

NASIG 2018: engaging and collaborating for the future

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The recently concluded NASIG annual conference (its 33rd) was a great success. Although predominantly attended by North American publishers, librarians, and vendors, the conference drew attendees from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. In addition to being well attended, with an excellent and stimulating programme at a wonderful venue (the Grand Hyatt Atlanta - Buckhead), the conference provided an interesting glimpse into issues and themes of importance to NASIG members for the coming year. Five of those themes are highlighted here.

Core competencies

NASIG has devoted significant time and energy to developing [core competencies](#) for various aspects of professional practice related to its mission and vision, including core competencies for electronic resources librarians, print serials management, and scholarly communication librarians. Each of these documents has been very well received, and in fact NASIG's work here has inspired the development of similar core competencies documents such as the recently released Core Competencies for Acquisitions Professionals published by the Association of Library Collections and Technical Services, which is part of the American Library Association.

Although their publication is relatively recent, NASIG's core competencies have already been widely used in a variety of ways. They also featured prominently within this year's conference programme. One example was a session presented by three colleagues at East Carolina University on 'Core competencies at every stage' that focused on Core Competencies for Electronic Resources Librarians. One discussed those competencies in the context of nearing the end of a long career, another focused on how she used the competencies as a mid-career librarian, and a third presenter talked about use of the core competencies as a guide for someone new to electronic resources librarianship. In this session, I was particularly interested in how the core competencies were used to frame a path toward promotion requirements at this particular institution, as well as to structure ongoing professional growth and development.

Other core competencies-related programme features focused on how they informed the creation of an academic library internship programme, as well as how the most recently published Core Competencies for Scholarly Communication Librarians was used to help implement a new institutional repository.

NASIG's investment in core competencies is reaping significant benefits for the information community beyond what was initially imagined. They articulate aspirations that clearly have helped many in our field to structure where they want to go and what they hope to accomplish, and I see them

as important, ongoing points of reference in the future.

Digital preservation

Another interesting development for NASIG is in the area of digital preservation. Anne Kenney, then University Librarian at Cornell University and a longtime proponent of digital preservation, challenged attendees at NASIG's 2015 conference to consider ways to actively engage with digital preservation for journals. As a result, we formed a Digital Preservation Task Force which this year released three publications, called NASIGuides, on various aspects of digital preservation.

Task force members put together a panel presentation that included a publisher representative. In addition to providing an update on their work, presenters invited input on ways they could continue to engage the NASIG membership in issues around digital preservation, as well as liaise with other entities involved in this important work.

Digital preservation is an increasingly urgent and important issue with which the broader community needs to engage and collaborate. It is good to see progress being made to educate and inform others via this task force.

Collaboration

As a profession, we have a long history of fostering collaboration, and NASIG has a long history of focusing on collaboration as well. In fact, this was one of the stronger and more consistent themes in just about every presentation given at this year's conference.

For example, there was an interesting session featuring the work that went into creating Dimensions, billed as "the world's largest linked research knowledge system". Another session talked about co-operative cataloguing projects, and a session on e-book accessibility issues in which a prominent e-book vendor highlighted the collaborative nature of their work and basically said that they engaged with accessibility work in response to customer demands. The past president of FORCE11, Maryann Martone, spoke passionately in yet another session about the need for collaborating on the scholarly commons to create a "coherent vision and set of practices for scholarly communications".

Last year, a new element was added to the conference: Student Snapshot Sessions. These are designed to provide LIS students with an opportunity to speak for 5-10 minutes on a particular topic, to give them real world experience of public speaking in a supportive environment. Last year's sessions were outstanding; this year's were even more so. One student focused specifically on enhancing collaboration within technical services.

Collaboration takes many forms and one of them that is particularly important to NASIG is collaboration with other organisations in the information community. UKSG is our sister organisation, the inspiration for our founding in 1985, and we have collaborated on many things ever since. The UKSG chair attends the NASIG annual conference, and the NASIG president attends the UKSG annual conference. We also collaborate on a joint award, the John Merriman Joint NASIG/UKSG Award, named after the person who was so instrumental in the creation of both organisations. But there is even more that we can do together, and there are ongoing discussions among the leadership of both organisations that are generating great ideas about how we can accomplish even more together moving forward.

Social justice

A growing theme at recent NASIG conferences has been social justice. What are we doing in this area, what do we need to be mindful of, and how can we best contribute? For me, one of the more important speeches on this topic was last year's vision session speech by April Hathcock, Scholarly Communications Librarian at New York University. She spoke about 'Racing to the crossroads of

scholarly communication: but who are we leaving behind?'. Among other things, she highlighted several areas of bias within our field while also featuring projects and initiatives that represent positive change.

At this year's conference, Lauren Smith spoke on 'Communities of praxis: transforming access to information for equity', which carried on this theme of social justice. She described her own experiences within social services in Scotland and discussed ways in which we can collectively harness our power to correct imbalances and transform the information community.

Another popular session was given by librarians at Vassar College on 'Bringing social justice behind the scenes: transforming the work of technical services'. Many attendees spoke about being inspired by the presenters' articulation of ways in which we can combat social injustice within our current work environments.

Within the past year or two, NASIG has also worked on social justice issues with particular regard to its Code of Conduct, and has actively participated in an initiative coordinated by the Society for Scholarly Publishing to publish guidelines on diversity and inclusion in scholarly communications. This area remains one of great importance for NASIG members and I think we will see more discussions about social justice issues in coming months.

All things open

An obvious trend in the broader information community is on all things open: open access, open science, open data, open source. I was pleased to observe so many components of this year's conference programme devoted to this topic, highlighted by one of the vision session speakers, Sören Auer, who described his vision for an open research knowledge graph. The closing vision session speaker, Lisa Macklin, also focused on the topic of open by asking "How open are we?". She focused initially on open access developments but then went on to suggest that we think more broadly about all things open: how accessible is open?

There were several other sessions related to all things open, including one on open educational resources (OER) and another on ethical considerations for collecting open access resources, all of which were informative and stimulating.

Open source software also featured at this year's event. We had a session on cataloguing within the FOLIO environment, for example, as well as a user group session on the CORAL ERM, an international, open source software project. One of the students who spoke at the Student Snapshot Sessions also featured her work implementing and using CORAL.

Clearly the power and dynamics of long-established methods of publication, scholarly communication, and software development continue to shift in significant ways, with more developments yet to come.

Conclusion

In closing, it is important to note that these five themes are only a portion, and a hand-picked portion at that, of what is on the mind of NASIG members. One of the joys of conferencing is the stimulating exposure to many different ideas, perspectives, opinions, and experiences. That was certainly on prominent display at this year's event! Looking ahead, my hope is that NASIG and UKSG will continue to build on decades of working together to advance and transform our communities.

These views are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of UKSG.



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