

John Sporing

John Sporing is the 2020 recipient of the Boyce Award for distinguished service to the regional science profession. After earning a PhD in economics from American University, John Sporing entered regional science through his career with the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. During his tenure with the BEA, he ensured the agency's regional division economists were engaged with regional science academic scholars. Through his leadership, regional science scholars gained access to prototype BEA data products that proved essential for quality academic regional science research. During this time, John cultivated cross-agency relationships between the U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics to have their demographers, economists, and statisticians actively involved in the Southern Regional Science Association (SRSA), NARSC, the Midcontinent Regional Science Association (MCRSA), and the Western Regional Science Association (WRSA). In many ways, his 25-year career in the federal government centered on developing and maintaining key data products that were guided by regional scientists through regional science networks. Without John's leadership in developing detailed regional economic data products, much of the applied work undertaken by U.S. regional scientists would not have been possible.

Without minimizing these contributions, his key contributions have been in the area of service to its RSAI organizational affiliates – SRSA and NARSC. John took over leadership of SRSA during a period when it was in a tenuous financial condition after a poorly attended conference that had negative impacts on the organization's balance sheet. After taking over as its Executive Secretary, he used his administrative skills to negotiate favorable contracts for future conference sites. In the early years, he was very adept at working with host hotels to mitigate financial burdens to SRSA. John is detail-oriented and addresses all the small items in advance of and during annual SRSA meetings so that other officers and council members can focus on their primary leadership responsibilities. John's "no stone unturned" approach provides a comfort to leadership knowing that membership will be effectively served each year as a part of the annual meeting. Indeed, the new Executive Director of the Midcontinent Regional Science Association has already turned to John for advice, council and help as he undertakes making conference arrangements for MCRSA. In this regard, John provides great leadership to the organization.

John has also led several key strategic initiatives on behalf of SRSA during his tenure. One of these was the establishment of SRSA as a 501c3 non-profit. John's leadership in transitioning the SRSA to a 501c3 led the way for similar changes with the Midcontinent Regional Science Association. Second, John led an effort on behalf of SRSA leadership to initiate SRSA mini conferences on university campuses of members to highlight the regional science profession.

John's skill at organizing conferences and negotiating hotel contracts that are favorable to the SRSA has been an invaluable resource to the NARSC. The 2018 and 2019 NARSC conferences have been largely organized (hotels, meeting spaces, meals, receptions, and breaks) using John's expertise in helping improve the overall experience of the NARSC conference and ensuring favorable contracts for NARSC. During NARSC meetings, it is rare not to see John behind the

NARSC registration desk. If he is not there it is usually because he is attending to some conference-related “crisis”.

In recognition that we have all benefitted from the many ways in which he has provided service to various regional science organizations, the North American Regional Science Council is therefore pleased to present the 2020 David Boyce Award for distinguished service to regional science to Dr. John Spring.