And They Were There -- Reports of Meetings -- NASIG Conference

Editor

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This past week I went to the North American Serials Interest Group in Minneapolis, MN. The conference opened on Thursday the 18th and closed on Sunday the 22nd. Over the course of the four days I went to many interesting sessions, but there are several sessions programs I want to highlight in particular.

The first session I want to highlight is the opening plenary session, which was given by Marshall Keys of MDA Consulting. Prior to starting MDA Consulting, Keys was the executive Director of NELINET, the largest library organization in New England. In his talk Keys highlighted how today's technology trends affect the libraries of tomorrow. He focused his discussion on chaotic transitions, the period of time in which old and new technologies battle to see which ones survive. In almost all cases, the new technology emerges as the victor and the old technology falls by the wayside. The primary example he used was the continuous changes in music recording formats (45's to 8 track to cassette to CD's and now to music on DVD's).

He went on to explain that new academic library patrons come to school with a "blogger" mentality. They care about community and personalization, but not about privacy. "You are unique, even though you are exactly like everyone else." This new generation of students use their cell phones as their primary information appliance, through text messaging, camera phones, and the ability to surf the Internet and check email. Their attitudes towards information dramatically impact the principles and laws of intellectual property. They feel that anything in the environment, whether it is protected or not, is something that can be captured and shared. Students today see no difference between TV and the Internet. They can watch television through TiVo, email, and file sharing, and they can browse the Internet from their television. He highlighted a few examples of places that files can be shared that are virtually untraceable in terms of prosecution for peer to peer file sharing: Earth Station 5 and Venuatu.

For libraries to survive they will have to accommodate users, providing personalized information access. Students want their library interface to be like Amazon, showing what they have recently purchased, other materials on the same subject, things that similar users have checked out, etc. At Duke, all incoming students were given iPods to record and share lectures between each other. They were also given the ability to install Linux on the iPods to provide more usability. Keys emphasized that there will come a time when we will have to treat all students as distance education students.

The second session I would like to highlight is a session called Collaborative Checklist for E-Journal Access. The session was lead by representatives from Ohio State Universities, Swets Subscription Services, and Springer Publishing. During the session it was mentioned that over 50% of North American libraries receive print + online subscriptions. Of the 50% that receive print + online, 90% of those are academic libraries. In order to streamline the process of handling these print + online subscriptions OSU, Swets, and Springer created a checklist outlining what each organization was responsible for when setting up access to e-journal subscriptions. Their biggest challenge was to consolidate responsibilities and to identify who did what. In the end, they created a list of tasks and very clearly outlined what was expected of the library, the subscription agent, and the publisher. (I have a copy of that handout if anyone is interested.) It was interesting to note how much Swets is doing for its customers in the handling of electronic subscriptions. In comparison, EBSCO (our subscription agent) is not doing a very good job. It made me seriously rethink using EBSCO to handle our larger e-journal packages.

This brings me to the third program I want to highlight. There was a poster session at the conference describing in detail the process of switching subscription agents. (I have that handout as well). In light of the session on the e-journal checklist, I have been inspired to give Swets a trial run as an alternative subscription agent. Using the information gleaned from the two sessions, I hope to cancel a small number of subscriptions (50 or so) through EBSCO and switch them to Swets to see how the service between the two differs.

Other programs I attended were related to
- Electronic Journals Workflow — interesting, but not really applicable to an institution of our size. The speakers were from much larger institutions.
- Electronic Resource Librarians — also interesting. Many different types of institutions were represented, and I got to hear about the kinds of things people in my position at other schools were doing
- The role of the media in the division of America between liberal and conservative — This was one of the most interesting sessions, but not broadly useful to the field of information sciences. I have the Web addresses of a couple of really cool organizations that promote responsible media reporting and democratic conversation between political parties.

Lastly, I attended the NASIG Continuing Education Committee meeting. I will now be managing the CEC's page on the NASIG site and be the committee contact for a continuing education event in Mississippi. 

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