point from which all sorts of opportunities abound.

Other elements of the organization *do* contribute to NASIG's success. Yet, while those intimately involved in the organization think that surely everyone knows about the organization, this simply is not true. Word of mouth goes a long way, but we frequently meet people who have yet to hear of NASIG. Have we failed in our outreach? I don't think so. The membership brochures, the Web site, the excitement of telling others about. Part of the answer may lie in the changing nature of our jobs and our need to emphasize that we include more than serials in the traditional sense. Word-of-mouth and displaying membership brochures at library meetings remain viable ways of letting others know about NASIG. Our strategic plan calls for a dynamic public relations program. Even though we offer electronic resources, scholarly communication, publishing, and other avenues of discussion and education, fundamentals and details of serials are still needed. Self-promotion remains a strategic goal.

A few years ago we revised the membership brochure in English, French, and Spanish. Regardless of the language, the message is the same: NASIG is a simple investment and a dynamic partnership. We rely on volunteerism. We provide lasting networking opportunities. We aim for respectful discourse. We encourage and seek diversity in membership, programs, and leadership.

Our History, Our Vision, Our Future

The caption above from the membership brochure defines the scope of these twenty years we celebrate and the promise of twenty more. While *NASIG's history* is presented in more interesting ways elsewhere in this publication. I could not resist reading the first newsletter in January 1986 edited by Lenore Wilkas. In this issue the NASIG Study Group formulated plans to proceed with an inaugural conference in June 1986. An Executive Council provided temporary structure with co-founders John Riddick and Rebecca Lenzini, Tina Feick (Vice Chair), Susan Davis (Treasurer), Lenore Wilkas (Newsletter), and Marilyn Gonsiewski (Secretary).

The inaugural concerns, prophetically, are much unchanged:

1. Expanding the organization's leadership throughout all constituencies
... .
2. Soliciting greater membership representation from the commercial
constituencies
3. Working with and assuring various national professional organizations
that NASIG is complementing, not competing
4. Stabilizing NASIG's publication plan

We do cover the same ground over the years, but we have planted some new seeds also, seeds which sometimes span several board terms before coming to fruition. About 10 years ago Elaine Rast proposed that NASIG's archives be housed at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; now this has occurred. We have online conference registration and credit card capabilities; we have moved to online only for the newsletter but thankfully retain for a little while the print membership directory with enhanced online access; we established a bilingual task force and received a consultant's recommendation on archival record retention; we recommended a dues increase (\$15 in 1986) to \$25 in 1999/2000, and we held our first hotel-only conference in 2004. These are but a sampling of the movement of NASIG in the past ten years.

Our vision can only be as dynamic as we choose it to be, as we allow ideas to be tried, initiatives to be pursued, and commitment to the new strategic plan to be enacted. This vision depicts NASIG as a "network of informed, active individuals ... a forum for genuine communication." It proposes that NASIG "offers the most influential and dynamic annual conference in the serials industry." It asserts that NASIG "is an advocate for all of its constituents and is the preeminent organization for the North American serials community." And, not to be forgotten from the very beginnings, NASIG "is fiscally responsible, financially secure, and well managed."

Our future rests with the student grant winners, those new to library and non-library based positions, it belongs to leaders who can delegate to professional administrators those parts of organizational responsibilities that can alleviate the crunch on volunteers; NASIG's future embraces the emergence professionals yet to be envisioned. Our future also struggles with the concept of serials as continuing resources and with nature of articles within or outside of a bound journal, with the changing nature of scholarly communication through Open Access, institutional repositories, copyright, archiving, and pricing models. Our future hinges on the global economic and societal events and on collaborative efforts to improve access to information everywhere.

Imagine the anniversary cake with candles representing each conference site. What would your candles look like? For Bryn Mawr, Denison, Vancouver, San Antonio—oh, the places we've been! Nineteen and counting. I can hardly wait for the 20th in Minneapolis! How will that candle be crafted? What experiences will yours represent?

Let's capture the tradition of adding that extra candle to the cake--"one to grow on." What will be your extra wish for NASIG as we collectively celebrate twenty amazing years of change and growth, creativity and collaboration all wrapped into one big gift by the commitment of its members from those very early discussions among a few to the packed town hall meeting in Milwaukee. Enjoy reminiscing, reading, and creating your own very special anniversary and congratulatory memories.

Roar into those twenties in style, NASIG!