As I write this column, I am returning to Seattle from Berlin and Amsterdam where I have been immersed in conversation and discussion with fellow deans and colleagues working in the information field. One such discussion focused upon the interdisciplinary nature of information research and scholarship. As I engaged in conversation with my colleagues, I reflected on the long tradition of the discipline of information science and past efforts to define constituent fields and subfields. Over the years, I have found these attempts to pin down and articulate the boundaries of our discipline somewhat tedious and restricting. My conversations with students anxious to find absolute definition of concepts and boundaries have regularly resulted in my urging them to celebrate the fact that they are engaged with a discipline that is dynamic and responsive – a discipline that welcomes the contributions of allied fields and is highly receptive to new ways of exploring and knowing.

It is tempting to simplify the definition of information science and the information field with the claim that we are inherently interdisciplinary. But is this the case, and, if so, what does this mean? Certainly interdisciplinary work is a seemingly commonplace goal for research and intellectual communities. Federal funders express a preference for interdisciplinary teams of researchers in their calls for proposals. Universities and research laboratories are heralding a new age of interdisciplinarity – a breaking down of boundaries and silos, of new academic programming and so on.
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The simple view that I take on this is that interdisciplinary scholarship is found where two or more collaborators who regard themselves as coming from different scientific traditions work together on a shared problem. Interdisciplinarity is an expression of the mindset of the individuals involved. Through an interdisciplinary engagement each partner is celebrating the potential to think more deeply and differently about, in our case, information problems through collaboration with others who have a different background, area of expertise, set of methods and theoretical orientations. With this mindset in place, we also need a suitable environment to facilitate interdisciplinary work. This facilitation includes the required resources to fund the work and an environment in which the work is supported and rewarded. As I discuss this view with my colleagues from academic units around the world, it is very clear to me that the scholarship and research of information science and the information field is being nurtured and enriched in vibrant, stimulating and diverse intellectual communities – on university campuses, in research laboratories and in professional settings. My interactions with students around the world confirm that the future of our field is in the hands of young colleagues who see supportive interdisciplinary environments as the expected norm. Our students are eager to see their collaborative work resulting in a deep impact on the lives of people in all parts of the world.

Returning from Europe, I am also reassured of the wisdom of our decision to host the 2016 ASIS&T Annual Meeting in a European location. This choice certainly draws attention to the fact that our association is international in membership and orientation, but I also believe that a European location projects and inspires a broader information sensibility. The proximity of multiple cultural, ethnic and national backgrounds and the notion of a European unity seems to draw scholars and professionals into a deeper sense of sharing and collaboration around the compelling information challenges that face us all. I urge all members to think ahead to 2016 and plan for a fabulous meeting. Our destination will be announced soon.

I would like to bring you up to date on the various activities of the ASIS&T Board of Directors. Much of this work is conducted via email, but we have also scheduled a Winter and Spring telephone meeting and a Summer Retreat meeting for Board members. We have one such meeting coming up at the end of March, and our agenda is full. We will be finalizing plans for a call for proposals to redesign the ASIS&T website, a social media initiative, membership activities and a suggested realignment of our investment strategy. News of all these plans will appear in my next column.

Lastly, amid snowstorms, ASIS&T headquarters moved during the weekend of February 15 to 8555 16th Street, Suite 850, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The telephone, fax and email contact details for head office remain the same. This move took place because our landlord of almost 15 years plans to renovate and re-purpose the building we occupied. These renovations were sufficiently extensive that he bought out the remaining time on our lease and made some other concessions to make the interruption more bearable.

My warm regards to all members of ASIS&T.