Essay for the 2017 NASIG Horizon Award

At the Crossroads:
Coming Together and Moving Forward
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A crossroads marks a convergence of different paths coming together, and it also marks a choice of ways to move forward. There is a complex network of choices and opportunities in today's information world. The landscape is constantly evolving, and it demands vigilance and agility from information professionals, but that is not enough. We must learn and adapt, and we must be willing and able to interpret our knowledge for our users and business partners, who may not have the skills and resources to navigate the information world on their own. If we want to shape the growth of our world rather than chasing along in the wake of changes, we must move quickly to anticipate challenges and guide others in our communities towards informed choices.

In addition to serving as guides on the road to informed decisions, information professionals play a key role as gatekeepers. They decide what information is available to their users, where that information comes from, and how it is delivered. In addition, they are often responsible for helping users to find and access the information they need, effectively opening and closing doors that can lead from one crossroad to the next. It is the responsibility of every information professional to protect information, not just by protecting the records in their collections, but by opening doors to ensure that their collection of information and metadata is accessible to the users who need it to achieve their goals. It is also the responsibility of every information professional to carefully judge when a door should be closed, perhaps by deselecting a particular title or database from a collection, to prevent misinformation and ignorance from leading their users down a path that will take them farther from their goals.

The world of serials publishing poses special challenges to its informational guides and gatekeepers. Serial publications are evolving along with the rest of the information world, and many professionals in this industry must find their way through previously uncharted territory. Increased focus on digital assets and accessibility has led to unending debates over topics like the nature and merit of "open access" publications, though professionals have yet to agree on a controlled vocabulary to describe all the new phenomena that they have encountered. Even as debates continue, the constant flow of serial content leads to changes that can happen suddenly and frequently, and which do not wait for debates to be resolved. In this challenging time, information professionals must remain vigilant, discuss and acknowledge the change that we are seeing, and communicate clearly to help identify best practices and minimize growing pains for others involved in serials publishing.

In my work as an archivist of serial literature, I have often encountered theoretical questions about serials publishing, questions that indicate that authors, publishers, vendors, and end users are all struggling to learn what their options might be, to identify best practices, and to find the path that will lead them to achieve their goals. I have also encountered questions that were not addressed for myriad reasons: misinformation or lack of information caused some to

go unnoticed, while others were too complex or demanding to be addressed with available resources. It is my goal to connect these people to answers, to help build answers and guidelines where there were none before, and to be a part of the debate in our community, so that we can establish a consensus on the course our industry should take.