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NASIG at 30: New Initiatives, New Directions

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Steve Kelley, president of NASIG, outlined recent initiatives and directions of this professional organization, which is devoted to bringing together librarians, publishers, and vendors to discuss the management of serials, electronic resources, and scholarly communications. As NASIG approached its 30th anniversary, the organization undertook numerous projects, including the revision of the mission and vision statement, a new organization name, management of the SERIALST listserv for the community, and the establishment of a code of conduct for the organization.

Keywords: NASIG, serials, professional organization, electronic resources, scholarly communication

INTRODUCTION

NASIG, an international organization devoted to bringing together librarians, publishers, and vendors to discuss the management of serials, electronic resources, and scholarly communications, has been quite active and has recently experienced a number of changes. As NASIG approached its 30th annual conference in late May 2015, organization members were engaged in numerous initiatives and developments.

REVISION OF VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

Starting in late 2013, the NASIG Executive Board developed a plan to appoint a task force to investigate rewriting the NASIG vision and mission statements. The Board had reached the conclusion that the then-current vision and mission statements were out of date because they were focused on the concept of the “serials information chain,” while the interests of NASIG had broadened over the years beyond serials management to include other areas of emphasis, particularly electronic resources and scholarly communications. Kelley compared the situation to working in a position with an outdated job description and argued that NASIG needed to update its organizational job description.

In early 2014, the NASIG Executive Board appointed the members of the task force to rewrite and revise the vision and mission statements. The task force included a range of participants, including former presidents of NASIG, former members of NASIG, and a newer member of NASIG, in order to get an array of perspectives. The members of the task force included the following people: Steve Oberg (chair), Rick Anderson, Tina Feick, and October Ivins, all former NASIG presidents; Patrick Carr, a veteran member and former Executive Board member-at-large; Lauren Corbett, a former member of NASIG; and Betsy Appleton, a relatively newer member of the organization.

The task force rewrote the vision and mission statements, which can be found at the NASIG website (http://www.nasig.org) under the ABOUT tab. The new vision and mission statements broadened the stated range of NASIG’s interest beyond serials. The statements were presented to the NASIG membership to be voted on in an online voting process. The statements were approved by the membership and were adopted on November 10, 2014.

ORGANIZATIONAL NAME CHANGE

A matter that was closely related to the outdated vision and mission statements was the outdated nature of the full name of the NASIG organization. From its founding, the full name of the organization was the North American Serials Interest Group. By 2014, this name had become problematic
in at least two respects. One, the inclusion of the word “Serials” in the name implied that the organization was solely concerned with print serials, as opposed to also being interested in electronic resources and scholarly communications. And two, the words “Interest Group” implied that the organization was a smaller part of some larger association, when it is in fact an independent organization.

In November 2014, the Executive Board proposed changing the name of the organization to simply NASIG, with the letters not referring to other words. The Board wanted to retain the good will and brand recognition built into the name NASIG and believed that this was the simplest solution. There was precedent for this action, as UKSG made a similar name change. UKSG (formerly the United Kingdom Serials Group) is a somewhat older British organization upon which NASIG was initially modeled.

After a 30-day period for comment, the name change was presented as an amendment to the NASIG Bylaws in December 2014. Online voting was held open for six weeks, and the name change proposal was adopted on February 2, 2015.

TAKING ON MANAGEMENT OF SERIALST

In early 2014, Birdie McLennon, the founder and one of the moderators of the SERIALST listserv and a long time NASIG member, unexpectedly passed away. With McLennon’s passing, the future home of the SERIALST listserv was thrown into doubt. The remaining moderators of the listserv, all members of NASIG, asked the Executive Board if NASIG would be interested in taking over the management of SERIALST. After considering several options, including trying to find a university willing to take on the hosting of the listserv, the Executive Board decided to contract with a commercial service to host SERIALST and its archives. The Executive Board believed that integrating the management and moderation of the listserv into NASIG’s committee structure would allow for succession planning and the training of new moderators, thereby preventing moderator burnout. NASIG officially began moderating SERIALST on August 1, 2014.

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS

At the 2014 NASIG Conference in Fort Worth, Texas, Angela Dresselhaus gave a presentation describing the deep interconnections between electronic resources librarians and the process of scholarly communication. Inspired by this presentation, the NASIG Executive Board voted to appoint a task force to draft a set of Core Competencies for Scholarly Communications Librarians. These competencies would complement NASIG’s approved set of Core Competencies for Electronic Resources Librarians and the set of Core Competencies for Print Serials Librarians that is in process.

NEW CODE OF CONDUCT

In 2014, the NASIG Executive Board started discussing the idea of developing a formal code of conduct for the annual conference as well as other NASIG-sponsored events. This discussion grew out of concerns arising from disruptive events and incidents of harassment that had occurred at several different conferences, some of which had been reported in the national news. Also, several potential speakers for the NASIG Conference had asked in recent years if the organization had a formal code of conduct. Although NASIG has not had a severe event occur at one of the conferences, the Board decided that it would be better to have a policy in place in case such an event should occur. Accordingly, a formal code of conduct was developed by the Board and posted on the NASIG web page in early 2015 prior to opening registration for the conference.

30TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

Kelley then discussed the upcoming NASIG Conference, which took place several months after the North Carolina Serials Conference. The 2015 conference was NASIG’s 30th conference, and it was held in Washington, DC, from May 27 through May 30. The conference included a joint program with the Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP) on May 27th. This program, called Evolving Information Policies and Their Implications: A Conversation for Librarians and Publishers, was the first joint program at a NASIG conference since 1992. There was also to be a rich array of programming for the conference proper, as well as a special dessert reception to celebrate NASIG’s 30th anniversary.

PARTNERING WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to the joint program with SSP, NASIG is involved in partnerships with several other organizations. In the fall of 2014, the NASIG Executive Board contacted the Library Publishing Coalition about becoming a strategic affiliate. The Library Publishing Coalition (LPC) is a relatively new organization that seeks to encourage libraries to participate in the publishing process. After some initial conversations, the NASIG Executive Board voted for NASIG to become a strategic affiliate of the LCP and to seek ways to cooperate in the future.
NASIG also has a collaborative relationship with NISO (the National Information Standards Organization). For several years now, NASIG and NISO have offered joint webinars and offered webinars at reciprocal prices, i.e., NASIG members pay NISO member rates for webinars and vice versa. These webinars have represented a successful strategy to provide continuing education opportunities to the community throughout the year.

In conclusion, Kelley encouraged attendees to find out more information about NASIG by visiting the organization’s website at http://www.nasig.org.