



NASIG Newsletter

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Profile

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Profile of Some Fabulous NASIG Member Retirees

I thought it would be a lot of fun to contact a few retirees, who were formerly very active in NASIG, to see what they are up to. NASIG has fostered many close friendships (and a romance or two) that transcend attendance at conference or membership in the organization. I believe those close bonds are one of the main reasons the organization has been able to thrive as an all-volunteer endeavor. I also wanted to continue the celebration of NASIG's 25th anniversary by gathering more stories about the early days and to show there is life beyond serials and libraries!

I contacted four former members and heard back from all of them. I met Minna Saxe (CUNY Graduate Center) on the 1984 trip to UKSG that sparked the idea of a North American serials organization. I am not entirely certain when I met Sylvia Martin (Vanderbilt), but I have a vivid memory of her giving a presentation at the OCLC Serials Control Users Group meeting at an ALA in Dallas. Perhaps that was the summer of 1984. I certainly met Kathy Meneely (Cleveland Health Sciences Library) at the first NASIG conference, but I really got to know her when she worked on the Local Arrangements Committee (now called Conference Planning) for the second conference at Denison University, Granville, OH in 1987. Ken Kirkland (DePaul) has a very busy post-working world life—he is involved in a local genealogy group and is an avid black and white film festival aficionado. I met Ken in 1980 when I started my first professional position at the Illinois Institute of

Technology and he was a serials librarian at DePaul. He also traveled with the “Class of 1984” to the UKSG meeting.

All of these folks made key contributions to the organization and are delightful people! It will be terrific if we can all re-connect in person at the 2012 conference in Nashville!

NASIG related

Going back to the beginning of your involvement with NASIG, tell us where you were career wise and how you heard about the group (or the idea for the group).

Minna: I was one of the American librarians who attended the UKSG annual conference in 1984. As a group, we visited several serial vendors, as well as were given special tours of Oxford and its neighboring region. Due to circumstances none of us could have ever anticipated, we became a close group and held reunions for several years. Many in this group, together with other librarians and vendors, thought it would be a good idea to have a North American equivalent of UKSG.

Sylvia: I was head of the Serials Department at Vanderbilt University in 1985 when my supervisor informed me of Marcia Tuttle's upcoming trip to the UKSG meeting in Oxford and a subsequent tour of England and Scotland. He asked if I would like to go. Duh!!! My chin hit the floor as I replied that it sounded like a plan to me. I feel that I really got in on the ground

floor of NASIG since there was a lot of talk about its formation on that trip. NASIG is modeled after the UKSG. NASIG held its first meeting at Bryn Mawr College in 1986. I might add that the Oxford meeting was a great experience and the tour of England and Scotland was special. There were nine US librarians, and a Scottish librarian served as tour guide. We visited universities, libraries, and lots and lots of castles.

Ken: I don't remember the exact moment of hearing about the proposed NASIG, but I was still serials librarian at DePaul University in Chicago. I was part of the "Class of 1984" as we called ourselves, the survivors of a group who went to the "1st International Serials Conference," which turned out to be a meeting of UKSG at the University of Surrey. To the best of my recollection, one of our fellow class members, John Riddick, thought of forming NASIG, and then enlisted the help of Tina Feick and John Merriman, who was chair of the UKSG at the time.

Kathy: In 1984, I received an M.S.L.S. from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. Prior to receiving my masters degree, I spent several years rearing my 2 children, getting a BA and working as a paraprofessional in school, public, academic, and hospital libraries. In 1985, I was hired as head of the Serials Department at the Cleveland Health Sciences Library, Case Western Reserve University. During my first year as a serials librarian, I met George Lupone, deputy director at Cleveland State University, and he told me about a new group that was focusing on all aspects of serials, called NASIG. He gave me information about the first conference, which was to be held at Bryn Mawr College, June 22-25, 1986.

What particularly appealed to you about the concept?

Sylvia: At the UKSG meeting, I got a taste of the advantage of sharing ideas, new concepts, and even established ways of dealing with serials. It revitalized my own work with serials, and I was able to share that new enthusiasm with colleagues back in the States. By becoming a part of NASIG, I knew that I would be able to keep up with the ever changing world of serials and

continue to share what I was learning. I liked the informality of the meetings and, especially, the opportunity to meet other serial librarians, publishers, and vendors on a social as well as professional level. Serialists (I once wrote an editorial for *Serials Review* entitled "What is a Serialist?") are an elite group, and I consider myself fortunate to have been among them.

Ken: I was quite impressed with UKSG because it brought together serials librarians, publishers, and vendors from all over to discuss the issues that concerned us all. Most serials librarians were thrown into their positions to sink or swim, and encountered many things not mentioned back in library school. The cheap dormitory accommodations were also a factor. ☺

Ken, you arranged for the informational meeting at DePaul? What do you remember about that? I thought it was in January 1985.

Ken: I did secure the room for the first informational meeting during ALA in 1985. Marjorie Bloss (at IIT at the time) had thought of the site because DePaul in the Loop was a convenient spot. I don't remember snow, so I have the vague idea it was summer (Editor's note: Ken is correct—it was July 1985). The classroom on the tenth or eleventh floor at 25 E. Jackson was packed. Some attendees were astounded by the roar from the 'L' on Wabash below; a sound not encountered in many academic settings. Back in 1967 my first day at the Lincoln Park Campus library which also was adjacent to the 'L' but only two stories high the sound reminded me of being back home in a West Texas sandstorm without the sand every time the el went by.

(Editor's note: The 'L' refers to the Chicago Elevated trains, sometimes also called 'EL')

Did any of you attend (or remember) going to the Serials Section executive committee where John and Becky talked about NASIG not being a total threat to SS?

Sylvia: I didn't attend that meeting, but heard a lot about the pros and cons of that controversy. I was active in ALA's Serials Section, as well as NASIG, and I

never considered it a problem. Maybe I was just naïve, but I felt the two organizations complimented each other. I don't know whether that competition still exists.

Minna: Others felt that NASIG would be a redundancy, as ALA already had a highly functioning Serials Section and there was no need for a stand-alone serials organization. The argument that both serials organizations could co-exist won out and NASIG was formed.

When did you join NASIG?

Sylvia: I joined and attended the first meeting of NASIG at Bryn Mawr in 1986. The informality of the meetings and social events provided a wonderful opportunity to meet many serialists who were on the cutting edge of new ideas and technology. I made many lasting friendships at NASIG and maintain contact with many of those people to this day. I stress the informality of all of the conferences that I attended because of the relaxed atmosphere. It eliminated a lot of the stress that often seemed to pervade at other work-related meetings, usually held in more formal settings.

Ken and Minna both joined the first year.

Kathy: I subsequently joined NASIG in 1986 and attended the first conference. This launched a career-long attachment to an incredible organization which provided an important role in my development as a serials librarian

What conferences did you attend? What was the last conference you attended as a registrant? I'm aware that a few of you came to some social functions after retirement.

Minna: I attended the first conference at Bryn Mawr College in 1986, and went on to attend most of the following ones until the one at the College of William and Mary in 2002. I always got a lot out of the conferences, even though I had been in serials since the early 1970s. It was not only the papers and panels at

the formal meetings that provided me with new insights and concepts, but also the many small conversations with fellow attendees, whether in line at the coffee breaks or waiting for an official program to begin. Of course, many of these early conversations dealt with the automation of serial records. I doubt whether many of us anticipated that many serials themselves would someday be online!

An important component of the early conferences was that they were held on college campuses (following the UKSG example). These informal environments, together with shared meals, local excursions, and evening entertainments, provided the participants with time to form friendships which went beyond the conference. It was always so nice to see "old" friends from last year's conference and to reconnect with them. It was also quite gratifying to find that a large core of attendees returned year after year after year. NASIG was certainly doing something right!

Sylvia: I attended all of the conferences except Scripps College (1989) and Duke University (1995) up to the one held at the University of New Mexico (1996). That was the last meeting where I was actually a registrant. However, I did go to William and Mary in 2002, literally for the fun of it. I traveled with a couple of other retired NASIG-ers. (Maybe I should write an article on the meaning of that word!) It was good to see former colleagues, and it was great to attend a conference and not feel guilty about missing meetings! In 2007, I was returning to Nashville at the same time that NASIG was meeting in Louisville. Since Louisville was on my route, I arranged to have dinner with several of my long time NASIG friends where I was able to catch up on the latest events, as well as people in the serials world.

Ken: All of them from Bryn Mawr until 1999 at Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh. When I retired in 2000, Minna Saxe sent me the NASIG-blue t-shirt from San Diego.

Kathy: In all, I attended twenty-two NASIG Conferences; the last one was in Louisville, KY, May 31-June 3rd, 2007.

Editor's note: In case you didn't figure it out, both Ken and Kathy had perfect attendance right up until their retirements. That's part of why I call this group "fabulous!"

Are there any particular committees, projects, etc. that you worked on? Sylvia, I thought you were on the Award committee that developed the Horizon award. Ken, you "shepherded" the student grant winners. Have any good stories to relate?

Sylvia: I served as chair of the original Bylaws Committee and, later, as chair of the first Horizon Award Committee. I also was on the Executive Board in its early days. I remember a meeting of the board in Washington D.C. where someone brought up the revolutionary idea of electronically recording meetings and other important information. No way! How far we've come! I also introduced several speakers at various conferences and served on a panel or two or three.

Serials technology is changing even faster now than it did 10 years ago when I retired. I would probably have to have a reference librarian standing over me in order to find anything in a library today. However, I do know how to interpret a magazine mailing label and how to claim for my missing issue of *Southern Living*.

Ken: Yes, I was on the student grant committee for two or three years. As part of that I also handled the travel arrangements. Some of the Board members were worried about the young people being thrust into the wilds of Chicago all alone (for the 1992 conference), so I agreed to meet them at O'Hare and drive them to UIC. That turned into a tradition for a while. One year was a little embarrassing in retrospect because most of the winners were men. I don't think any of us on the selection committee thought we had been biased, but the number was rather disproportionate and looked suspicious to others. Perhaps one reason was that so many of the candidates that year had advanced degrees and were changing careers, so maybe their advanced credentials seemed more impressive in the overall pool. I do remember with great fondness meeting and working with the students.

Minna: Throughout the years, I served on the NASIG board and on numerous committees. But in my opinion, my biggest contribution to the organization was my suggestion to have student attendees be given scholarships to attend the annual conferences. It has given me great pleasure to see how my suggestion has enhanced both NASIG and these students.

Kathy: During those twenty-two years, I participated in a variety of NASIG activities, but being on the Local Arrangements Committee for NASIG's Second Annual Conference, June 14-16, 1987 at Denison University, was probably my favorite conference. We had an incredible committee and were identified as one of the "blue dots" (conference organizers and Executive Board members had blue dots on their name tags).

Other special NASIG-related memories?

Kathy: One of the fun highlights of the Denison conference was when Dr. Charles Maurer, library director extraordinaire, Wagner aficionado, and collector of rhinoceros memorabilia (a picture of a rhinoceros was put on his name tag!) announced from the balcony in traditional Wagnerian style that attendees should proceed to dinner.

Also, one of the "evening socials" had a problem arise about liquor restriction in the building where the social was to take place, however, thanks to some enterprising serialists the problem was amicably resolved, and DJ and dancers were united on the same floor in the building.

Sylvia: There are so many wonderful memories of NASIG. While the meetings were always informative and memorable, what I remember most are the social get-togethers and the special events.

One of my favorite memories is of the torrential downpour that came up quite suddenly while several of us conventioners were on a canal boat in San Antonio. The rain was so heavy that it flooded the River Walk. There was nothing for the boat driver to do but to pull the boat over against a wall and wait out the rain. We

were literally soaked to the skin, and returned to Trinity College looking like drowned rats. There were a lot of “told you sos” to deal with since several people had said we were crazy to go onto the river when rain was predicted. Nobody said anything about a monsoon!

On the outskirts of St. Catharine’s, during the Brock University conference, Judy Luther and I discovered a charming little restaurant called the Dewdrop Inn, just like on the Waltons TV show. Yes, there really is a Dewdrop Inn - and one with food so good that Judy and I, and others with whom we shared our discovery, went back a couple of times.

I remember riding the ski lift in Vancouver with my feet dangling way too high above the ground. That was daring enough for me. I didn’t want any part of that swinging bridge over that high ravine. I stood on the sidelines and watched while those of my colleagues with more courage than I walked across and back again, swaying from side to side the whole time. And then there was that oh-so-delicious cook out at the University where we were served the most delicious salmon I have ever eaten to this day.

Another memory is of my locking the keys in a rented car high in the mountains of New Mexico. Elaine Rast and I had skipped a meeting or two to do some sightseeing while attending the conference at the University. I’m sure she bit her tongue to keep from saying what she must have been thinking at the time. We were lucky enough to find a coat hanger in a little souvenir shop close by. She jiggled the lock a few times, just like a pro, until it opened.

Stories of the dorms are probably too numerous to mention. However, they were fun and another means of becoming better acquainted with conference attendees. I’m not so sure I could handle the dorm life as well today as I did those many years ago. In fact, I think I heard that dorms have given way to other means of lodging.

Ken: Swiping the floor lamp from the piano room at Bryn Mawr when the high ceiling light bulb burned out

in my dorm room, and that one of those rooms had no furniture at all when the Elsevier guys arrived. The fresh salmon at the University of British Columbia that was so good, although one British attendee commented, “I really prefer tinned,” and that Minna Saxe was one of three or so who got trapped in a dormitory elevator. The Mexican food outdoors at Scripps (Ontario, California) when the weather was so coolish. I told them how nice they were to serve such good Texas food just for us. Speaking at Oglethorpe about moving from the OCLC Serials Control Subsystem (SCS) to Innovative Interfaces, and not receiving very good written feedback, only to have someone from New York City tell me years later at Boulder how much she appreciated the presentation, that I had hit the nail on the head.

Retirement related

Moving on to retirement. What have you been up to? How do you fill all your spare time? Do you use any of the skills you learned in serials in your current life?

Kathy: In reference to retirement, I have taken a variety of classes, I volunteer at a Nature Center in the Cleveland Metroparks System, and I sing in a community choir. My husband and I travel often; our goal is to see as many National Parks as we can. So far we have visited Olympic National Park, Yellowstone & Grand Tetons National Parks, the Dry Tortugas, the Florida Everglades, Sequoia & Black Canyon National Parks, and Yosemite.

Sylvia: As the old cliché goes, I wonder how I found time to work! Initially, I spent a lot of time with my four grandsons. As they grew older and more independent, I began looking for other ways to spend my time and energy. Shortly after I retired in 2000, Nashville was preparing to open their first visual arts center. They were in need of docents, and even though I had never taken an art course in all of my school days, I saw it as a great opportunity for continuing education. I went through the interview process, was selected, and am now enjoying my eighth year as a volunteer. I do off-site PowerPoint presentations as well as in-house adult

tours. Docents prepare their own tours. I feel the writing and editing that I did for several library-related journals during my NASIG years has served me well in putting a tour together. The introductions that I made and the programs in which I participated have helped me with the public speaking that is necessary for the tours.

I also am taking advantage of Vanderbilt's retirement learning classes. For six weeks, three times a year, classes are offered on a variety of subjects from music and art to politics and religion. I usually sign up for what I call the fluff classes – those that are fun and not too heavy. These are my kind of classes - no attendance taken and no tests given!

Living in an area rich with Civil War history, I have become a real Civil War buff. I have even joined the local Civil War Round Table. I discovered that there are a lot women, as well as men, who share this interest. I am considering becoming a volunteer at two of the sites where the Battle of Franklin took place. Franklin is a charming little town a few miles from my home where this major battle took place. Unfortunately, it never received its due in the history books.

I belong to a book club, do some church work, and love to garden. For the past year or so, I have been doing some extensive landscaping around my home and some redecorating on the inside. It's time consuming, but it has its rewards. I love movies and stage shows. They are always a good excuse to indulge in one of my most favorite things to do – dine out! Nashville has loads of good restaurants, and I'm on a mission to give as many as possible a try. Maybe I should add restaurant critique to my resume!

I have recently joined a local recreation center where I try to go two to three times a week for some exercise. I have to drag myself kicking and screaming to get there, but I always feel better when I make the effort.

You can see that I do keep busy. In fact, until I started putting my activities down on paper, I myself didn't realize how busy I am! Guess that's a sign that I'm

enjoying what I do. I thought I would travel more extensively, but I'm not sure where I'd fit it in. It really is nice to have so many options as to how to spend my time.

Ken: Reading the Chicago Tribune and New York Times is a daily minimal requirement, along with the crossword puzzle. (They've just announced recently that crossword puzzles don't fend off Alzheimer's after all, but that doesn't stop me). I still go to four film festivals every year—silent and early talkies—at Syracuse, Columbus, Hollywood, and Massillon, plus the Tennessee Williams Southern Literary Festival in New Orleans. I continue to pursue genealogical research, my main hobby. I'm a driver every Friday for Vital Bridges, a meals-on-wheels program.

Oddly enough I do on "the other side" as editor of the "CAGGNI Newsletter" for the Computer Assisted Genealogy Group of Northern Illinois. Now I see firsthand how title changes can occur just because a new layout person adds the word "newsletter" after "CAGGNI" at the top. In my four years as a CAGGNI member everybody has always spoken of it as the newsletter and unconsciously assumed that was part of the title. Of course it all started as "NIPAFUG" for the first few years. When we wanted to track down some missing early issues I knew to go to the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, IN, where they have an almost complete back file. I also think back to NASIG at Duke where we visited the University Press and saw manuscripts that were almost unreadable, and then the edited versions that were masterpieces of scholarly publication. That was an eye-opener at the time. Then, there was the chagrin this year when we stopped offering a printed version for two or three libraries and five or ten retro members. We missed the monthly publication date by two or three days, but got a claim from one of the libraries the day after it was due. Experience with serials work and databases; teaching database search strategies come in handy in my genealogical pursuits.

Are you in touch with other serials colleagues? How do you keep up with your contacts?

Sylvia: I stay in touch, mostly via email, with a group of friends, all of whom I met through NASIG. Once in awhile, we chat over the phone, and have even gotten together on occasion. I'm looking forward to NASIG 2012 being in Nashville, where I hope to see former colleagues with whom I've lost contact since retirement.

Kathy: It was a privilege to be part of this splendid organization and when asked if I miss working, I reply that it is the people that I worked with and met (as a member of NASIG, etc.) in my tenure as a serials librarian that I miss. I have maintained contact with a few colleagues and enjoy hearing about the latest "scuttlebutt" in Serials.

Ken: Email, of course, and at ALA whenever it meets in Chicago. Virginia Reed (also a former NASIG member) is a neighbor about four blocks away. We have lunch occasionally, and go to Costco or the Chicago Botanical Garden. Sometimes at NASIG—most recently Milwaukee and Williamsburg, and hopefully Nashville in 2012. And when traveling through the right place. Saw Sylvia Martin in Nashville this summer. I have seen Minna Saxe in New York now and then, and when she visits Chicago.

Any advice for those nearing retirement?

Ken: Look forward to it. Fear not.

Sylvia: My advice for those nearing retirement? Whenever it seems the appropriate time, just do it! In fact, if I had known retirement was so good, I might have done it sooner. Make sure you have some options as to how you want to spend your time, and then get involved. Retirement is a whole new life style, but a great one.

Kathy: I think the people that do well in retirement are the ones who have not only financially planned for their future, but have cultivated interests outside of their

work life. To quote one of my retirement cards— "Retirement is not for Sissies." In the end one just needs to take the plunge and enjoy it, you have worked hard and you deserve it.

Miscellaneous

Is there anything else you'd like to share—books, movies to recommend, the URL for your blog (ha, ha), things to do in Nashville in 2012? Anything else?

Sylvia: I am really looking forward to NASIG's upcoming conference in Nashville. I would be happy to make recommendations as to places to stay, places to visit, and of course, places to eat. Nashville is a real paradox. We have the old and the new. We have art shows, craft shows, Broadway shows, and bus tours galore. And what would Music City, USA be without the music! We have it all – from bluegrass, jazz, and pure country to classical, opera, and ballet. Whether or not you like country music, I highly recommend a visit to the Grand Ole Opry. It's quite an experience if for no other reason than to say that you've been there and done that. You can probably even buy a tee shirt (I wonder if the Nashville Chamber of Commerce could use me).

I would love to hear from you, whether it's to ask about Nashville or to just say "hey!," as they do here in the South. My email is: sylmartin@comcast.net.

Minna: Now, as a retired librarian (and one who is very happy to be retired), I can look back at my career with great pride. I can honestly say that NASIG had contributed much to what I did as a librarian, and I look forward to seeing many of my old friends when I attend the 2012 conference in Nashville!

Ken: Well, I am on Facebook, but don't log in very often, although I do mean to reform. Also caggni.org, although you won't get to see the fabulous newsletter without joining.

This Fall, I went with Sylvia to see where the Battle of Franklin was fought in 1864, not far from where she

lives. My great-grandfather was captured there and imprisoned in Camp Douglas in Chicago, “The Andersonville of the North.”