



President's Corner

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This year was not what I expected from my NASIG presidency. When I wrote my last President's Corner column in late February, I was blithely excited for the conference to come, nary a cloud on the horizon. It's hard to believe that in that time, we've experienced a global pandemic and a massive uprising against racism. NASIG has not been immune from the effects of these forces. We've had to marshal all of our reserves of creativity and resilience to meet them, and I'm so proud of the work we've done so far.

As the coronavirus pandemic struck and then worsened in March, it became clear that NASIG would not be able to hold its annual meeting in Spokane, WA as planned. We were lucky to reach an agreement with the venue to reschedule for 2024, without any financial loss to the organization. The bigger challenge was figuring out whether we could quickly make the change to an online format.

The members of the Executive Board were unanimous in their desire to move the conference online. We didn't want to see the work that had already gone into the conference wasted, including the efforts of the many committees that support the conference and the more than 60 presenters who had already begun to prepare their content. We also wanted to be there for our members during a time when people's work lives were likely to be full of uncertainty.

Thanks to massive efforts from NASIG's volunteers, we were able to pull together a successful online conference in just two months. Members of the Program Planning, Conference Planning, Continuing

Education, Awards and Recognition, and many other committees came together with the board to figure out everything from the intricacies of Zoom webinars to the logistics of a virtual ice cream break. Thanks to our volunteers we were able to renegotiate our sponsorship agreements, plan a synchronous program, record the remaining sessions for on-demand viewing, manage a registration list more than seven times our normal volume, offer platforms for professional and social interaction, and take care of a thousand tiny details we never would have guessed at ahead of time.

Then, just a couple weeks before the conference, we were thrown yet again by the national uprising against racism after the murder of George Floyd by a police officer. Speaking personally, I found it difficult to know how to react as an organization in the face of a situation so serious and appalling. How do we support the cause in a meaningful way that doesn't just sound like lip service? It's to NASIG's immense benefit that the members of our Equity and Inclusion Committee were able to put together a sincere and powerful [statement](#) on short notice and encourage us in self-examination. NASIG donated \$500 to Black Lives Matter, but more importantly we have begun to reflect on the problems within our own profession and organization. We are committed to examining our practices in the coming year and figuring out how we can work more actively for a just world. The positive response from attendees when we presented these goals at the conference was deeply heartening.

In the end, the conference was not only a success, but a success beyond what we could have imagined. Nearly

all of our sponsors continued to support our event, allowing us to offer free registration. We had nearly 3,000 registrants, exposing NASIG to a whole new audience. Our vision speaker, Janetta Waterhouse, gave an insightful and grounded talk about management in libraries, and the positive responses were a sure sign that her advice was needed now more than ever.

Throughout the conference, I saw participants engaged and excited. We had between 400 to 1,000 attendees online at any given time. Some sessions had so many questions they spilled over onto our online forum, and many attendees and conference volunteers were ready to hop on the mic between sessions for a chance to chat. Occasionally, I'd hear the voice of a friend or colleague I hadn't seen in a while, and it felt like a slice of normal life in the middle of a crazy year.

It makes me happy to know NASIG was able to hold a successful conference and come out of a crisis year with opportunities in front of us. We learned a huge amount about running an online event, and we hope to share our takeaways during a webinar this fall. We also plan to build on our newfound knowledge and momentum in 2021 by continuing to include an online component, whether or not we're able to meet in person. We'll also continue to focus on equity and inclusion initiatives, and we hope to engage our members in these discussions and activities over the next year.

I never could have imagined the specific events of the past year, but it doesn't surprise me that NASIG has risen to meet these challenges. I'm honored to have served with such a strong and dedicated group, and I look forward to continuing the work we've started in the next year.