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PRESIDENT'S PAGE

by Gary Marchionini

Over the course of this year's activities I have had several opportunities to revisit fundamental themes that recur in all professional societies. What is the American Society for Information Science and Technology? Whom does it serve? What problems does it address? Work this year by the publications, membership and Annual Meeting program committees, as well as discussions in my presidential conference calls and at the various meetings, have each given rise to fundamental questions about mission, focus and participation.

A look at the "About ASIS&T" page (http://asist.org/about.html) on the ASIS&T website highlights our 73-year history as a society devoted to improving information access. My sense of what ASIS&T is today is somewhat broader in that for me, our mission is to study information – its genesis, propagation, use and effects over time. We tend to be particularly interested in information's effects on people and institutions and in the technologies and techniques associated with it. I claim that ASIS&T is the world's leading society in information science and a home for information science research and the practices that stem from research findings. As a professional society, we aim to promote the information professions through evidence-based research and innovative development. Thus, as researchers, we investigate problems that arise in any stages of the entire information life cycle; and as practitioners, we aim to apply the results of systematic investigations to invent effective and efficient solutions to those information problems. Some ASIS&T members focus more on research and some on practice, but all ASIS&T members are made of the same metal when it comes to understanding and solving information problems. As a result of the recent meeting of the program committee for the upcoming Annual Meeting, I am optimistic that we can forge a program that is well struck on both sides of this coin.

A second musing about the nature of ASIS&T arose as I participated in the LIDA conference in Zadar, Croatia, in May. I was struck by the level of excitement and engagement shown by European ASIS&T members. There was a doctoral forum run by the European ASIS&T Student Chapter (well organized by doctoral student Cathal Hoare from University College Cork, Ireland) that highlighted

research done in several Eastern European universities. I hope that there will be a follow-up doctoral forum next year. Students and faculty outside of North America recognize ASIS&T as the leading information science society and aspire to participate actively.

Additionally, as I read *JASIST*, I am struck by the international scope of coverage and authorship. Papers from non-North American authors dominate many issues of JASIST. For example the May and June 2010 issues have 30 full papers, only 13 of which are from authors from North American affiliations (and one of these includes an author from Asia). Looking back at May and June issues from 1996 there were nine full papers, four from North America and five from other parts of the world. If we go back another 20 years to the March-April and May-June 1976 issues we find eight of 10 papers from authors with North American affiliations, but two that are not. This quick perusal of the collection on my shelf (yes, paper), demonstrates the long-standing globalization of our primary research publication.

These observations of meetings and of our publications validate how international ASIS&T is in fact, if not in name. Indeed, ASIS&T is increasingly international in scope and participation. As the leading information science society, we attract a broad range of participants from around the world and have an obligation to advance research and practice related to information science globally.

As we head toward our 75th anniversary (2012) it is important that we reflect on our mission as the leading society in information science to balance discovery and application and leverage information technologies to expand global participation in ASIS&T. ■