

Interviews with Selected Members
Elizabeth Lowe

(1) What first drew you to NASIG?

In 1984, John Riddick, the co-founder of NASIG, invited me to participate in the Task Force to determine if the US/Canada needed an organization like the UKSG (United Kingdom Serials Group). I represented subscription agents.

At that time, I reported to John Merriman, then Director of Blackwell's Periodicals Division, who had founded UKSG. Not only was I personally interested in a group that focused on serials, but I also had support from my employer to be a participant.

From the beginning, I was hooked. I liked the concept, the people and the energy!! –
Tina Feick, SWETS

I'm embarrassed to say I cannot remember how I first learned about NASIG, but I have been a member since 1986 and attended my first conference at Denison. I was drawn to NASIG because of its focus on serials and I was a beginning serials coordinator. My dept. head then, who had a strong serials background, may have told me about the organization. – **Connie Foster, Western Kentucky**

The people I knew who were members always thought it was cost effective, beneficial, and FUN. – **Sharon McCaslin, Longwood University**

I was President of a Subscription Company and wanted to gain access to my decision makers and the market leaders. – **Dan Tonkery, EBSCO**

(2) What's kept you involved in the organization?

The concept, the people and the energy have kept me involved. NASIG provides a platform to educate the new serials librarians/publishers/agent representatives into the industry, to present new ideas/challenges to be discussed among all parties, and to remind us of the everyday aspects but also to ensure that we look to the future. – **Feick**

I have stayed involved because NASIG is a unique and rewarding organization from its volunteer leadership to its excellent programming and the stellar annual conferences. The friends I have made through the years have become the core of my love of NASIG. The networking opportunities that have emanated from NASIG membership and involvement have been invaluable. I have had and sought opportunities which have challenged me professionally and kept me thinking within and outside that "box." – **Foster**

This organization is run by and for practitioners of the art – the programs are realistic and there is an opportunity to participate. – **McCaslin**

The quality of the NASIG programs and gaining access to the major movers and shakers in the Serials Industry has kept me involved. The people make NASIG valuable. –

Tonkery

(3) Which of NASIG's activities have been of most value to you in your own professional life and why?

The conferences as a whole have been the most important – from every conference, I walk away with an idea, some new information, another way of looking at a situation, and/or new/renewed contacts.

The workshops – tactical sessions – the small group environment that promotes dialogues - have been essential for the dynamics of NASIG.

Networking at receptions, between sessions, after sessions, etc., have provided the greatest opportunities for meeting people in our field and discussing the issues of the day.

– **Feick**

Most of my answer to the previous question covers this—networking/friendships and annual conferences. I thoroughly enjoyed my opportunity to be on the executive board in various roles. – **Foster**

The convention, because I need this chance to see things from a serials perspective. –

McCaslin

The programs have been the most beneficial, as many of the meetings presented forward thinking on serials related issues. – **Tonkery**

(4) How has your experience as a serialist evolved since embarking upon your career? What role has NASIG played in that evolution?

For eight years I was a Serials Librarian, in a large public library system and with a major academic institution. When my family moved, I sought a new post and was offered the position as a representative for Blackwell's Periodicals Division (now Swets Information Services).

As a vendor representative, I was invited to be a part of the Task Force exploring the need for a NASIG type organization here in the US. NASIG gave me the opportunity to work with colleagues from libraries, publishing, other subscription agencies, automation vendors, and other industry constituencies.

Working on the conferences – both local arrangements and conference planning, I gained experience in organizing events. I learned to watch the details and quality check every step of the way. This experience has played well for me throughout my career.

In addition, I have been involved in giving programs at NASIG. As a result, I have been asked to speak at other conferences – ALA, SLA, SSP and UKSG, for example.

Being elected Vice-President/President of NASIG remains the highlight of my career. Working to bring a new organization into being was so exhilarating. Just watching NASIG grow has been very gratifying.

Following the NASIG recognition I was then elected Chair of SISAC (Serials Industry Systems Advisory Committee). Then 10 years ago I received the Bowker/Ulrich's Serials Librarianship Award for contributions to the ongoing education of serials librarians.

None of the above – speaking engagements, SISAC positions, and the Bowker Award - would have been possible without NASIG. NASIG gave me the opportunity to excel.

I was then appointed Vice President of Academic Sales and later Vice President of Customer Services. The NASIG experience has been invaluable to me throughout my career. – **Feick**

I have gone from serials coordinator (which means everything about serials management and cataloging) to adding the title of head of technical services. My various roles in NASIG on committees and the executive board have certainly expanded my horizons and given me leadership opportunities. – **Foster**

I have only been a serials librarian for six years. NASIG has been a big factor (providing mentors and examples) for all of that time. – **McCaslin**

Over the past 30 years or more I have seen many changes and NASIG has been a great sounding board for change and gathering together the individuals making those changes. – **Tonkery**

(5) Can you speak to NASIG's role in the facilitating mutual understanding and cooperation between librarians and vendors? Or in enabling librarians to better respond to changing trends in serials publishing (e.g., open access publishing, e-journals, trends in STM [scientific, technological and medical] publication?)

The first issue is a constant struggle. Over the years we have tried to include vendors in the organizational structure and through programming. We have had discussions with vendors about how to improve communication and interest so as to attract a diverse group of constituents, and we still have not arrived at a nice solution. Part of the problem is that vendors now deal with those who are decision makers and that usually means library deans or consortia representatives, so from a business perspective they do not benefit directly from attending NASIG. On the other hand, many vendors appreciate the fact that NASIG does not have formal exhibits so that they can learn, listen, and participate without having “floor duty.” I believe the recent program innovation in Milwaukee to

include product reviews in a timed, structure way is highly effective and an excellent bridge between no vendor product discussions and all-out exhibits.

The programs at the annual conference and regional support for continuing education offerings all enable members to be informed about new trends and discuss standards and other changes in our traditional roles. – **Foster**

I think it has been a great advantage to keep the meeting on a neutral footing. All NASIG members have been equal and vendors have been treated with respect and considered part of the community. NASIG policies regarding keeping out commercialism have been great.

The NASIG forum is one of importance to the Serials community. – **Tonkery**

(6) How has NASIG impacted our profession over the past twenty years?

Over the past twenty years NASIG has provided a forum for discussions about serials issues. Without NASIG, librarians within and without serials operations would not have had a place to learn about the serials industry or a place to network to gain contacts. --
Feick

I don't know that NASIG per se has been widely credited with as much as it should be. NASIG has not been proactive politically or socially on purpose; we have not been vocal in the sense that ALA is. I am still surprised that people have not heard of us! We seem to maintain a steady membership of about 1300. As individuals change positions, retire, and seek other interests, we lose those but gain others. I believe our impact has been significant (or I'd like to think so) on students and new library professionals through our scholarships and grants program. I think we are moving more towards an advocacy role where it fits our vision and values, where we can add a stamp of support for a standard or an issue that affects the serials community. – **Foster**

I think all of the important serialists are members (perhaps by definition). So NASIG certainly gives the appearance of moving (and even defining) the profession. That may not be cause and effect, though – it may just be coincidence. – **McCaslin**

I think NASIG has gone a good job of keeping up in the profession and has served as a continuing education opportunity for many librarians. It has also provided young librarians to become active in the profession at a much earlier time in their career. Exposure to the industry leaders through the program and session has been an important contribution. – **Tonkery**

(7) Looking back at the past 20 years, what do you think has been NASIG's single greatest achievement or contribution?

Educating serialists (all parties) about the industry - an ongoing process – through our conferences, continuing ed programs, newsletter, networking!! – **Feick**

This is tough! That NASIG exists as a premiere forum for serials and scholarly communication through its annual conferences. – **Foster**

1. Proving that an affordable annual professional convention is possible for entry-level librarians and those with average salaries.
2. Providing a template which lets vendors participate without the traditional (and all-too-common) exhibits model. – **McCaslin**

Continuing Education for all players in the serials information chain has been the most important contribution. – **Tonkery**

(8) What is the first thing (one or two words) that pops into your mind when you think of these conference sites:

2004 Milwaukee, Hilton

Total hotel situation – so easy to get around – **Feick**

Wonderful program changes – **Foster**

Plush and Accessible (I was on crutches) – **McCaslin**

Fair. Not my favorite – **Tonkery**

2003 Portland, Portland State

First hotel residency scenario.

Networking on the quadrangle around the Farmers Market! – **Feick**

In love with Portland – **Foster**

Too close to ALA (I didn't make this one) – **McCaslin**

Fair. At least it was on a campus – **Tonkery**

2002 Williamsburg, College of William & Mary

Outdoor banquet under a tent – **Feick**

Permeated with history and gorgeous campus – **Foster**

Walking through history – **McCaslin**

Very good. Beautiful – **Tonkery**

2001 San Antonio, Trinity University

Outdoor events – many opportunities to network – **Feick**

The news that Faxon had been bought by divine; terrific campus – **Foster**

Stairs & the Riverwalk (I mean this is San Antonio, right?) – **McCaslin**

Good. Functional – **Tonkery**

2000 San Diego, University of California

Reception at the aquarium

Outdoor discussions – **Feick**

All-time favorite with its open spaces and sculptures. It will be the retirement haven for all NASIG presidents. – **Foster**

Reliably Perfect Weather – **McCaslin**

Best/great location. Unbelievable – **Tonkery**

1999 Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University

Very hot

Our President wearing a kilt! – **Feick**

Information Ecologies – **Foster**

Fair. Dorms the pits – **Tonkery**

1998 Boulder, University of Colorado

Thunder storm during reception at NOAA

Tour of Celestial Seasons – **Feick**

Pat Schroeder – **Foster**

Very good. Beautiful – **Tonkery**

1997 Ann Arbor, University of Michigan

Outdoor banquet – **Feick**

Beverly Geer, the Pointer Sisters and Harmut Walravens and the Pink Cadillac Award--opening night – **Foster**

Good. Very nice – **Tonkery**

1996 Albuquerque, University of New Mexico

High altitude – drinking lots of water!!
Mexican flavors – **Feick**

The tote bag and shirt (still my favorites) – **Foster**

Very good. Hot but beautiful – **Tonkery**

1995 Durham, Duke University

Tenth anniversary celebration – including cake!!
John Riddick, Becky Lenzini and John Merriman return to visit. – **Feick**

Gothic dining hall – **Foster**

Very good. Beautiful – **Tonkery**

1994 Vancouver, University of British Columbia

Fantastic conference setup
Great Location except for rain where we missed the outdoor salmon barbecue –
Feick

Hunters and gatherers, superior keynote speaker – **Foster**

Very good. Beautiful – **Tonkery**

1993 Providence, Brown University

Lovely outdoor reception
Dinner cruise – **Feick**

Ivy League everywhere! – **Foster**

Good. Good meeting but poor location – **Tonkery**

1992 Chicago, University of Illinois

Ease of getting around – **Feick**

Bedspreads make great blankets at baseball games – **Foster**

Good. Poor and almost unsafe – **Tonkery**

1991 San Antonio, Trinity University

Great facilities – dorm room setup terrific
Line Dancing
Drenching rain on the dinner river trip – **Feick**

The only other time I got up early enough to participate in the fun run
Deluge on the Riverwalk – **Foster**

Good. Nice – **Tonkery**

1990 Ontario, Brock University St. Catherine's

First Canadian conference
Dinner by Niagara Falls – **Feick**

The only other one I missed – **Foster**

Good. Poor at best – **Tonkery**

1989 Claremont, Scripps College

COLD – had to move events inside!!
Panel on peer review – **Feick**

Unexpectedly cool weather; neat buildings – **Foster**

Very good. Beautiful – **Tonkery**

1988 Atlanta, Oglethorpe University

Quaint
Auditorium where everyone fit – just right – promoted discussion.
First cataloguing discussion group led by Marilyn Geller. – **Feick**

Intense open meetings and exchanges about pricing issues a la Hamaker style –
Foster

Good. Too small – **Tonkery**

1987 Granville, Dennison University

Thank you Blue Dot!!

Discussion (rather heated) between Chuck Hamaker of Louisiana State University and John Tagler of Elsevier.

Bugs

Library Director's operatic call to dinner!! – **Feick**

My very first.

Impressed with the friendliness of everyone – **Foster**

Good. Too small – **Tonkery**

1986 Bryn Mawr, Bryn Mawr College

Style

Bryn Mawr's Swedish meatballs

Panel with Chuck Hamaker and Keith Courtney about British pricing

Sherry in the lounge – **Feick**

Sorry I did not attend! – **Foster**

Good. Nice location – **Tonkery**

(9) Please describe what you consider to be your most memorable NASIG experience. It could be from a conference, continuing education experience, board meeting, tour, email discussion, or any other NASIG activity.

Organizing the Bryn Mawr Conference was so much fun and so much work; I was a committee of one in charge of this first conference. We were not yet an official organization – just a study group – so no committee members to tag for help. With a terrific conference director, Bryn Mawr College library staff and other local volunteers, we pulled off an amazing first conference including arranging transportation to ALA!

The meals were great, the Oxford University style buildings created a special ambience, the campus jazz band was superb – led us to do the bunny hop at 1:00 AM!! Oh yes, the conference sessions were excellent with speakers from various backgrounds. – **Feick**

Truthfully it has been the opportunity to represent NASIG in Mexico and at UKSG (twice, once because the current president at the time could not attend. – **Foster**

Dressing in a wet suit to open the San Diego Conference – **Tonkery**

(10) What do you see as the biggest challenge for those of us in the serials industry right now? Over the next decade?

Managing electronic resources is the major focus for all parties. Besides the purchasing, setup, maintenance and the cost, we still have the issue of archiving – who is going to maintain these electronic archives? – **Feick**

Specifically seeing how serials as bound or online journals evolve and whether articles replace the volume/issue concept entirely and the matter of Open Access and institutional repositories and how they will affect publishers, subscription agents, and libraries and the entire process of scholarly communication and access. – **Foster**

Now: handling electronic access. Over the next decade: appropriate and cooperative preservation of all formats. – **McCaslin**

Making a successful transition from print to electronic is the biggest challenge we face today. Over the next decade keeping open access and its replacement involved with the library or serials community. There is a danger we face of losing the battle and letting the faculty or other group takeover our role. – **Tonkery**

(11) NASIG was founded with several basic principles that have stood the test of time. Would you like to see any changes or modification in those principles and why?

Yes, the basic principles have stood the test of time, but we have diminished our contact with publishers and other content providers. We need to ensure that all parts of the industry (the old “serials information chain) are included. In some ways, it appears that NASIG wants to be just a librarians’ organization.

If we truly still want to address publishers and other content providers, NASIG needs to include them more as a part of the organization. – **Feick**

I believe the exhaustive member survey and strategic plan/vision have addressed some changes and the leadership is committed to staying flexible and viable while holding to those core values which have made NASIG unique. We have encouraged outsourcing when needed to accomplish work that volunteers struggle with. – **Foster**

I would not presume.... – **McCaslin**

Remain the same.... – **Tonkery**

(12) What do you see as the biggest challenges for NASIG right now? Over the next decade?

The biggest challenge remains including all parts of the serials industry – not just being a librarians’ organization.

NASIG needs to meet this challenge and continuously ensure that all parties are included. – **Feick**

To decide whether to have a part-time association management concept assist leadership in the increasingly complex and time-consuming aspects of our organization. – **Foster**

Now: Deciding how to handle a hotel-based conference, without becoming “just another organization” – **McCaslin**

Membership as we are an aging profession – **Tonkery**

(13) If you were to be granted three 3 NASIG-oriented wishes, what would you wish for?

1. NASIG continues to be a strong, financially viable organization, including having paid staff to handle the administration of the organization.
2. NASIG’s membership and conference attendance is truly representative of all parts of the serials industry.
3. NASIG plays a major part in mediating the future of serials issues.
4. (If I’m allowed!!) NASIG still focuses on fun through networking. – **Feick**

Another strong 20 years of existence

More campuses to volunteer as hosts for the annual conference in tandem with hotels
Continued strong and diverse committee leadership and participation for volunteers to ensure our longevity – **Foster**

1. To reliably have enough travel budget to plan on going each year
 2. To have the convention always far enough away from ALA to make it feasible to do both
 3. To spread the NASIG philosophy to ACRL, so that more librarians could be involved professionally and I could go away from ALA not feeling so “used”.
- **McCaslin**

All the NASIG meeting held near a quality golf course.

All publishers work with agents to supply material

Improve the quality of the program to include more publisher related programs. –
Tonkery