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Profiles

Profile of Nettie Lagace, Associate Director for Programs at NISO

Christian Burris, Profiles Editor

Nettie Lagace is the associate director for programs at NISO (National Information Standards Organization). She earned her B.A. in Political Science and History at Wellesley College and her M.I.L.S. at the University of Michigan. Before arriving at NISO, she was the business information librarian and webmaster at the Baker Library for Harvard Business School as well as a project librarian, project manager, and project director at Ex Libris.



Photo Courtesy of Nettie Lagace

When did you decide to become a librarian?

I graduated from my liberal arts college smack into a recession, and felt fortunate to land a regular job as a secretary in a very small law firm. Because it was so small, I became the “gofer” who would go to regional libraries and town offices to do research on historical matters and records lookup for the partners. I found I

liked the process of finding various things (much more than doing my research for papers in college!) and the thought of becoming a person who organized materials for future access seemed quite appealing. So I went back to my college library (I lived nearby) to look up library schools in order to get a degree...this was in the early 90s when many of them were closing. Through fate, I made it to the University of Michigan’s School of Information and Library Studies as it was planning its eventual transition to the School of Information and my first semester was when version one of the Mosaic web browser was released. It was a very interesting time to be in library school. My fellow students there, who were all so bright, energetic, and perceptive, made the difference for me.

Were there any challenges as you transitioned from libraries into the role of a supporting partner for libraries?

Not so many, for me. Again, when I moved from working in a library to working for a vendor (Ex Libris in 2000), timing was on my side: the link resolver technology was so very new that it was fun to be able to discuss how it worked with potential customers and partners. Nowadays we can take interoperability for granted all we want; but then, connecting two disparate pieces of technology (abstracting and indexing databases and online journals) seemed like a wonder! The fast pace made me learn as quickly as possible and I appreciated that my understanding of the issues that libraries faced helped me communicate their product needs to our development process. I tried to make the most of that experience.

How did you become involved with NISO?

NISO was a crucial part of the standardization of OpenURL ([ANSI/NISO Z39.88-2004 \(R2010\) The OpenURL Framework for Context-Sensitive Services](#)), the technology that link resolvers are based on, and to this day OpenURL is my favorite standard, of course! So I understood the importance of standards very early in my library technology career. I began representing Ex Libris as a member of the NISO Education Committee (a group that helps NISO staff plan webinars and other events) and soon after that I served as Ex Libris' voting representative to NISO. These tasks helped me understand the role that NISO plays in connecting different stakeholders to create tools that help "grease wheels" for everyone and how full, open input on standards during their creation and maintenance is necessary to cultivate the richest development environment possible. Moving to work at NISO when I did in 2011 seemed like a pretty natural transition for me!

You're the associate director for programs at NISO. Could you share more about what you do in this position?

NISO has a very small staff so we all do a bit of everything, but my main role is to manage the working groups and our leadership groups (called "topic committees" at NISO). These are made up of volunteers from the different communities NISO serves: libraries, vendors, publishers, and others. Every group and project is different – different problems, different context and outcomes, different personalities – which ensures that I'm learning something new every day. I ensure that NISO's standards are updated and maintained, and work with ANSI, the American National Standards Institute, our accrediting agency, to follow our approved procedures. I also work with NISO executive director Todd Carpenter and my fellow staff members on strategic initiatives to ensure that NISO stays relevant in the community, and we represent the United States TAG (Technical Advisory Group) at the Annual ISO TC46 Information and Documentation

Meeting, which is an additional set of international standards in which to be immersed.

Are you watching any specific emerging technologies?

It seems like everyone is moving to social media... but as an easily distracted multi-tasker, I'm not sure how I feel about it personally! Mobile technology can always be improved; now that I use reading glasses I can see that accessibility technology really is for everyone.

What is the next challenge for technology in libraries?

Company mergers—the library world is not immune to this trend across industries.

Would you like to share anything else with us?

I'm always honored to work with the folks at NASIG – at an IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) satellite meeting last week, a librarian approached me to recall a presentation I made at the 2002 NASIG meeting in Williamsburg, VA – I thought I was the only one who remembered it! NASIG has been a great organization for so long and I know NASIG's collegiality and professionalism will continue to underpin its success.