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## Don's Conference Notes-Racing to the Crossroads: The 32nd Annual NASIG Conference

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# Don's Conference Notes

by **Donald T. Hawkins** (Freelance Conference Blogger and Editor) <dthawkins@verizon.net>



## Racing to the Crossroads: The 32nd Annual NASIG Conference

Guest Columnist: **Steve Oberg** (Group Leader for Resource Description and Digital Initiatives, Wheaton College, and NASIG President) <soberg@wheaton.edu>

A dynamic theme of “*Racing to the Crossroads*” set the stage for **NASIG’s 32nd Annual Conference** and was entirely appropriate given the location in Indianapolis, IN, home of the world-famous Indianapolis 500 and known as the “Crossroads of America.” Meeting from June 8-11, this annual conference was a stellar venue for interesting and innovative presentations and discussions about issues of importance for us all: data science and management, best practices for e-resources accessibility, core competencies for e-resources librarianship (as a side note, **NASIG** wrote a highly regarded core competencies document, published a few years ago),<sup>1</sup> how to successfully collaborate with vendor colleagues to launch new services or programs, scholarly communications issues such as working with and promoting Open Educational Resources, and much more.

**NASIG’s** programming continued to impress with its combination of stimulating and thought-provoking Vision Sessions (one held each morning of the event), concurrent sessions, a well-attended Vendor Expo, a Great Ideas Showcase, Snapshot Sessions, and Vendor Lightning Talks. A new and interesting program element, Student Snapshot Sessions, was added to the program to provide an opportunity for student attendees to get their feet wet by presenting at a professional conference in a welcoming atmosphere; they were very well received.<sup>2</sup>

At the Indianapolis conference **NASIG** also successfully launched its student mentoring initiative, which pairs experienced librarians with students for a year, giving students the benefit of mentors to guide them as they explore their courses and firm up their career objectives. In other words, **NASIG** builds on its biggest strength: fostering and extending relationships, thus creating an engaged and supportive community of people interested in the distribution, acquisition, and long-term accessibility of information resources in all formats and business models (to quote directly from its vision statement). Those who have past experience with managing serials (think of title changes, a journal that has various supplements, etc.) will recognize how natural this relationship fits with what **NASIG** has been and is continuing to do so well, but not limited to serials. Rather, **NASIG** is actively engaged in best practices for managing e-resources of all types as well as broad issues of scholarly communications.

This push into broader areas was illustrated by the opening Vision Session speaker, **Dr. Michel Dumontier** of **Maastricht University** in the Netherlands, who spoke on “Advancing Discovery Science with FAIR Data Stewardship.” **Dumontier** began his talk by highlighting problems with reproducibility of research findings. He said that, for example, fully 64% of research in psychology cannot be replicated. Why? Because science is hard, statistics aren’t sufficient for the kinds of data being collected, biology is unruly, and medicine is very complex. He argued that we need new ways to think about discovery science (in his talk, “discovery science” meant drug discovery), and our current approaches aren’t good enough to validate research studies. He therefore argued that we need to figure out ways to use data sets to increase confidence in a particular hypothesis by means of meta-analysis. **Dumontier’s** research efforts are focused on building a massive, decentralized knowledge graph built on independent data sets, called Bio2RDF. With this kind of tool, we can better understand and more quickly figure out the best ways to fight new problems such as the sudden spread of

the Ebola virus. As part of these efforts, he spoke at length about FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Re-usable) data principles, and articulated his belief that libraries have a critical role to play. In his mind, FAIR principles should apply to *all* digital resources including software, scholarly publications, etc., not just data. He also spoke about the value of semantic publishing: ways to communicate and re-use publications (data, citations, and text) at will and as a norm. There were several questions from the audience but one that particularly interested me was whether the thesis text of scholarly articles themselves could also be re-used somehow, and **Dumontier** responded by talking about the development of argumentation networks. It was fascinating, and I had the strongest sense that we were getting a glimpse into the future of scholarly communication — except that it is happening right now!

**April Hathcock**, Scholarly Communications Librarian at **New York University**, was the second Vision Session Speaker. Her session, titled “Racing to the Crossroads of Scholarly Communication (But Who Are We Leaving Behind),” was an eloquent plea for us to consider who is being left behind, where are we racing to, and what are our core values. She began her presentation requesting a minute of silence to honor Native Americans whose land we occupied. **Hathcock** stated that we can’t have intellectual freedom without access, and open access is a key to possibly bringing about an equal playing field, but we need to be intentional about it. We also need to bring voices from the margins into the scholarly communication system. One of the more arresting slides she showed us to illustrate her concerns featured a graph showing the preponderance of North American and European scholarly output represented in the Web of Science, whereas voices from areas such as Latin America and Asia are under-represented. She noted some efforts that are attempts to redress the imbalance, for example, a **Mellon** grant that was given to the **University of Arizona Press** to provide open access to indigenous studies books. I was particularly struck by her statement: “What’s the point of coming to the intersection if we find the same faces are there with us that were there at the beginning, and we have all come from the same places?” She encouraged the audience to explore detours on the way to the intersection or crossroads. **Hathcock** also highlighted the work of **FORCE11** (<https://www.force11.org>), which bills itself as “The Future of Research Communications and e-Scholarship,” noting how it is actively engaged in issues of representation, intersectionality, diversity, and more.



**Steve Oberg**

The final Vision Session was presented by **Dr. Carol Tilley**, Associate Professor in the School of Information Sciences at the **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**. A noted scholar on the history of comics whose research has been highlighted in the *New York Times* and elsewhere, **Tilley** spoke passionately about the rightful place for comics as a vital part of our intellectual and cultural history, a place that has too often and too frequently been in doubt. She walked us through the somewhat sordid history of anti-comics crusades in the 1950s and 1960s led by **Fredric Wertham**, which resulted in the formation of the Comics Code Authority, an industry-based initiative to screen and censor comic books published in the U.S. according to certain standards. She noted that this effort lasted into the 21st century. (**Wertham**, the crusader against comics, published his findings in the 1954 book, *Seduction of the Innocent*, which was highly influential in shaping people’s perspectives on the role and value of comics in society.) **Tilley’s** research conclusively revealed huge problems with **Wertham’s** findings, much of which was fabricated or overstated. As a result of anti-comics crusading, this important form of publication became less popular over time and was not held in high esteem by

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cultural institutions including libraries until relatively recently. **Tilley** highlighted a seminal article published in *Serials Review* in 1998 by **Michael Lavin** on "Comic books and graphic novels for libraries: What to buy"<sup>3</sup> as an important contribution to the growing interest in comics collections and the study of comics. She noted with satisfaction that interest in this genre continues to grow. One of **Tilley's** slides stated, "Most important: comics tell stories and communicate ideas, often in emotionally evocative and cognitively efficient ways," which summed the situation up rather well.

Admittedly, as its current president I am biased, but I think **NASIG** represents one of the best professional development opportunities available and at a lower cost than similar organizations and conference events. I encourage readers to consider attending next year's conference in Atlanta which will feature the theme, "**Transforming the Information Community**." Remember, too, that **NASIG** is more than a conference. As one example, it is an active participant in important standards development as an organizational member of **NISO** and **Project COUNTER**. **NASIG's** non-profit status is also noteworthy. Whether you want to attend a conference or participate as a volunteer on a committee, you are all invited to become part of the engaged and supportive **NASIG** community! 🌸

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have access to a copy of it and did not seek out its purchase because our project was short-term.) With Word being installed on most workstations in the library, the team decided to use the application and flesh out each of our six categories of the decision tree (purpose, genre/content, medium & format options, licensing terms, delivery mode & options, and costs & funding) within a single page. The main drawback to using Word was that manual copying/pasting of shapes and arrows was required. However, the Word files were easy to share and edit among team members, each of us were already very familiar with using the application, and it was easy to print and share the workflow with stakeholders.

### Deadlines & Test Runs

Having a firm deadline to produce a draft decision tree by December 2014 to library executive management was the primary driving force behind completing the workflow in a timely manner, and the committee used this as motivation for keeping strong momentum. With this deadline in mind, as well as the interest and support of many staff and library units, the committee delivered a multi-page decision tree workflow to executive management before the 2014 holiday break.

Of course, being on an academic campus meant that a change such as implementing a new workflow would be best to take place in between

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**Presses (AUPresses)**, effective immediately. **AUPresses** is an organization of 143 international nonprofit scholarly publishers. Since 1937, the **Association of University Presses** advances the essential role of a global community of publishers whose mission is to ensure academic excellence and cultivate knowledge. The membership of the **Associa-**

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### Endnotes

1. [http://www.nasig.org/site\\_page.cfm?pk\\_association\\_webpage\\_menu=310&pk\\_association\\_webpage=7802](http://www.nasig.org/site_page.cfm?pk_association_webpage_menu=310&pk_association_webpage=7802)
2. **NASIG** has always made a point of supporting and encouraging students into the library profession, awarding several student grants and scholarships each year. Full disclosure: I was a recipient of a **NASIG** student grant back in 1991 and it was my entrée into the profession. My experience back then had such a strong impact on me that **NASIG** has been my professional home ever since. More recently, the **NASIG** Executive Board voted to provide free membership to all currently enrolled LIS students, and as a result, we have welcomed many new members into the work of **NASIG**, including opportunities to serve on committees, which gives students relevant experience that helps their résumés stand out when they are searching for their first professional jobs.
3. **Lavin, Michael R.** "Comic Books and Graphic Novels for Libraries: What to Buy." *Serials Review* 24, no. 2 (June 1, 1998): 31–45. doi:10.1016/S0098-7913(99)80117-8

semesters. With small adjustments, the committee's work was approved by library administration January 2015, which left just enough time for a few test runs before the spring semester began. During one of our last committee meetings, the team took several test scenarios and walked through the workflow together, step-by-step. Satisfied with the outcomes, our team implemented the workflow in full earnest in February 2015.

### Conclusion

Two years later, the work completed by the Streaming Video Decision Tree Committee still has a meaningful impact on our library. For instance, the workflow we designed remains in place with occasional adjustments. Additionally, whenever a more challenging video request comes in that doesn't fit squarely into our decision tree steps, the team is able to reconvene and determine an approach in the same collaborative manner as when we first began meeting. In this way, the committee is pleased with its continuing efforts in teamwork. 🌸

### Endnotes

1. **Anderson, Elsa.** *Electronic Resource Management Systems: A Workflow Approach*. Chicago, Illinois: ALA TechSource, 2014.
2. "Flowchart." <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flowchart>

**tion** voted in June to undertake this name change, as part of a strategic assessment of the organization's identity, mission, and goals. The new logo and visual identity that are revealed today are vibrant expressions of the **Association**. The original 1921 proposal to establish the organization suggested the name "Association of University Presses" although it was eventually founded as the **Association of American University Presses** in 1937. "What was once considered the 'American university press' model of editorial independence and rigor is a type of publishing that

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