



Racing to the Crossroads: a NASIG conference review

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A couple of weeks ago I attended the conference of UKSG's sister organisation – NASIG – in the lovely city of Indianapolis, Indiana. As a former serials and e-resources librarian, I have always wanted to attend the NASIG conference to hear different perspectives on our community and meet new colleagues to listen to and learn from so was really excited to attend my first 'NASIG'.

It is customary for NASIG and UKSG to offer greetings and provide updates to each other's conferences in the opening speeches. In Harrogate earlier this year, we welcomed Anna Creech, Chair of NASIG, to the UKSG conference. I was privileged to deputise in Indianapolis for UKSG Chair, Kate Price, who started her new role at Queen Mary University London the same week and sadly couldn't make it. As soon as I stepped off the plane in the considerable heat of Indiana after being awake for 24 hours, I was welcomed equally warmly (and with lots of food and coffee) by the North American library community.

The NASIG conference runs from a Thursday to a Sunday in June each year with day one consisting of pre-conference workshops. Although I didn't participate in the pre-conference, I heard some really good feedback from other delegates, particularly about Terry's Reese's workshops on MARCEdit and metadata which went down really well. That evening local story performer and coach, [Sally Perkins](#), welcomed the conference to Indianapolis with 'The Charm, the Harm, and the Daring of Dillinger' giving delegates a dramatised potted history of America's number one wanted gangster of the 1930s. It linked the conference to the city's history beautifully.

There were many interesting and informative presentations that I attended during my time at NASIG, too many to cover in detail here, but I wanted to draw special attention to what for me was the highlight of NASIG – a vision session speech from April Hathcock, Scholarly Communications librarian at NYU, who eloquently encapsulated why the theme of the conference this year – 'Racing to the Crossroads' – is not just about the legendary Indy 500 for which this city is famous, but is a metaphor for how we as a profession and a community are at an intersection and asks the question "Who are we leaving behind?". She used the [ALA core values](#) of access, education & lifelong learning; intellectual freedom; democracy and, above all, diversity to outline how these principles intersect with each other and with our various identities on which our personal values and behaviours are based. She asked, are we as a profession doing enough to democratise knowledge and to give voice to communities and cultures that are not being heard through citation indexes and published, peer reviewed literature? The session was rich in references to important projects and advocacy programmes such as [Force 11's Scholarly Commons](#), [ALA's Spectrum program](#), [ACRL's Diversity Alliance](#) and [Wellcome Trust](#) and [Gates Foundation](#) initiatives to provide public access to funded research outputs and linked research data. She wrapped up by pointing out the value of diversity to scholarly communications. What is the point of being at the intersection if we have all

taken the same road to get there? It's ok to pick up hitchhikers and to take detours along the way because the end result will be all the better.

In addition to the three vision sessions, the NASIG conference runs four tracks of concurrent sessions, highlighting some great practical case studies and perspectives on e-resource management, scholarly communication, digital preservation, metadata and usage statistics. I presented one of these sessions on the COUNTER Release 5 Code of Practice which is due to be published next month and there was lots of engagement, and audience questions which I did my best to answer! There were also student spotlight sessions, poster sessions (the 'great ideas showcase'), short 15-minute snapshot sessions and the vendor expo and product demos, so a really good mix of different formats to keep the energy levels up.

Away from the conference programme, NASIG is also an opportunity to meet new colleagues over 'dine around' dinners and the annual local baseball match – I thank the many people who patiently explained to me the rules of baseball (over and over again) and provided an overview of the US baseball leagues. I hope to get to use that knowledge again at NASIG one day! Go Indianapolis Indians – better luck next time! There were also many lively discussions about the state of UK (and US) politics given the fact that the UK general election was held during NASIG!



No conference can visit Indianapolis without paying homage to the town of Speedway and the Indy 500. The dinner at the famous Dallara IndyCar Factory which included an (optional) ride in an IndyCar around the streets of Speedway (driven by a professional of course!) was a joy to behold!

So, having finally recovered from a week of thought provoking presentations, overindulgence and jetlag, I wanted to thank NASIG members for making a UKSG colleague feel warmly welcomed and I hope to see you again at a NASIG (or UKSG) conference in years to come.

Catch up on [slides](#) from the NASIG conference. Vision Session films will be available on YouTube soon.



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