

NASIG Newsletter

Vol. 25, no. 2

May 2010

eISSN 1542-3417

Profile

NASIG All-Timers

Susan Davis, Profiles Editor

To recognize NASIG's 25th anniversary and to honor the select group of members who have attended each and every conference to date, I thought it would be fun to find out more about this illustrious, or dare I say, infamous group.

(Ed. note: I'm a member of this group so you may read in a tad bit of bias.)

Susan Davis
Christie Degener
Tina Feick
Marty Gordon
Teresa Malinowski
Gale Teaster
Joyce Tenney
David Winchester

We are all baby boomers, about twice NASIG's age (plus a few)—which means we became involved as young, up and coming, librarians. Or at least that's how our fading memories remember ourselves and the heady times in 1984-85 when the idea for a North American serials group blossomed into a full-fledged professional organization. The special issue of the *Newsletter* celebrating NASIG's 10th anniversary chronicles the beginnings of our organization. I am the only one of the All Timers who went on that fateful trip in 1984 to the UKSG meeting at the University of Southampton, but

the others quickly got on board the NASIG bandwagon and became hooked.

For some of the questions, I synthesized the responses, for others I thought it was important to identify who said what. I really enjoyed hearing what everyone had to say and I would encourage all of our members to spend a moment or two with each of us at the conference. We hear that this will be Marty's last conference, as he thinks he has plans to retire!

How did you hear about NASIG?

We found out about NASIG in various ways. Joyce heard about the group at another meeting in Crystal City, Virginia. Gale read an announcement in a library publication. Marty knew Becky Lenzini (then at Faxon and co-chair of the study group) who told him about it at ALA Annual in 1985 and he "merrily motored the 50 odd miles to Bryn Mawr." David heard something at a JMRT social about an information meeting for a potential serials group at ALA Chicago in 1984. Tina was working for Blackwell's at the time and one of her colleagues, Mervyn Yeatman, passed along a request from John Riddick for a subscription agent representative to the study group. Tina agreed to be that representative. I knew John from the UKSG trip as well as through an OCLC Serials Control Subsystems Users Group. He asked me to come to the information meeting which was held at DePaul's Loop Campus. Teresa heard great things about this "new and different" organization from two California colleagues,

Marilyn Gonsiewski (now Lewis) and Kay Thorne. (Ed. note: See the profile of Marilyn in the March 2010 *Newsletter*.) Marilyn told Teresa there would be lots of opportunities to get involved in this grassroots organization. She was so right!

Several of us attended that informational meeting in January 1985 at DePaul University in Chicago. About 150 people showed up and David particularly remembers the enthusiasm for an organized group focused on serials. I thought it was at that same ALA that a group of us attended the Serials Section of ALCTS Executive Board meeting, where John and Becky planned to discuss the vision for NASIG. NASIG was intended to be a complementary organization, not a competing organization. I remember that John had it all laid out. ALA would continue to serve a lobbying, standards granting, accreditation role, while NASIG intended to be more educational. There were some tense moments, but in the end the two groups have managed to co-exist quite well. Several of us have served as both NASIG president and chair of the Serials Section (now called the Continuing Resources Section), although not at the same time! Cindy Hepfer, Beverley Geer, Mary Page and Connie Foster, and I have held both offices.

What do you remember from that 1st conference at Bryn Mawr College? In particular, what made you want to go back to the 2nd conference?

Christie remembers being surprised and pleased by the informality of the conference. The informality in dress came about as a bit of a fluke. The weather was warm and sunny and the opening dinner was an outdoor cookout. No one knew quite what to wear; especially if your previous conference experience was at ALA (dresses and suits were the profession uniform back then for *everyone*). Marilyn and I decided to keep on our shorts (we had been working at the registration desk and didn't have time to change anyway) and suggested other people go casual too. There were many outside events—the breaks and another dinner—so it seemed natural to ease up on the dress code. We did dress up for the banquet.

Most everyone remembers the immediate bonding that took place in the dorms, communal meals, and late night socials. Those of us in attendance were pretty much making it up as we went along. Well, that's an exaggeration because we did have a formal program, but all the other stuff was breaking new ground. Teresa even equates it to "one's first kiss" and it is still her favorite conference. We had some "big names" on the program; the architecture was reminiscent of Oxford (the plenary sessions were held in a church!); the food was fabulous (make your own sundaes with all the chocolate sauce you wanted); the weather was great; the excitement and enthusiasm were intoxicating. There were many, many opportunities to chat informally and everyone encouraged participation at whatever level was most comfortable. We all made some great professional contacts and developed very strong and long-lasting personal friendships.

Several people mentioned that they wanted to continue the learning and networking so they never thought twice about not attending the 2nd conference. Tina was already tapped for site selection and conference planning (we called it local arrangements back then) so she had no choice. I was the treasurer and was pretty much expected to show up. 😊

In light of other conference offerings and economic downturns, what made you want to attend NASIG year after year after year?

For most of us, NASIG became our professional association and we attended the conferences for the relevant and thought-provoking programs. NASIG has often led the way in cutting edge programming, like the faculty panel at Brown. The programs have an excellent balance of theoretical and practical, and large group sessions and smaller sessions. Plus the great networking opportunities that have been one of NASIG's greatest strengths. Conference attendees have a chance to talk with the "movers and shakers" of our profession, and to be surrounded by others who readily understand the fascination, frustration and constantly evolving challenges of serials.

We all treasure the special friendships we have made over the years; especially those that have lasted to today. Tina describes it as being like an annual reunion of friends.

What are some of your favorite conference memories? Contrast the early conferences on college campuses with dorm accommodations with those hosted at hotels and resorts.

Susan: My first ever Dove bar at Bryn Mawr. The rainbow at Niagara Falls (Brock Conference). The beautiful gardens on the University of British Columbia campus. The spectacular views of the Flatirons in Boulder. The peppermint room at Celestial Seasonings! They told us the gift shop business was brisker than Christmas time! Tethered hot air balloon ride in Albuquerque. Playing euchre at the late night socials. The “old style” late night socials! The cloudburst on the Riverwalk in San Antonio during the free night at the first Trinity conference. Baseball! Meeting all the award winners. Picnic lunch in the Duke gardens. Open mike night in Louisville. Chenille Sisters! Wishing Chair. Connecting with my childhood best friend after Asheville. Spending quality time with my NASIG friends. I miss the sense of community that we had in the dorms and on college campuses. I always had decent dorms and never had bathroom issues. I was up late doing my treasurer thing (closing the bar) so got up late. I missed the rush, so it felt like I had my very own private bathroom.

Christie: 1989. Scripps College, Claremont, California. I was a workshop presenter myself this year; it was easier than expected because I was familiar with NASIG workshops and even knew some members of the audience. I hadn't thought seriously about publishing the presentation until Cindy Hepfer surprised and complimented me by suggesting that I write it up for *Serials Review*.

1993. Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island. The end of the conference featured the traditional drawing for an item related to next year's conference; in this case, a UBC sweatshirt. When the presenter drew my

business card and then hesitated while pronouncing my last name (which confounds many), a large number of people in the auditorium yelled out "DEGENER!" This made me realize that we can still get to know each other, despite the larger conference size, and definitely made me feel like part of the NASIG family.

David: Tons of memories. Running in and winning several of the early fun runs. Such great dancing times at the earlier conferences. When late night socials were late night socials. Those were the days! Things change with time, and age slants memory. I never disliked the dorms, and the hotels are nice (especially the hot water, and large towels). I am not convinced that the “hotel” NASIG conferences have the social bonding that the early NASIGs had.

Gale: Memories of residence halls with no hot water, roaches (my favorite animal), and communal showers; getting lost taking a walk and hitching a ride back to the campus; a hot air balloon ride; not being able to get into my residence hall because an armadillo had the door blocked. (My god, he was huge!)

Joyce: The early years were fun, but the dorms became less attractive and I was so happy to never have to deal with the communal showers, bugs and broken doors again!

Marty: Hmm ...“team showers” at NASIG 2 (where one person turned the lights off and on so the other could quickly jump under the shower head to bathe). Dancing to Bruce Springsteen’s “Dancin’ in the Dark” at NASIG 4. A faculty member waving a big stick while speaking about STM publishers at Duke, was it? Having to give the Nominations & Elections Committee report and introduce the newly elected board members in the place of Kathy Soupiset (from Trinity) who was chair but passed away prior to the Vancouver Conference (boy, was I nervous!!!). And, of course, crowding 8 people into Greg’s rented car and going to a restaurant in Albuquerque and spilling the water pitcher all over the table and then having the waitress drop food on us.

Tina: Though I personally prefer being in hotels, I do miss the closeness of staying in dorms. I think there was more interaction and people did not disappear into their rooms. It has been difficult to replicate that early closeness. Perhaps that closeness is gained with the energy of starting a new organization – one where we finally had the opportunity to talk about serials issues.

Each conference has been different – and there is a memory for each one – the earlier conferences had more impact primarily as I was so heavily involved.

Teresa: This is difficult because so many experiences come to mind! NASIG has provided me with wonderful opportunities for professional and personal growth, as well as enjoyable hours spent with colleagues and friends. Which experience is most memorable? The opening session of NASIG inaugural conference held at Bryn Mawr with the excitement of a pioneering effort to draw all segments of the serials community together in a new and different manner? The paper on scientific visualization with stunning video images presented by Dr. John Mustard, professor of geological sciences (Brown, 1993) and the paper on reinventing knowledge by Dr. John Lienhard, professor of mechanical engineering & history (Albuquerque, 1996)? Both brought the thrill of new ideas from outside the immediate realm of serials. Then there are visual memories. NASIG picture postcards: walking to the conference banquet with Niagara Falls as the backdrop (Ontario, 1990); watching the sun set and the downtown city lights come on at the conference reception high atop the AMOCO building (Chicago, 1992); enjoying the spectacular view of the Vancouver harbor and North Shore mountains from the grounds of the Museum of Anthropology (Vancouver, 1994); serving on the 25th Anniversary Task Force and videotaping members as part of an effort to capture some NASIG history (Asheville, 2009).

NASIG Activities

I asked the others what their involvement in the organization has been. And we have been plenty

involved. There are three former presidents in the group, three former secretaries, one former treasurer, two former co-chairs of Local Arrangements, former committee chairs, task force members, presenters and workshop recorders. Plus the first two NASIG Champion Award winners and, I almost forgot, dance instructor. Is there any NASIG assignment one of us hasn't had? Listowner and webspinner are about all I can think of.

Thoughts or advice for future NASIG boards to keep NASIG vital and relevant?

NASIG is as bright as its leadership.

NASIG is making changes to ensure that it will continue. It does need to explore other avenues to make sure NASIG has a strong future.

We do need to reach out more to the commercial sector – and regain the balance. [Having] exhibits this year is a beginning. More needs to be done to make sure that all parts of the serials world participate in the discussion. NASIG is seen as an organization for librarians.

Don't try to be everything to everyone. Stay relevant to the needs of the times. Keep a two-way line of communication open.

NASIG definitely has strong place in the future. I would recommend partnerships with other organizations to bridge multiple groups. The collaboration with NISO is great. I think we need to work hard at marketing the organization and showing off our strengths.

NASIG will continue to have a viable, dynamic future as long as the organization remains proactive and not reactive. That is what appealed to me initially and I think it appeals to others. For example, I learned about the coming availability of electronic journals and full text databases at a NASIG conference before such sources were prevalent. Membership might be down at the present time, but the economy is affecting higher education and its related industries detrimentally. Unfortunately, this is to be expected and suffered.

Keep providing top-notch programming. Do more marketing about the value of the organization.

How has NASIG impacted you professionally and personally?

David: NASIG made me a better professional, and a more complete person. There are so many bright NASIGers. Seems impossible to attend a conference and to not absorb some great knowledge.

Joyce: The contacts made at NASIG have been invaluable! I can pick up the phone and call any number of folks to get input, ask a question, and bounce off an idea. Friendships! My husband and I look forward to the conferences every year. We count many of the NASIG attendees as friends and really look forward to the four days of catching up on what has happened over the year and reconnecting.

Gale: I have made great friends and contacts I would not otherwise have. These are people I can contact with professional questions. Also, I have learned new techniques and technologies related to serial publications.

Teresa: NASIG has been the centerpiece of my professional career. The organization provided me with numerous opportunities for growth and involvement. Personally, it's been a joy! The friendships I have made have truly enriched my life.

Marty: Without NASIG I would not have had the opportunity to serve in many ways within a professional library (field) organization. I learned so much from those I met at the conferences and from the programs. I probably would not have attained associate librarian without having been involved in NASIG.

Tina: NASIG has played a major part in my professional life. Through NASIG, I have met many people from all parts of the serials information chain. My NASIG contacts got me involved in SISAC, ALA and NISO and invited me to speak at various meetings in North

America and the UK. I have also learned about what libraries need and had the opportunity to help educate about the subscription agents' role. NASIG gave me the credentials to be promoted and in addition, allowed me to mentor and provide support to others within the organization.

I have felt "at home" in NASIG – I have always felt included – and not an outsider as in other library organizations.

Christie: NASIG has provided continuing education applicable to my daily job, and served as the main organization for professional involvement and development outside local and regional groups. I have made some wonderful longtime friends through NASIG.

Susan: I believe I wrote elsewhere that NASIG made my professional career. I was able to make important professional contacts and lifelong friends because of NASIG. I learned a lot about what it takes to run a successful organization, and have had a chance to visit many parts of the US and Canada that I might not ever have had a chance to see. I still believe in NASIG's founding principles, in particular communication and sharing of ideas among all members of the serials information chain as equal partners. And I must admit that in spite of all the hard work required by the all-volunteer nature of the organization, I have had a tremendous amount of fun over the past 25 years.

Tell the membership a little more about you personally, such as any special talents, hobbies, or what you do in your spare time.

Tina collects first edition mystery books and poetry. She and her husband, Howard, love to travel, tour museums and attend the theatre and the opera. Tina does try to read the books that she collects (occupational hazard—too many books, too little time to read). She and Howard did a poetry reading at their local library and hope to do more!

David is a basketball official during the winter months, and observes that the players are getting faster every

passing season. He also volunteers with Meals on Wheels and with the Cat Association of Topeka. He has an antique 1972 Gitane bike (Greg LeMond used a Gitane bike much later than this model) that he only takes out when the weather is nice. David likes to read, expand his movie collection, is taking piano lessons and tries to keep his cat happy.

Marty has an avatar in Second Life. He likes to work around the house and read science fiction. He likes to travel and drive around in his truck. He also enjoys going to Lancaster County buffets with his wife of 36 years (he points out that those are consecutive years!).

Christie loves to cook and is addicted to some of the reality-based cooking and restaurant shows like “Hell’s Kitchen,” “Top Chef,” “Top Chef Masters,” and “Last Restaurant Standing.” She also is busy in the garden and doing yard work since she and her husband have a great place on ten acres.

Teresa jokingly replied that she is still searching for her talents. I can attest to her wonderful organizational and editing abilities! She taught me how to do NASIG board minutes when I was secretary. As for hobbies, Teresa has belonged to the same book group for more than 15 years. She introduced me to Alexander McCall Smith’s *No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* series in Powell’s bookstore in Portland. She has a Bernina sewing machine where she sews and quilts. She loves baseball and is a big Angels fan. If the weather is warm, look for Teresa at the ballpark.

Gale has five cats (the number tends to fluctuate a bit) who are the loves of her life. She loves to read and watch mysteries, especially those involving murder and mayhem. I know she and I have discussed the Richard

Jury mysteries from Martha Grimes. She also claims not to have any talents (but I know she is a good dancer!). She tried gardening but her plants keep dying, even the ones that garden shop owners claim you cannot kill! She supports the arts, theatre, and dance in the Rock Hill, South Carolina, and Charlotte, North Carolina, area. She is working on developing the perfect Cosmopolitan, so let’s bring back the volunteer bar tenders of conferences past! 😊

Joyce does a lot of volunteer work with the Center for Celiac Research, just completing their annual walk. She and her husband, Greg (who has also attended all of the conferences as a guest—he has never attended a program but hasn’t missed many social activities!), love their dog and dancing.

I love to read mysteries, particularly historical mysteries, but with some contemporary series mixed in. I also love sports; my favorite is now hockey. I am really enjoying this year’s Stanley Cup playoffs, even though my Buffalo Sabres didn’t make it out of the first round. As for talents, I have a pretty decent memory that is starting to fade and some facility for numbers. I have been very fortunate to select some genuinely interesting subjects for the profiles column—I guess that’s why the *Newsletter* keeps me around. 😊

What else should I have asked? Do you plan to keep coming to NASIG conferences?

Marty points out that he has gone from a 32” waist to a 40” waist since NASIG 1. (Maybe that has more to do with those Lancaster County buffets than NASIG).

Most everyone indicates that they will keep coming to NASIG until they retire (and possibly beyond).