UKSG

A day in the life of
a standards organization director
Todd Carpenter

Todd Carpenter, who is Executive Director of the National Information Standards Organization (NISO), takes us through a typically busy but rewarding day in his life.

Todd is pictured above on a social outing during an ISO meeting in Jeju, South Korea – one of the many places he has recently visited in the course of his work.

Getting going and keeping up

My day usually starts with my son hopping into my bed and kicking me in some fashion. It's not quite as unpleasant as an alarm clock, nor is it as reliable, but it certainly is more effective. Together we stroll down the stairs, where after setting him up with breakfast, I check in electronically. Dozens of e-mails, blogs, the local and national papers, Facebook, several Twitter hashtags and the like are how I greet the morning.

One of the challenges of keeping up with the various standards projects inside and outside of NISO is the fact that people with whom we work are generally volunteers and many are spread out around the world. This means that a number of them work 'after hours' at night on NISO work. Also, a large contingent of NISO and ISO's work takes place outside of the US. While I may start off at 6:30 or 7:00, colleagues in Europe have been at it since 2:00 am my time. This leads to an always-on stream of information and updates from a variety of projects.

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This particular day is somewhat of a light morning e-mail-wise, probably because the previous evening was Halloween in the US and most parents were with their kids. Over the last 12 hours, having received only 20 important e-mails, this counts as a light morning. (The normal flow is nearly double that.) A taste of the day's communications follows:

Data Citation Project update

There is a working group exploring data citation that is part of CODATA on which I serve, and I lead a subgroup that is tasked with data collection for the paper we are preparing.

Todd (second from left) meeting with Director General, Karl Min Ku (3rd from left), and the staff of the National Central Library of Taiwanshared services in the Dutch national information infrastructure

During the call I discuss with the team leaders a Digital Curation Centre paper that was released the prior week on data citation practices, which overlaps significantly with the work of our group. It will have some impact on our survey.

ISO Registration Authority Agreement discussions

A few of the two dozen e-mails this morning relate to finalizing a meeting I have been trying to arrange for several weeks with the leadership of the ISO Central Secretariat. ISO is working to implement a draft contract for registration authorities, and there has been a lot of feedback on previous drafts. A second call in the morning is with the chair of the ad hoc group of registration agencies. We discuss the draft and prioritize the critical concerns for the discussion later in the week.

Redesign ISQ

The next activity is a staff call about *Information Standards Quarterly*, NISO's magazine. We are considering revising the format. The Board of NISO decided to completely cease print publication, so we're thinking about the implications of this and how it might improve its presentation and distribution.

Resource Sync project administration

NISO recently received a grant from the Sloan Foundation to undertake a project to create a web-scale specification for the exchange and synchronization of large data repositories. NISO is partnering with the Open Archives Initiative to undertake this work, and now that the grant is funded, we have to work out the many logistic details of pushing the project forward. Today, there are two calls to move this project forward.

Pack and then off to the office

I finish packing for this evening's flight and then drive into the office. During the drive I have a quick call with a partner at Old Dominion University (ODU) to discuss their role in the project, and the requirements of a subcontract between NISO and ODU.

Once in my office, I have a quick check-in with my operations manager. The main reason I'm in the office today is to sign checks. One of the few things I can't do remotely is affix a signature to checks. It is also renewal season at our organization and I discuss the promptness with which several of our members have paid their dues. Renewal season is always gratifying for a director, when members reaffirm their commitment to the organization.

Before I duck back out of the office, another skim of the e-mail, a few quick responses and then I'm on the way out back home. During this drive I have another quick discussion about the Resource

With Professor Sam Oh, of Sungkyunkwan University, during an ISO meeting in Sydney

Sync project with our second subcontract partner, Cornell University. I also have another conversation about a new group that is forming on revision to the ISO Inter-Library Loan Standards.

On the way home I pick up the kids for the hand-off and set them up with some dinner with their mother. She's been very supportive over the past month of solid travel, for which I am endlessly grateful. I wouldn't be able to maintain this pace without her support.

Flight to Charleston

Next, I'm off to the airport for a trip to the Charleston Conference. Dinner for me was at the airport, where I got a few minutes to begin to write an introduction to our newsletter, ready to go out later that week. Despite my heavy reliance on technology, I like to write longhand in a little moleskin notebook. For this month's introduction to *NISO Newsline*, I choose a topic that might create a stir: the future of the MARC bibliographic format and NISO's involvement in that work.

I fly through Charlotte on my way to Charleston. Unfortunately, this isn't the uneventful flight I always hope for. The pilot announces that the plane had hit some animal on take-off. "We aren't certain of the status of our front landing gear" is not the kind of thing you want to hear from your pilot. Despite some anticipation and excitement, we land without incident. A quick connection is spent chatting with Rachel Frick, Director of the Digital Library Federation, at the airport, who happens to be on the same flight. We then board another plane to Charleston together and share a cab into downtown after we land. We discuss the introduction I'd written on the plane and the potential impacts of the MARC revision work being led by the Library of Congress.

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It is midnight when I finally arrive exhausted at my hotel. The next morning begins another busy day at the Charleston Conference. Fortunately, this is the second-to-last trip for the year. Life won't continue to be this crazy, I tell myself as I drift to sleep.