



## Profiles

---

### **Profile of Betsy Appleton, NASIG President**

Christian Burris, Profiles Editor



*Photo courtesy of Betsy Appleton*

*When did you decide to become a librarian?*

Barbara Fister was a librarian at my undergraduate alma mater, and I had an informational interview with her about her experiences in book publishing. We got to talking about librarianship, and that discussion was so interesting I ended up taking a student worker position in the library to check out the environment. Since I enjoyed it, I enrolled in library school.

*How did you start working with serials and electronic resources?*

That first student worker position I took was actually in the serials department! I must have done a passably OK job of it since they hired me on for the summer after as a full-time library student worker. (In retrospect, I don't think I was a very good student worker! I couldn't help

reading journals as I checked them in, for example.) That experience really opened doors for me in ways I couldn't have predicted and certainly did not expect: I had just enough experience executing journal shifts to continue to get hired to plan and execute a series of journal shifts in multiple departmental libraries during grad school. In turn, working with print serials led me to my first librarian position as serials librarian in a medical library where I ended up working with electronic journals and other e-resources.

*What is your current position?*

I'm currently Head of Collection Development at Tarlton Law Library at the University of Texas at Austin.

*What has been your greatest reward as a librarian?*

The "as a librarian" part of this question is tripping me up! All my working experience after my undergraduate education has been in libraries. I therefore have no objective reference to know if the quirky, wonderful people I have loved working with in every workplace is "because library" or "because work." When I think of what I imagine as inherently-library work (at least for my particular flavor of librarian), the ratio of completely-different to comfortably-cyclical work is so rewarding for me. As fiscal years roll or systems migrate, for example, I get to learn from and improve upon my experiences. Everything that I wish I could have done better I will likely have another shot at improving next time.

*What is the most valuable lesson of librarianship that you didn't learn in library school?*

Librarianship is any good work done in/for libraries, and library workers regardless of their credentials are doing librarianship. I had a wonderful supervisor early in my career who made this very clear, and the department she supervised was one of the best-run, most effective groups I have ever worked with. I hope I have lived up to this lesson ever since learning it.

*What have you been reading during the coronavirus emergency?*

Initially, the only reading I could handle was rereading P.G. Wodehouse farces: I needed an escape, and I'm sure other NASIG members can empathize! My favorite Jeeves-and-Wooster story is probably still Joy in the Morning, though I have not read them all yet. I've found a little more equilibrium as this emergency has progressed, so fortunately I'm getting back to heavier reading now, albeit far more slowly than I would like. I'm currently reading *Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America* by Jennifer Harvey. I am parenting two very young white children and we all need them to be anti-racist.

*Who or what drew you to NASIG initially?*

My supervisor at that first student worker position had attended a NASIG conference, and recommended I take a look at the programming when we were chatting soon after I started my first post-graduate job. I ended up applying for and receiving the Horizon Award that year and had a wonderful experience. I'm sure many NASIG members can relate to the experience of being the only/first person on staff at their library who was grappling with the new and counterintuitive ways e-resources were changing serials work. It was energizing to spend a few days among people that had similar questions, struggles, and experiences. I also ended up meeting NASIG members who worked with publishers and other vendors and sharing different perspectives on

our work increased my understanding of the e-resources landscape immeasurably.

*How has NASIG changed/evolved during the time that you've been involved?*

NASIG was far better described by the name North American Serials Interest Group when I first joined in 2008. Now our programming and membership focus has grown to include all sorts of electronic resources, scholarly communications, standards, and more, including serials. This seems like a counterintuitive answer, but it seems to me that while the "whats" of NASIG have expanded and changed, there's continuity in the "hows": The organization is still all-volunteer run with a relatively flat organizational hierarchy. Leadership is accessible and responsive. (And if your experience is different, let me know!) We are able to pursue new initiatives and ideas—perhaps not as quickly as we aspire, but these initiatives and ideas are always moving forward.

*What are your priorities/goals as the president of NASIG for the coming year?*

These have shifted somewhat in the past few months! Our plans for a few priorities have been suspended due to the pandemic, and in many ways my goals seem far less ambitious than I had expected. By the time I hand the reins to Ted, there's a few things I'd like to see for NASIG. One, I want to ensure that we continue to re-evaluate and improve our processes for ensuring equity in awards and recognition as well as in nominations and elections of board members. Our leadership is overwhelmingly white, and we need to remove barriers to BIPOC [Black, indigenous, and people of color] colleagues in that leadership pipeline whenever we become aware of them. Secondly, we are getting a clearer picture of our annual budgets thanks to our 2019-2020 treasurers Jessica Ireland and Cris Ferguson re-designing the treasurer's reports/budget documents they maintain. In a word, we are habitually running a deficit conference budget. We need to find ways to sustainably fund our conferences. Finally, a question that has started knocking around in my brain is: What

role should/could NASIG have in supporting our membership through this pandemic and economic downturn? Are there ways to meaningfully support those of us that are furloughed or laid off? I want to find answers to that question this year.

*Would you like to share anything else with us?*

I have a whole President's Corner column in this issue as well as this interview, so I'll share more there!