



View from North America

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Greetings from North America. I hope everyone enjoyed the promised summer of stability. In the US and Canada it was, once again, the summer of the perpetual conference. We began in May with a joint US & Canadian Medical Library Association meeting in Vancouver, BC. The glory of Vancouver, the bay amongst the mountains, was the perfect setting to begin the summer's enthusiastic and significant discussions of the changes in our serials world. The conference keynote speaker made us aware that the Internet Revolution effects much more than the library's role in supporting the medical profession with increasing self-help and consumer oriented computer services, traditionally provided only in a visit to the doctor's office. And we thought only librarians and subscription agents were fighting the myths of disintermediation.

In early June, Special Libraries Association convened in my home city of Philadelphia. The discussions and programs focussed on e-commerce, B2B solutions, and the ever-increasing demand for e-journal solutions by corporate librarians and their vendors. SLA is exciting for the visionary and non-traditional exhibitors that join the full service library/information companies in the convention hall. There is a joint SLA planned in Brighton and I strongly encourage all UKSG members to attend.

My favorite time of the year remains the NASIG conference and this year was special. The meeting followed SLA by a week and the venue was the University of California, San Diego in glorious (on the Pacific Ocean) La Jolla. If SLA is visionary, NASIG is total immersion in reality: 3.5 days of plenary sessions, in depth workshops, and

networking. There are no exhibits. This year's meeting was convened by my friend and competitor, Dan Tonkery, NASIG's President and "Surfer Dude". He appeared at the opening in wetsuit, surfboard, and cool shades. Maybe he will do a reprise for UKSG if asked? The plenary speakers (one from Hewlett Packard, the other from the Public Broadcasting System) challenged us to embrace the impossible and move beyond the traditional. The final plenary featured a number of speakers, including John Cox and Chris Beckett to summarize the future of serials. Chris was particularly himself as he singled out some of my colleagues and competitor-friends in his analysis with "sub-titles" for his vision of the future. Thanks, Chris. But, there is a future for serialists and it is an exciting one. The latest NASIG Newsletter summarizes most of the presentations and can be found at <http://www.nasig.org>.

The annual ALA meeting, mid-July in Chicago with over 20,000 librarians in attendance, was the fitting climax for the perpetual conference. The American annual two-week vacation is used to recover from conferences dealing with licensing, e-journals, vendor rumors, and the future of our profession.

A final, personal note. When I began my career in the 70's the first "serials person" I met was John Merriman. John, from all your former colleagues, friends, admirers, and even competitors in North America, thanks for all your help and guidance over the years and we wish you continued peace and good will as you move into yet another emeritus role. You are the best.