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# Head in the Clouds, Feet on the Ground: The 1998 NASIG Conference

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# Head in the Clouds, Feet on the Ground

The 1998 NASIG Conference

by

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34 **I**nspired by the United Kingdom Serials Group, the North American Serials Interest Group (NASIG) was established in 1985, and it held its inaugural conference at Bryn Mawr College in 1986. This independent organization's purpose is to promote communication and the sharing of ideas among all members of the serials information chain. The mission of NASIG is to "provide a forum for debating *hot topics*, to foster a unity of purpose with diversity and to arrive at resolutions through teamwork, camaraderie, and respectful discourse."

NASIG is a broad-based organization and its membership is not limited to librarians. Anyone and everyone who has an interest in serials is welcome. Thus, its membership also includes publishers, vendors, bibliographic utilities representatives, educators, binders and paraprofessionals. The members come

not only from the United States, Canada and Mexico, but also from the United Kingdom, Sweden, the Netherlands, Australia and Korea.

Throughout the year, NASIG offers various continuing education workshops and seminars about serials. However, the annual conference is the most widely attended and varied of its meetings. One of NASIG's basic commitments is to provide an affordable conference so that as many members as possible can attend. Therefore, in order to hold down costs, its meetings are held at various college and university facilities. Approximately 700 people attended this year's annual conference at the University of Colorado at Boulder on June 18-21. The theme was "Head in the Clouds, Feet on the Ground." Being new to serials, I made it one of the first professional conferences I attended.

The plenary sessions, held every morning, were widely anticipated and well attended. A great deal of effort is put into finding excellent speakers and relevant topics for each of the three sessions. On Friday morning, the first plenary session was given by Mark Walter, an editor at Seybold Publications. His topic was "Internet Publishing Update: Assessing the Impact of Changes in Publishing Technology on Libraries," an examination of how Internet publishing is and will be affecting the publishing industry. On Saturday morning, Pat Schroeder, former Representative from Colorado, spoke on "Publishing in the New World." She pointed out that the nature of the global economy is changing from a goods based economy to an information economy; and that we, as Americans, do not truly value the fact that we hold most of the information. On Sunday morning, Ellen Waite Franzen, the Associate Provost for Information Services at the University of Richmond, presented the third plenary session entitled "It's Personal, It's Digital and It's Serial: Trends that May Affect Higher Education, Publishing, and Libraries." Her speech introduced the audience to many of the technological changes that are right around the corner and how these changes may affect our lives, both professionally and personally.

One of the most appealing aspects of the annual conference is the wide variety of topics presented at the workshops. As a beginning serials cataloger, I was unfamiliar with other aspects of the serials information chain and took this opportunity to learn more. Since many workshops are offered at the same time, I could not attend them all. One workshop I did attend was a dialog between a librarian and a publisher entitled "What if Gutenberg Had a T-1 Connection?" The point was made that in today's digital world, roles are changing. Publishers are having to explore various methods of access and preservation which, in the past, were the concern only of librarians.

In the workshop "Dear Abby, Dear Abbot: Practical Advice for the Serials World," a panel consisting of an acquisition librarian, a vendor and a publisher began a discussion with the audience that focused on the problem of claiming inconsistently and randomly published serials. This problem has become very vexing because many on-line systems issue a claim much too soon for items not received.

Examining the administrative side of processing serials was "What Ever Happened to the Serials Cataloger?" The workshop presenters examined the problems created by the downsizing of technical services

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and the redistribution of job responsibilities was expounded upon at length.

For the catalogers, Jean Hiron, CONSER Coordinator from the Library of Congress, conducted a workshops entitled "The Latest on Latest (Entry) and other hot news about seriality." The new concept of the **ongoing entities**,\* as opposed to the present concept of serials, was explained. Also discussed was the new idea of the **incorporating entry**, as opposed to current practice of successive and latest entry. Although both concepts are new, serials cataloging does appear to be progressing in this direction.

Last but not least, there was a little something for the information technologists among us. "Telecommunications and IT Infrastructure in the Delivery of Electronic Information" sounded like it was going to be the most boring and dry of the presentations. However, this turned out to be the most informative, exciting and fun workshop of the entire conference. The presenter, Christopher Duckenfield, humorously and accurately portrayed the tensions and connections between the librarian and the technologist. First, he examined the stereotypical views we have of one another. Technologists see librarians as "old fogies messing with technology they don't understand." Librarians see technologists as "spoiled brats with

few social skills who are overpaid and still do not deliver the technology needed." Then, Mr. Duckenfield emphasized the things we have in common, such as the need to deliver the information to the public that it demands and needs. At the end of the workshop, many helpful ideas for improving the communication between technologists and librarians were presented, the need for understanding the concerns of each other being the most important.

There were, of course, events outside of the workshops. Each night, dinner was a time for socializing, networking and general fun. On Friday night, the dinner was at the Celestial Seasonings facilities. The tour of the facilities was fascinating and the gift shop was great. On Saturday, dinner was served at the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Situated on a mountain overlooking Boulder, the scenery from the Center was spectacular. The food was good, too.

NASIG is a very laid-back organization. The people at the conference were all friendly and helpful. The dress was casual with jeans, T-shirts and shorts being the uniform of choice, which made for a warm atmosphere to talk and get to know people. The members I met represented every aspect of the serials information chain: a paraprofessional in acquisitions from California, a reference librarian from New York,

a library director from Texas, a vendor from Colorado, a professor of library and information science from Michigan ... and many more. No one slighted or ignored anyone else based on the jobs they perform. Everyone just enjoyed everyone else's conversations, with differing viewpoints often compared and debated.

I highly recommend that anyone involved with any aspect of serials consider joining NASIG. The dues are low, only \$20 a year, and the annual conference is relatively inexpensive. The conference fees usually include all meals, a dorm room (to be shared with one other person) and the workshops. The cost this year was \$300. If you are interested in joining NASIG, you can contact me, the Nebraska Representative for NASIG, at the address below.

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From the membership brochure  
NASIG: North American Serial Interest Groups, Inc.

\*For more information on the concept of **ongoing entity**, see the article "Issues Related to Seriality" by Jean Hiron and Crystal Graham. This can be found on the web at <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/jsc/confpap.htm>. Please note that Adobe Acrobat is necessary to read this article.



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