



NASIG Newsletter

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Profile

Katy Ginanni

Susan Davis, Profiles Editor

At the end of the profile Maggie Rioux prepared for the [NASIG Newsletter in 2003](#), she suggested we ask Katy what she had planned as her next trick. I don't think having another profile as new NASIG President was the first item on Katy's list, but here we are; filling in the gap from December 2003 to the moment Rick handed over the gavel in Palm Springs. I purposefully didn't ask her about NASIG matters as I expect she'll cover those in her President's columns.

Katy recently moved from being e-access and serials librarian for Trinity University in San Antonio, TX to Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC to become collection development librarian.

What was there about serials in that first job at Vanderbilt (that you sort of fell into) that made you love them so much to build your career around them?

I never actually decided to build my career around serials! I did enjoy that paraprofessional position in serials at Vanderbilt. My boss and mentor, Sylvia Martin, said to me once that anyone can handle a monograph: you buy it, you catalog it, you put it on the shelf, you bid it farewell. But working with serials is like fitting a jigsaw puzzle together. It's always challenging and interesting! My plan, though, was to get my MLS, perhaps seek a second master's degree in history, and go into special collections and/or archives.

But when I finished library school, there was a serials acquisitions position open at Auburn, and since that was what most of my experience was in – and I needed a job to start paying student loans! – it made sense to apply for it. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Talk about your time in South Africa. I followed your adventures on your blog, where you posted so many wonderful photos. I'm happy to see that it is still up!

Susan, you are welcome to link to the blog. It is at www.katyginnanni.blogspot.com.

Maybe it's important to know how I got to South Africa before I talk about my time there. When I came back from Zimbabwe, I took a position as training specialist at EBSCO. I'd been doing that for about five years when the manager of EBSCO's office in Johannesburg (who I had met when we both temporarily worked in EBSCO's London office in 1996) wrote to say that she needed a new sales manager and didn't I need a change? After thinking about it for some weeks, and then a try-out visit for six weeks, I decided that I could use a change.

In a weird way, my time in South Africa helped me achieve some measure of closure on my interrupted time in Zimbabwe. Weird because the experiences were so different. In Zimbabwe, I taught at a rural school where I had no electricity or running water. I walked to the market in the township, or took a bus on weekends to do shopping in town (2 hours away). No TV, no Internet, no take-out food, no washer and dryer. On the other hand, I had all the modern conveniences in

Johannesburg. It is a very modern city that could be anywhere in the developed world. There are malls and art museums and restaurants and concert halls. But it is still African. And being able to spend some significant time there, even in a 180 degree way, helped me find peace with my somewhat abrupt departure from Zimbabwe.

My stock response, when asked about South Africa, is that I loved South Africa but I did not love Johannesburg. After I'd been there for about eighteen months, I realized that I was a tense, nervous wreck. I returned to the U.S. about six months later. However, I don't regret one minute of my time there. It is a remarkably beautiful country and if anyone wants advice about what to visit, where to stay, and so forth, I'm always happy to talk about that touristy kind of stuff. But I also enjoyed myself from a professional standpoint. I hate to sound ethnocentric, but the truth is that I was pleasantly surprised by the state of academic libraries in South Africa (and other southern African countries that I visited, such as Namibia and Botswana). They don't enjoy the same level of funding that most of us in U.S. libraries do, but they're not so terribly far behind, either. And I discovered that librarians in South Africa are the same as librarians I've met at home and in other countries: for the most part, we are all doing our best to meet the needs of library users. I enjoyed meeting and working with many librarians in my two years there.

Early on in my stay, I volunteered to fill an empty slot as secretary for my provincial chapter of LIASA (Library and Information Association of South Africa). That was also a very good experience. As with NASIG and other professional associations in the U.S., those who volunteered for work in LIASA were librarians who were dedicated to serving their profession. I was happy to have found a professional "home" in the Gauteng South Branch of LIASA.

And I was very thankful that EBSCO allowed me to remain active in NASIG while I was working in South Africa. I had just been elected as a member at large when I got the opportunity to go to South Africa, and I

hated the thought of stepping down. EBSCO agreed to pay for my trips back to the U.S. in order to attend board meetings. I don't think either NASIG or I could have afforded it otherwise.

Tell us a bit about working at Trinity and living in San Antonio, home (or former home) of other famous NASIGers--Bev Geer, Bea Caraway, Clint Chamberlin, Dan Tonkery, Danny Jones, Kathy Soupiset, Marcella Leshner (apologies to anyone I've left out).

My job at Trinity was the first in a library since 1992, and I really did have an adjustment period. I didn't feel the same sense of urgency that comes with being a vendor representative. In other words, no one expected me to respond to emails within an hour of receipt. [Ed. Note: Hmm, I'm not so sure that lack of urgency is true across all academic libraries!] But the adjustment didn't last terribly long, and it felt very good being back on a college campus. And I think that Trinity was an extraordinarily good place to be. Not only was the library one of the least dysfunctional I've been in (and I've been in a lot!), but the atmosphere all around campus was welcoming and supportive. By and large, people wanted each other to succeed – from students to faculty and staff and administrators.

I really loved San Antonio, too! Sure, I'd been there for conferences; who hasn't? Conferences are big business in San Antonio. But actually living there was fun, too. There's an amazing diversity there. Of course there is the Hispanic population, but did you know that since the mid-1800s, there have been several groups of European immigrants who settled in that area? Lots and lots of Germans, but others, too.

[Ed. Note: Yes, I visited Kerrville, Fredericksburg some years back and enjoyed some of the Alpine décor!] Having a large military presence also increases the diversity. And while I admit that I missed the verdant greenness of the southeast U.S., I'll also admit that South Central Texas has its own loveliness. I also really, really enjoyed learning about and seeking out Texas music and Texas dance halls!

And the move to Western Carolina?

I've wanted to live in the mountains of western NC for years and years, so this is really a dream come true for me. I've been here for six weeks now, and there is still hardly a day that I don't see something that makes me exclaim, "It's so beautiful here!" I enjoyed exploring the area in my downtime between jobs, and will continue to do so, probably for years and years. If I get tenure! [Ed. Note: Excuse me, that's when you get tenure!]

Another important aspect of my move is that it's a change in focus in my career. I've been in serials since 1985! (That was my first paraprofessional position at Vanderbilt.) I've been interested in collection development for quite some time, but I think it's difficult to get jobs in collection development without experience. Fortunately, my job at Trinity included serving as a liaison to one academic department and one cross-disciplinary program, and apparently the folks at WCU thought that was enough for me to get my foot in the door. So far, I'm really enjoying the change. It's pretty cool to know that I can help shape the collections in Hunter Library, and have an indirect but important influence in the learning process of our students.

Merlefest—describe a typical day at (Hmmm, any possibility of a joint NASIG conference there? :-)

Oh, trust me: if some NASIGers didn't like dorm rooms, they certainly won't like Merlefest camping! Some of the campgrounds have only cold water showers! There just aren't very many hotel rooms in Wilkesboro, NC.

Here's a typical day at Merlefest. Wake up later than you intended, because you stayed up too late playing and singing at the campfire the night before. Stand in line (probably) for the shower. Bum coffee from Laura (she makes it by the gallon, I think) and breakfast from Martha (she cooks pounds and pounds of bacon, no exaggeration). Consult the day's program with your friends, figure out a rough schedule of which bands/stages you'll see during the day, when and where you might meet up with friends. Pack up your gear for

the day (rain gear, snacks, water bottles, chairs) and stand in line for the shuttle over to campus. (Merlefest is held on the Wilkes Community College grounds.) Enjoy great music, well-behaved crowds, great music, sunshine, great music, visiting with friends, great music and festival food. Did I mention great music? Head back to camp in the evening to eat a little supper, have a beer or two (no alcohol on campus), load up your clothes for the chill of a NC April night, and then head back to the festival. Enjoy more great music. Come back to camp around 10pm-ish, ask everyone what was the best thing they heard that day, play and sing at the campfire, go to sleep. Repeat.

Have you been to other music fests/events? What are their good/not so good features?

I've been to a number of music festivals, some tiny and some bigger than Merlefest. But Merlefest continues to be the standard by which I judge other festivals. In its 25 years, the festival organizers have taken suggestions and made serious improvements in the infrastructure of the festival. They have a great customer service attitude, and they really try hard to make it a good experience for the attendees. I'm ashamed to say that I've never been to the Philadelphia Folk Festival (ashamed because my sister lives there and I have little excuse), and I'd really like to get out to Telluride, CO for that festival, too. A standout was the High Sierra Music Festival in Quincy, CA (that year), and an annual favorite is the small but excellent Acoustic Café that a friend north of Birmingham puts on every year. I've been a regular volunteer there since 2000.

Tell us more about what else occupies you in your spare time. Pets, hobbies? Love to cook? Eat? Music? Movie buff? TV programs? Books you love to read? Do you still dive?

I like dogs and some day when I'm not traveling so much, I'd like to have a dog. But at heart I'm a cat person. We had cats when I was growing up, and I've always had cats as an adult. Right now I have two, Maggie (a friendly, soft calico) and Tessie (a gray tabby

who I almost lost last year and as a consequence, she has become extremely attached to me).

I come from a family of foodies, so I am passionate about both cooking and eating. In the last couple of years, I've become very interested in food production and policy in this country, and attempt to buy local and organic as often as possible.

Although bluegrass is my passion, I have very diverse musical interests. In fact, it's pretty safe to say that I like almost anything except rap, hip hop, pop and techno. And death metal. No death metal. I really enjoy listening to live music, and one reason I'm excited about living in western NC is that I'll have all kinds of opportunities to hear live bluegrass, old time and folk music.

I love going to movies but for whatever reason I don't seem to do it very often. I watch more TV than I ought to, but that's because I got cable for the first time a couple of years ago and discovered the almost endless re-runs of Law & Order, Law & Order: SVU and Law & Order: Criminal Intent. NCIS, Bones and House also rank high in my orgies of re-run watching.

I don't read nearly as much as I used to. Now it usually takes me at least two or three weeks to read one book. One of the things I LOVED about being in Zimbabwe (with the Peace Corps) is that because I had no

electricity, I had none of the modern distractions – no TV, no Internet. I read SO MUCH while I was there! I miss having that time for reading and writing.

I haven't dived since I left South Africa, and I regret that. It's an activity that requires both time and money, and I seem to have been short of one or the other – or both! – since the fall of 2007. One of these days...

What does "Radical militant Librarian" mean to you? (Background— John Ashcroft, US Attorney General at the time, complained about the "radical, militant librarians" who were arguing on behalf of their users' right to read freely, without government interference or surveillance, and helped to influence the Congress in its vote to extend its debate on the renewal of the USA PATRIOT Act. Katy's sister made her own button (ALA sold its own version) so Katy could distribute them during an ALA Midwinter in San Antonio—I still have mine!)

If John Ashcroft thinks that protecting privacy and the freedom to read makes me radical and militant, then I will wear that appellation proudly. What a boob.

What else should I have asked about?

That seems pretty comprehensive to me! I can't think of anything else.