**Against the Grain**

Volume 15 | Issue 5 Article 23

November 2003

# And They Were There -- Reports of Meetings -- NASIG 2003

Linda Lewis
*University of New Mexico*

Ruth Fischer
*R2 Consulting*



Recommended Citation

Lewis, Linda and Fischer, Ruth (2003) "And They Were There -- Reports of Meetings -- NASIG 2003," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 15: Iss. 5, Article 23.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4171

**Biz of Acq**
*from page 76*

should be obtained from the Provost's office and/or the university's Website. Incorporating this long-range master list of dates eases the addition to these work-intensive extra tasks to the pre-existing constant workflow. Advance preparation helps minimize disruptions and time-crunches and makes it easier for library acquisitions to provide timely and well-prepared context-sensitive reports.

**E-business tools:**

1. When used to speed up and customize acquisitions, the context-sensitive use of earlier-described e-business tools to provide high-quality and quick service increase the level of respect for the library's business savvy in the eyes of public services librarians, teaching faculty and students, visiting review teams, and the university administration alike.

**Web-based tools:**

1. The *Library Comparison Tool* from the U.S. Dept of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (*http://www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/libraries/academicpeer/*) is filled with every imaginable type of library statistics. This Web-based tool makes spur-of-the-moment producing peer-library comparison reports a snap. It is intuitive and easy to use. Again, quick, professional service and turnaround is valued by administrators.
2. Accreditation agencies' Websites provide useful insights into the reviewers' expectations. Taking initiative to access this information in planning for accreditation visits long before the rush gives libraries a strategic advantage in presenting available services and resources in the best light. Evidence of hands-on initiative and proactive collaboration always wins the hearts of review teams and university administrators.

### C—The Business of Acquisitions and the External Constituents

External constituents (outside the teaching/administration loop) include Friends of the Library, non-academic staff and executives, trustees, the general public to the extent supported by the university's mission and scope, schools, librarians and educators at other institutions, researchers in other countries. While levels of obligation to support the general public vary greatly between public and private universities, the library's presentation of self can indirectly foster members of the general public to attend the university or support it in some other way by joining the Friends of the Library, making a gift, generating library-friendly publicity, etc.

**University-internal technologies:**

1. A prominent link to the library on the university's main Web page announces the library's importance to the campus-wide learning and research experience.
2. Information on new acquisitions on the library's Web-page showcases to the entire campus, the outside world, and prospective students (and parents) how well the library supports all of the university's programs.
3. Information on new gifts added to the library on the library's Web-page is a great PR tool to show appreciation for gifts received and added by the library.
4. Information on books given by Friends of the Library on the library's Web-page is a great PR tool to publicly express appreciation for the Friends of the Library, show existing Friends that their support of the library is in good hands, and to recruit new Friends members from the general public.

**In-house business software:**

1. Spreadsheet and database software increases the efficiency of library acquisitions. They are very useful for external projects in instances where the needed detail of measurement is not easily supported by the general library system. Such projects typically require detailed data analysis within individual donors' project records rather than activity by fund or bibliographic record. Examples include membership lists tied to special projects, such as donor-based Adopt-a-Book or Friends of the Library projects, where each of many donors is entitled to a book selection in their name. When such donors request an accounting from the library, they expect the information right at that moment. The donor's perception of the library's documentation efficiency can make or break the next donation and impacts good relations. A well-designed database helps the library provide the data quickly; this enhances the acquisitions department's reputation for efficient business operations.

**E-business tools:**

Members of the general public often appreciate library Web-portals for selectors. Examples:

1. Members of the public wishing to donate their books often appreciate being able to glean the value of their gifts from libraries' portals to out-of-print dealers' Websites, since libraries are not in a position to issue appraisals. Out-of-print dealers' Websites can provide going market rates for items for donors' tax purposes without implicating the library in appraisal activities.
2. Members of the outside often appreciate the library's Web-portal links to currency converters.

**Web-based tools:**

Librarians and educators at other institutions, members of the general public, researchers in other countries, and any interested parties outside the university's immediate circle can benefit from well-designed Web-portals that pull together sites such as currency converters, publishers and sellers by continent/country, material type, and discipline, educational Websites and accreditation agency sites. An intangible benefit to the library is the increase of its stature both on campus and far beyond.

### III—Pulling It All Together

No matter which technologies are adopted, and no matter how the enlisted technologies are combined, ultimately the key for library acquisitions is to not passively wait until a need is expressed, but to be proactive and take the initiative. A conversation with a colleague at another university's library about customized reports included descriptions of how reports are run "whenever they want them," and "they" tend to request them at the last minute, "they" meaning librarians from Public Services and other constituents in campus. The natural question: Why? Why wait passively? Who says librarians in Acquisitions and Technical Services cannot be proactive, anticipating the customers' needs? The technologies are a powerful ingredient, but cannot serve as a substitute for human initiative.

Ultimately, the library as a whole serves the users—students, faculty, external clientele. The most effective way for library acquisitions to contribute to the library's effective service to the outside world is through context-sensitive use of business technologies. These include Web servers with the latest library information, Web links to the latest library acquisitions, links to useful sites, and sophisticated use of business and statistical software. When used seamlessly in support of the university's mission, these tools help generate excitement about the library.

# And They Were There

## Reports of Meetings — NASIG 2003

Column Editor: **Sever Bordeianu** (University of Mexico) <sbordeia@unm.edu>

**North American Serials Interest Group (NASIG)**
**Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, June 2003**

Report by **Linda Lewis** (University of New Mexico)

**NASIG**, the **North American Serials Interest Group**, met in Portland, Oregon in June, 2003. The host university was **Portland State University**.

**NASIG** has always been held on university campuses with many people staying in the dorms. This time the meetings were on cam-

*continued on page 80*

## And They Were There
*from page 78*

pus, but housing was in hotels. Lots of discussion occurred about the pros and cons. Pro: many people hate dorms. Con: some people like the adventure of dorms. The debate does show a change in the organization: **NASIG** has grown so big that most campuses can't find enough dorm space to house everyone. And many of the members are reluctantly aging, as is the entire library profession, and so the idea of a twin bed in a dorm just isn't fun any longer. So how does the group hang on to the informal, friendly atmosphere that is a **NASIG** trademark while moving into hotels and/or conference centers? It was a major topic at one meeting and at lots of informal discussions.

**Rick Anderson** (**UNLV**) talked about the dynamic tension between standardization and customization. Do we use the catalog records created by other libraries or do we create our own tailored records? Do we purchase the same materials that everyone else is getting through packages and approval plans, or maintain our specialized collections. (Well, yes, to both, depending upon the circumstances.) He said that there were two basic types of librarians: procedures followers (want consistency; hold to standards that are the basis of their professional beliefs) and problem solvers (who want to resolve problems in order to provide the best, most efficient service and access). That the two groups overlap, and most people have some characteristics of both—but that most people tend to be more one type or the other. That practically none of us are doing the jobs we were hired to do a few years ago. That doing those initial jobs, regardless of how well we do them, is not addressing current needs. Change is a necessity. He asked "To what degree do we pursue accuracy at the loss of service?" He said that some people are at the extreme end of the scale; they are guilty of "the fetishization of completeness and accuracy." He challenged the concept that librarians should be "teaching people to fish"—that the libraries should not be the ones teaching people how to learn, how to do in-depth subject research, or how to think. We should provide information to answer the patrons' requests, and organize the materials so that the patrons can find information readily. If we organize the information in a manner that is intuitive, then we wouldn't need to do as much instruction, or teach as much information literacy. He said: it's more risky to follow the existing rules than it is to take risks. His top myths about e-resources: (1) they will solve the serials budget crisis (nope; they are more expensive and rising faster in costs); (2) publishers are shifting to electronics to save costs (nope, to increase profits and to reduce staffing); (3) supporting electronics requires less technical service staff than print resources did (nope; requires more staff, and higher level staff); (4) The "Big Deal" packages reduce the staff/work needed at local libraries (nope; usually takes more time and staff to negotiate and customize and access) (5) moving to electronic journals can eliminate the need for monitoring and checking-in (nope; more time to make sure access continues and resolve problems; **OhioLink** is working on a way to check-in electronic journals). The realities of electronics: Never have so many staff worked so hard to make access successful. Some publishers have found a pot of gold. Users are hooked on desk-top delivery, and they want more than libraries can afford. Most publishers aren't set up to handle customer support functions to support the purchase and renewals from libraries. Managing electronic journals is expensive, time-consuming, and more challenging than handling print journals—but the benefits of 24/7 campus-wide access are outstanding.

In response to **Rick**, **Dan Tonkery** said: To support electronic resources libraries need More People, More Time, More Money, and Higher Level Staff. It may be as much as ten times more expensive to acquire and process electronic resources than it was to process print materials.

Lots of libraries have developed their own databases to control information about electronics, as we have. **Innovative** has its new electronic resources manager in test, and in operation in a few libraries. Other vendors may develop similar products.

***"To support electronic resources libraries need More People, More Time, More Money, and Higher Level Staff."***

**Nancy Slight-Gibney** and **Mary Grenci** from the **University of Oregon** did a project to identify the time required for individual tasks in serials. For example, to determine just how much time it took to receive a serial issue (opening, checking in, labeling, etc.) Very detailed. Very time-consuming to track every part of the task. They did it for two weeks in the fall and spring. It is one of those things you don't want to start unless the data will really be used, since it does take a lot of thought and time. **University of Oregon** is an **ARL** library, with about 20,000 students. They have about 2.5 million volumes; 18,000 current serials (including depository, electronics and gifts), and a materials budget of $5.8 million. Their serials and acquisitions unit (excluding cataloging and bindery) has about twelve people.

**Ann McHugo** and **Carol Magenau** from **Dartmouth** gave a presentation called Re-inventing Acquisitions with a "Forget-to-do" List. They are seeing (like almost everyone) the growth in digital licensing, linking, and related complications; the transition from print to digital materials which are harder to acquire; the loss of staff, and shrinking/stable budgets. Their goals were to support the increase in digital acquisitions activities, to teach staff to handle the new materials, to redo job descriptions that accurately reflect the new jobs (which sometimes means increased salaries and/or levels of positions), and to reassign staff to handle the new roles. They have about 4,000 students, with about thirty subject selectors who are part-time selectors, six subject libraries, storage facility, and a $7 million acquisitions budget. They looked at what tasks could be transformed, transferred, or terminated. They are shifting activities to other areas—they were still routing some journals, and began teaching the faculty how to set up electronic table-of-contents notifications for the journals they wanted. They changed how they were handling claims—stopping most of that; they don't do systematic claims, but will claim journals in response to questions or when they notice an issue has been missed. But if it's available in electronic format, they don't claim the print. They are considering stopping checking in serials but are concerned about the implications for the service to patrons and the stewardship of the collections. When they get a journal title in both print and online, they are not keeping the print. They either toss the print, or sell the issues to dealers. They are mandated by their director to have only a single format—print, or electronic, but not both. They said: Change is here to stay. They asked: How have you managed to redeploy staff to accommodate working with electronic resources? What services have been dropped at your institution that were difficult for you to accept?

General observations: Electronic resources are multiplying, expensive, and demand staff attention. They require a higher level of staff, time, and money than print journals ever did. And no one is getting more staff to deal with them. So things are being dropped—routing, customized services, claiming, check-in. And as **Leigh Watson Healy** said at a keynote address: change is not incremental, or evolutionary; it's meteoric, or cataclysmic.

Next year: "Growth, Creativity, and Collaboration: Great Visions on a Great Lake" at the **Historic Hilton Milwaukee City Center**, Milwaukee WI, June 17-20, 2004.