



Carrying on at the Speed of the Internet: NASIG Issues and Trends

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The speed of change in the serials world provides plenty of opportunities at NASIG conferences. Once again, NASIG's founding strength of all its members being able to come together to discuss issues, relate experiences, and offer alternatives, without commercial promotion, remains the platform for progress. Three pre-conferences were presented in 2005; all three demonstrated the effect of a common understanding between publisher, vendor and librarian towards eliminating confusion as the internet whirled around us. In 2008, a panel made up of up these three discussed the needs and goals of each partner. And 2010's "Licensing Electronic Journals through Non-Subscription-Agent 'Go-Betweens'" discusses a new partner in the process.

I. This Electronic World

The electronic environment has been discussed at NASIG since the first conference in 1985. That environment seems so innocent and simple at the time of the 25th conference. Every aspect of serials has been affected by the electronic environment. Seven of the ten strategy sessions at the 2007 conference concerned journals as they joined the electronic environment, as did 11 of the 15 tactics sessions. The subjects of these presentations ranged from open URL to ERM to blogs and wikis. In 2008, discussion moved on to the next generation of library automation and its impact, and the emerging trends of the 2.0 library; the pre-conference "Emerging Trends, 2.0, and Libraries" was the highest-rated of the four pre-conferences. Later sessions discussed expanding current applications, and the interrelationships of serials functions.

II. The Big Deal of Collection Development

Journal pricing is a staple topic during conferences. In fact, in 2005, 12 sessions and one poster discussed how to effectively stretch funds for maximum effect. As the decade progressed, pricing remained as a presentation topic, but the accent shifted to collaboration in the management of resources, involving not only the library staff but also the user. Open access and ERM systems were topics in 2006. The search continued to maximize the Big Deal for libraries in 2008's "Smoking out the Big Deal: Getting What You Want Without Being Stung."

Perpetual access has its roots in the license agreement; this is brought out annually in numerous sessions, frequently presented by the trio of partnership: librarian, vendor, publisher. Perpetual access and the license agreement was the topic discussed in a 2009 Strategy session, "Ensuring Perpetual Access to Online Subscriptions." It spoke from three perspectives; this time publisher, librarian and digital preservationist. Services must be coordinated. Perpetual access was also an Informal Discussion at the same meeting, along with CLOCKSS, LOCKSS, and Portico. The option of pay-per-view e-journals was introduced as another 2008 strategy session, and reappears in 2010.

Licensing remains another staple for discussion among us. In 2007, "Alternatives to Licensing of E-Resources" which was a discussion of the NISO Shared E-Resource Understanding (SERU) working group. In 2009, "Basics of E-Resources Licensing" was presented as a pre-conference. In 2010, licensing is approached from a slightly different angle in "Don't Pay Twice! Leveraging Licenses

to Lower Student Costs." That we have lost control over our electronic collections was the point made in the 2007 presentation "Hurry Up, Please. It's Time-State of Emergency."

The ability--or difficulty--of systems being able to accurately capture statistics has provided the opportunity for several speakers to present their in-house solutions or their inventive uses of commercial programs to bring meaning to budget concerns. This is another recurring topic, and a popular one.

III. We Have Our Standards

The standards for automations were discussed frequently during NASIG's first two decades, with the big issue being system migration. By the time of the 20th conference, there was still one presentation and two posters on system migration. In 2008, we were looking at the next generation of library automation, and in 2009 this new generation warranted its own informal discussion group, where the discussion included the shift from single interfaces to data stored across the web. A Tactics session titled "Improving our Local Electronic Serials through Standardization and Migration to New Platforms" expressed the need for caution in linking and archiving. The future of serials management in a cooperative processing environment rounded out the 2009 conference, and the 2010 conference had an additional session on data handling for today's users.

Cataloging is another recurring conference topic; in 2005 the discussion moved from AACR2 to Functional Requirements of Bibliographic Resources (FRBR), and then to "AACR3 is Coming; What is It?" This theme became "The Shape of Things to Come: Resource Description and Access (RDA)" a year later. Each conference for the past five years has had pre-conferences on some aspect of serials cataloging, from holdings workshops to metadata to RDA. All this in addition to regular sessions on cataloging. Clearly, we recognize the need to stay up-to-date. However, the 2009 conference evaluation reported a "perceived lack of cataloging/metadata-related sessions during regular conference time." (as opposed to the pre-conference).

IV. Shrinking Staff, Expanding Jobs

Throughout all the turmoil of electronic access, ERM, open access, retrieving usage statistics, and the relationships between serialists, vendors, and publisher, the effect on the individual is continually addressed. Finding stability in a sea of change, and meeting the throes of personal achievement, have been the subjects of numerous sessions at each conference.

In the 2008 "Painless decisions: serials and digital initiatives" session, it was stressed "that no matter what the budget is or what technology is available, people are what make the difference." Tasks former completed by one individual or department are now shared throughout the library. The same conference pursued this sharing with a discussion of workflow changes attributed to electronic resources positions. In fact, reorganization in technical services was discussed at the 2006 conference. This reorganization enabled staff to examine existing policies and procedures, leading to increased efficiency and improved services.

Projects require managers who are able to manage change, calculate risks and facilitate communication; a professional approach to planning involves techniques, such as those discussed in 2006. Efficient training for projects, particularly vendor-sponsored training, helps to determine if this is an effective use of training.

During the 2007 conference, those attending "We are All Winners: Training Silents to Millennials to Work as a Team" were given the opportunity to unify staff efforts, no matter how long the staff has been with the library, or how diverse they are. The ability to draw staff together requires managers who are knowledgeable about management issues and are able to manage with integrity; this was emphasized in the session "Managing with Integrity." This 2008 preconference helped attendees discover styles and techniques for being an effective manager through style tests, scenarios, and bibliography.

Personnel issues remain regular topics at each conference, particularly with a focus on workflow issues. Likewise, personnel management and job descriptions are staple presentations. Professional development for the MLS career is a favorite topic, from finding the first academic serials job in 2005 to continuing education alternatives in 2007. Expanding career alternatives beyond the library also remains a popular topic.

V. We are Not Alone

Partnerships, interrelationships, collaboration; it's the NASIG legacy. Challenges faced in the past 25 years have been met in numerous ways, and strategies have been eagerly shared by members. Brain-storming sessions and Town Hall meetings have proved to be other vehicles for sharing. Whether they are "serials" or "continuing

resources," print or digital, user-tagged or with a controlled vocabulary, you can count on hearing about it at NASIG annual conferences.