**Serials in the park: Proceedings of the North American Serials Interest Group, Inc. 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, June 26-29, 2003, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon**
Edited by Patricia Sheldahl French and Richard Worthing
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This indexed volume comprises 40 chapters covering the 2 pre-conference programmes, 3 plenary sessions, 13 concurrent sessions and 19 workshops that took place at the conference. The Poster sessions are summarised and the conference registrants noted. Many of the chapters include short lists of notes or bibliographic references. In a few instances the recorders of sessions mention a bibliography that was distributed. It would have been very useful to have had these included in the publication.

One pre-conference programme and several other sessions focused on cataloguing. Karen Darling's (Head of Acquisitions, University of Missouri-Columbia) pre-conference programme entitled *Cataloging survival for non-catalogers or you thought you would never need to catalog again* was not designed to train participants as cataloguers but to develop an understanding of the rules, principles and terminology of cataloguing and to highlight changes to AACR2 Chapter 12. Closely aligned to this session was the workshop *Case studies in electronic serials cataloging, or What am I supposed to do with this?* Topics covered include aggregator neutral records and the difference between an integrating resource and a serial. The former exists when "material [is] added, changed, or deleted via updates that do not remain discrete". A serial, however, still has a "succession of discrete parts, usually include numbering and lack a predetermined conclusion."

A few presentations can be grouped under the term "staff development". Rene Erlandson (Senior Newspaper Cataloguer, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) led a workshop on training programmes focussing on training staff rather than users although the basic principles are applicable to either audience. The four stages to setting up successful training programmes are: assessment and evaluation of needs, designing the programme, implementation and analysis. The first stage includes issues such as whether a programme is needed, what the expected outcomes will be, what will be considered as adequate competency, and building support for the training amongst the trainees. The other "development" papers focussed on developing serialists. Concern has been raised in the United States about the so-called "graying" of the library profession. In *Planning for new growth in the forest: cultivating new serialists for the future* this topic was raised and suggestions were made as to how to recruit students to the profession and how to develop an interest in serials work. Few library schools actually teach a course in serials librarianship; so it is not easy for students to become aware of career opportunities in this field. Steps for recruitment include suggestions such as the following: "Be creative in recruitment; hire talent rather than skills; design jobs around people and *then* train them; offer internships and development programs; promote librarianship as a career in elementary and high school; seek diversity; mentor." The third "development" paper focussed on the tenure process for academic librarians in the United States and "six factors for success". Although not of direct relevance to academic institutions in South Africa, there are some tips one can glean about developing one's career: Keep the CV up to date, participate in committees of professional organisations, network in order to find mentors and develop collegiality.

Oliver Pesch (EBSCO Publishing) presented a paper on usage statistics. This is a very useful article for libraries that are seeking to analyse their electronic resources usage. In tabular form he identifies elements that are usually captured (logins/sessions, turnaways, searches, fulltext articles requested) and how various role-players might use them. He also reviews some to the initiatives that are ensuring standardisation and accountability in the reporting of usage statistics – ICOLC Guidelines for Statistical Measure; ARL E-metrics; NISO Z39.7 Library Statistics Standard and Project COUNTER.

Another "hot topic" under discussion was the "electronic journals list versus OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) access" debate. In *Finding a better trail through the journals forest* the presenters discussed SUNY Albany's (State University of New York at Albany) decision to move away from providing access to their electronic journals through a web-based list to providing access via the OPAC. In 2001 the institution found itself in a confusing situation with not all electronic journals having been catalogued, a web-based list of electronic journals, a separate Serials Solutions list on the web site and all other journal formats available via the OPAC. The decision was taken that all electronic journals be catalogued and that the OPAC be the master database for them all. They use the one-record bibliographic approach, as this is the least confusing to users. MARC records were uploaded to the OPAC from the Serials Solutions report. The Serials Solutions list is no longer displayed on the website, but the librarians use it to identify changes to databases. In 2003 the SUNY Libraries were preparing to implement SFX. At the time of the NASIG conference this was not seen as a replacement to having the electronic journals in the OPAC, but rather as an additional service that would help supply all

their users' needs. On the other hand Kathryn Paul and Elena Romaniuk of the University of Victoria (Canada) talked about how they used the OPAC to dynamically generate webpages for their electronic journals by ensuring that all the metadata required to do this was included in the OPAC records.

Other topics covered include library management, digital preservation, creating print repositories, usage patterns, acquisitions issues, consortia, copyright and electronic journals. As the conference was that of the North American Serials Interest Group the editors and most of the presenters are North American librarians working in the serials field. Although there might occasionally be a slight American emphasis, most of the issues are faced by librarians globally - making this publication and the topics covered applicable internationally. Anyone working with serials today is sure to find at least parts of this publication to be of interest.

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