

NASIG Newsletter

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Profiles

New Members of the 2010/11 NASIG Board

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Now that this year's elections cycle has been completed, it seemed like a good time to get to know the "new" folks we elected to the Board a year ago and whose terms started officially after the conference in Palm Springs. I invited Clint Chamberlin (University of Texas-Arlington), Buddy Pennington (University of Missouri-Kansas City), Jenni Wilson (Alexander Street Press), and Vice-president Steve Shadle (University of Washington) to describe their experiences so far.

How did you first get involved in NASIG?

Steve first attended a NASIG conference back in 1993 at Brown University when he and his colleague Pamela Simpson presented a session on the International Serials Data System (now the ISSN portal) as a cataloging resource. Steve had only been working with serials for about a year and a half and was relatively new to library conferences. He thought the NASIG conference to be a wonderfully focused meeting of colleagues sharing similar problems.

Buddy joined NASIG in 2003 when he became the serial acquisitions librarian at the University of Missouri – Kansas City. His first conference was Milwaukee in 2004 and he just knew that this was the community for him.

Jenni writes that she was working for Readmore (a subscription agent) in the mid-90's and was one of many Readmorsians who were NASIG members.

Clint first heard about NASIG from Beverley Geer and Bea Caraway when he was a student worker in the library at Trinity University. A few years later when he realized he was interested in working with serials, Clint contacted Beverley to ask a few questions about a career in serials. She encouraged him to apply for one of the student travel grants and he was one of the lucky recipients that year to attend NASIG in San Diego (2000). He's been involved ever since.

What made you decide to be considered for a Board position?

Based on the story he gave, I believe Steve drank the NASIG kool-aid while attending a UKSG meeting and talked to Char Simser about the differences in the two organizations. When Norene Allen from Nominations & Elections called, Steve was already in "NASIG space" and talked him into running in a moment of weakness.

Jenni wanted to give back to the organization after attending conferences for many years.

Clint always enjoyed his work on NASIG committees. When he was nominated the first time (and it took several times before making it through the vetting process to appear on the ballot), he was pretty apprehensive because he didn't feel like he knew enough about NASIG operations to be a good candidate. Over time, though, Clint gained more confidence and felt like he'd not only enjoy working on the Board but would be able to make some good contributions.

Buddy has served on some committees and participated in other NASIG activities while he's been a member. His primary consideration was looking at who was already on the Board and having the desire to work with them to shape the organization. As many of us repeat (ad nauseam at times!), we are only as strong as our members. He's always felt, looking around at the membership, that NASIG is doing a wonderful job

How did you feel when your name appeared on the ballot?

Steve: "OMG is this really happening?"

Jenni: "Nervous. Not sure if anyone knew who I was!"

Clint was "virtually certain" he wouldn't be elected because the rest of the slate was so good.

"Queasy!" This was Buddy's second time on the ballot and the first time did not end up quite as successful. It was, of course, a tremendous honor, and also very humbling to realize that there are people out there who would think I would be good at this.

How has being a Board member lived up to your expectations (or not)? What has surprised you about serving on the Board?

Steve wondered if his working style (big on brainstorming, bad on process) would mesh well with the corporate culture of the Board and the organization. He has been pleasantly surprised at how patient everyone has been and how well the Board works. Steve has also been surprised by the sheer number of volunteers that contribute time and effort to this organization...it's pretty amazing.

Jenni describes the Board as a great group of people with a real passion for NASIG. It's very refreshing.

Clint hasn't had any surprises because he knew several previous Board members who had given him a general idea of the kinds of work that the Board takes on. One pleasant surprise has been how enjoyable it has been.

Cliff has found that working with large groups of people can often be hellish at best, but the current Board is a fun group of people to work with. We get a lot done, and we enjoy each other's company while doing so.

No major surprises for Buddy either. Lots of work. But also lots of fun. He marvels at how open and receptive Board members are to ideas and questions. The Board provides a very welcoming atmosphere; rest assured no one thinks your questions are silly.

Name one or two misconceptions you had about serving on the Board, or how the Board and larger organization operate.

Steve thought NASIG work would completely consume his life, but that hasn't been the case (most days just a number of short emails...that 'process' shortcoming he is most concerned about). Personally, he suspects that Katy's just sheltering him until next year (when his life will most likely be consumed by NASIG).

Jenni was afraid she wouldn't be able to keep up. It is a good amount of work but certainly not overwhelming. There are a lot of hands on deck to help out.

This is not necessarily a misconception, but Buddy had not been aware of how seriously the Board considered the economic aspects of the organization. And there really is an awful lot of work behind the scenes. NASIG isn't a business, but there are definitely business realities to be aware of and address.

Based on your Board experience so far, what have you enjoyed the most?

Steve obviously enjoys the travel—his top choice—site visits! Because the annual conference is the most significant, high profile activity of the organization, it's been a great experience to have the opportunity to get into potential meeting spaces to see what works, what doesn't work, to think through all aspects of the conference (financial, logistics, social) and to envision the attendees' experience. And just to be clear, it's not

the entire Board that does site visits, but only President, Vice-President and Conference Coordinator.

But equal to that has been getting to know and appreciate all the individual Board members. They are a great group of people to get to know and work with.

Buddy lists sitting in a room with a group of colleagues (and a few idols) and working toward common goals of how to make NASIG a stronger, more vibrant organization as the most enjoyable aspects of serving on the Board.

Jenni has enjoyed getting to know all of the other members, seeing how they communicate, discovering the collective sense of humor of the Board.

Clint, like Jenni, has enjoyed learning more about how the work of all the various committees comes together to make NASIG function so smoothly

All of you served on various NASIG Committees before joining the Board. How does committee service prepare you for the Board? How would you compare the two?

Steve--Serving on a Committee gets you a little more into the NASIG website and gets you experience in communicating with other members on a NASIG activity. However, it stands to reason that Committees are generally focused on a specific operational activity while the Board is responsible for the "affairs of the organization." The activity of the Board will vary from year to year but obviously financial oversight and coordination of organization activities are always the core of what the Board works on.

Buddy sees that committee work is great in that it prescribes an environment of accountability within the larger organization. You have a structure. You have tasks and deadlines and reports. The Board is similar in that regard. Committee work is more focused on one or two aspects of NASIG. The wonderful thing about being on the Board is that you become aware of all aspects of the organization. It is a great learning experience.

Jenni likes being on the other side to see how the committee liaisons work to communicate back and forth. Now she knows firsthand how things actually end up getting done!

Clint believes that service on multiple committees helps one learn about how different parts of the organization work individually while ultimately helping one understand as a Board member how those parts relate to all of the others. Being on the Board gives one a wider perspective.

What specific advice would you give to those considering a run for NASIG office?

Steve suggests you serve on a couple committees first as it gives you a better sense of who does what. Also, all Board members serve as a liaison to at least one committee (responsible for communication between Board and committee) so serving as a Committee Chair prepares you for your board liaison activities.

Don't be afraid. Jenni assures us that no one bites or yells!

Be prepared to read and think about the organization a lot! And don't be afraid if you haven't been in NASIG all that long. The Board needs diverse perspectives to function. (Buddy)

Volunteer for committees, work hard while you're on those committees, and get to know your fellow NASIG members. And be patient! You may be nominated several times before finally getting onto the ballot, which if anything is a testament to how many highly-qualified people there are in this organization. (Clint)

What suggestions do you have for the organization to better mentor those who are interested in running for office or becoming more involved in NASIG?

Steve's advice is first, remind committees and membership of the support resources on the NASIG website: Committee Chair guidelines, Board Member guidelines, working calendars, Committee

handbooks...it's all there. Second, maintain this support documentation so it both current and useful. Third, take an interest in new members (for example, attend the first timer's reception; find out what people are interested in doing). Finally, network, network, network! NASIG "promotes communication, understanding, and sharing of ideas"...you can't really do that unless you're talking to each other.

Clint is not a huge fan of formalized long-term mentoring programs because they seem a bit forced. Having a mentor at the conference to show you the ropes is one thing; being assigned a mentor to help you become more involved in the organization is something else. He agrees with Steve that best thing the members of the organization can do is make an effort to get to know people who are fairly new to the organization and try to cultivate relationships with them – which is something a lot of NASIGers are pretty good at already.

Buddy believes we need to create an environment where people who are interested are comfortable asking Board members or officers for mentoring or more information to get a sense of how it works.

What's it really like at a Board meeting? Do you have a humorous anecdote to share?

Like an episode of Survivor except no one is voted off the island and everyone is really nice. And it's held in a windowless hotel meeting room. Really.

It's fun but intense. We deal with a lot of issues during the day-long Board meetings, but even though that is somewhat mentally draining, our meetings have been leavened with a good dose of humor. Of course it helps that the current Board is full of folks with wonderful senses of humor!

A lot of talk and deliberation, for sure. But fun as well. Humorous anecdote? Well, there was the time I learned about the YouTube mash up of The Flintstones and Raging Bull...

On a personal note, what do you do for fun in your now reduced spare time?

Who knew Steve was so musical? He plays clarinet and sings a little in a five-piece Balkan band: www.orkestarrtw.com

He and his partner (Rick) also spend regular time with Rick's two grandsons (5 & 8...what great ages!)

In December, Steve took his first mileage run ever to Maui (if you don't know what a mileage run is, check out <http://www.insideflyer.com/articles/article.php?key=6585>).

(Ed. Comment--yea that was a sacrifice!)

Jenni is a movie goer. And, I'm a librarian, so of course I like to read!

Clint confesses he's a little obsessive about gardening. He spends hours working on it, and when he's not working in it, he's either reading to educate himself more about gardening or is dreaming up new plans for it. Guess we need to check Clint's thumb for greenness!

Buddy is a bit of a gamer so if I can blow off some steam with my Wii or PS3 then he'll do that. He also watches a lot of movies, and is a long-suffering Kansas City Royals fan.

Anything else you'd like to share about yourself, NASIG, the world in general?

Clint says it's great to be a part of an organization like NASIG that can be fairly nimble and responsive to member needs.

That seems like a good place to end. Nimble and responsive are traits that many companies would like to emulate. Go NASIG!