To explore the feasibility of holding an annual meeting outside North America, the ASIS&T International Relations Committee (IRC) conducted a survey from September 18 to October 6 in 2012. The purpose of the survey was to determine the likelihood that ASIS&T members would attend an ASIS&T Annual Meeting and/or other events outside North America over the next five years. This report summarizes the main findings from the survey.

Main Findings

Validity of findings: Self-Selective Sampling Fits the Membership Population in Terms of the Geographic Distribution. A total of 247 responses were received. About two-thirds of all respondents are from North America (70.45%), followed by Europe (15.79%). The 2010 membership data indicated that members from North America represented 87.6%, followed by Europe at 6.4% and Asia at 3.5%. Although 2012 the membership count is not available, the percentage matches 2010 pattern (See Table 1). Compared with the 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical location</th>
<th>2012 Survey</th>
<th>2012 Membership</th>
<th>2010 Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australasia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15.79</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>70.45</td>
<td>87.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Misc means that the respondent does not select any country.

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membership data provided by ASIS&T headquarters, the survey sample was a reasonably good representation of the overall membership.

Preference for having an annual meeting in Europe rather than in the Asia-Pacific (AP) Region. The first part of the survey questions asked about the likelihood of attending ASIS&T Annual Meetings outside of North America. Figure 1 (question 1a) shows that 49% of the respondents indicated they were “very likely” or “likely” to attend an annual meeting in Europe, with only 21% stating they are “very unlikely” to attend an annual meeting in Europe. Figure 1 (question 1b) shows that 28% stated they are “very likely” or “likely” to attend an annual meeting in the Asia-Pacific (AP) region, and 40% are “very unlikely” to attend an annual meeting in AP. The data shows a stronger preference of having an annual meeting in Europe rather than in AP.

Respondents commented that holding an annual meeting outside North America could increase our membership. They wrote:

An excellent idea that would consolidate ASIS&T as a truly international association. For decades people from outside of the USA have made great efforts to attend – and at great expense.

If ASIS&T is going to grow as an organization, it needs to expand beyond the United States to attract and sustain vibrant member communities all over the globe.

Meetings outside North America would demonstrate ASIS&T’s openness to countries other than the United States.

Respondents commented that holding an annual meeting outside North America is also important for our discipline:

I do want to hear international perspectives on information science; they are absolutely vital to the progress of any field of research.

Greater involvement with our colleagues outside of North America is desirable. Definitely needed in this global environment.

Respondents raised concerns regarding U.S. green cards and visas and permission from some U.S. funding agencies and universities. It was noted that junior faculty waiting for green cards in the United States could not attend an annual meeting outside the United States. On the other hand, respondents also mentioned how difficult it can be to get a visa to attend the annual meeting in the United States. Two comments illustrate these points:

For our international junior faculty members who are awaiting green cards this could be a show stopper.

Right now it is very difficult to get an American visa although I got my doctorate degree from Case Western Reserve U, so I prefer if the conference is conducted outside United States.
Timing of the conference was another issue raised by respondents. A personal benefit to holding a conference outside North America is the opportunity to visit other places. However holding the annual meeting during the U.S. academic fall semester limits opportunities to combine sightseeing with annual meeting attendance.

Would be most likely to go to Europe or an Asian/Pacific country if I were interested in combining it with travel in that area.

Many of our people have the wherewithal to pay to see an exotic place.

I would love to attend an ASIS&T Annual Meeting outside [the United States]... but the travel time in the middle of a semester... would make it impossible.

The current annual meeting is during our university course time. A Europe annual meeting would be able to schedule in a better way, as the venue would be closer. [From a respondent in Europe]

An issue raised in the past concerns participation in the administrative/business components of ASIS&T that are held during the annual meeting. If members could not attend an annual meeting outside North America, how would this impact the administrative/business components? It should be noted that currently this is an issue for international members. A respondent suggested a solution that could enhance the administrative components of all annual meetings:

The administrative components of annual meeting, e.g., business meeting, Chapter Assembly and SIG Cabinet, SIG business meetings) should be separated from the physical meeting when outside North America taking advantage of electronic communications.

Cost Analysis. As expected a concern expressed by respondents focuses on costs to attend an annual meeting. Many respondents from North America said that the costs to attend today are too high. Two respondents explained:

It is a hardship for me to even travel inside the United States. I had to really work hard to have the money to attend ASIS&T 2012.

My organization is not supporting any travel funding for the foreseeable future, so my chance of attending Annual Meeting even within North America is slim.

Thus no matter where annual meetings are held, some respondents will not be financially able to attend.

As shown in Figure 2 (question 4a) 51% of the respondents spend more than $500 to travel to the annual meeting. The average cost of travel is $672. Sixty-one percent reported spending more than $500 for lodging, with an average lodging cost of $673. When food and other costs are considered, an average cost of $1795 was reported. Recall, this cost does not include the annual meeting registration fee.

\[\text{FIGURE 2. Estimated travel and lodging costs to attend a previous ASIS&T Annual Meeting}\]
Table 2 provides an overview of all the related costs by geographic region. Not surprisingly since all annual meetings have been held in North America, the cost for attending is lowest for attendees from that region. But even so the cost to attend (excluding annual meeting registration fees) for attendees from North America is $1475.

As mentioned earlier, the average cost to attend an annual meeting is $1795.

About 37.4% of this amount is for airfare ($672), another 37.5% is hotel costs ($673). Food (13.4%) and other costs (11.6%) account for another 25% of total cost. Attendees from North and South America spent 24.2% and 33.3% of average total cost on airfare, whereas attendees from Europe spent 42.8%. Attendees from other areas spent more than 50% on airfare.

Respondents mentioned their willingness to travel to an annual meeting outside North America provided costs are reasonable. They wrote:

As long as the venue is cost efficient.

If it were done in Western Europe in a location that was easy to get to from the United States, I’d be okay with it, providing other costs are kept down.

From the questionnaire data it appears that reasonable costs would be in the $1500-$1800 range for members in North America. Hotels are generally less expensive in Europe, and this may help reduce the registration fee as well as other costs because many hotels and universities in Europe charge groups less to use their facilities than hotels in North America. In addition many European universities offer inexpensive dorm rooms/suites for visitors. More rooms are usually available when the university is not in session, but usually a number of rooms are available even when the university is in session. With sufficient long-range planning as is usually done with regard to the annual meeting location these rooms could be reserved for annual meeting attendees.

There was also concern expressed with respect to the financial ability of students to attend an annual meeting outside North America:

I do worry about the ability of students to attend the meeting if held outside of the United States.

It will be a good thing. This may enable ASIS&T to be better known outside North America.

### Table 2. Estimated costs by geographic locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Airfare</th>
<th>Hotel</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>2873</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>1352</td>
<td>886</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>2873</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australasia</td>
<td>1612</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>3648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>2290</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>1062</td>
<td>4248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>2123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>No country identified</em></td>
<td>517</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>1741</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*7 respondents did not list their countries in the survey.*
America. And it will reduce costs for people from North America for a change. So I think the idea of rotating continents should be explored.

Many countries in Europe offer some financial support to international conferences that are held in their countries. This financial support could be used to support student attendance at the annual meeting. In addition student travel support could be sought from national funding agencies.

Respondents commented that holding the annual meeting periodically, e.g., every three to four years, outside North America would be a fair approach.

**Holding them occasionally outside of North America would be good.** Perhaps having every third conference outside of North America would be a good way to introduce this concept.

Maybe we can have the Annual Meeting outside of North America every three to five years?

**What percentage of our membership is coming from overseas?** Is it enough to warrant this “fair trade” or perhaps holding the annual meeting internationally once every four years or some other rotation?

**Co-located/Joint Conferences Outside North America Favored.** Sixty-nine percent of the survey respondents said they were neutral, likely or very likely to attend an annual meeting held outside North America when the annual meeting was co-located with another conference (Figure 3, question 2a).

**Possible Co-located/Joint Conferences.** The survey asked respondents which conferences should ASIS&T consider co-locating with. The list of conferences was developed in consultation with IRC and board members. The conferences with the highest mean ratings were the iConference (mean = 3.27) and JCDL (mean = 3.24). However it should be noted that for each conference, the response that received the most votes was “3,” a neutral response (see Figure 4).

The survey also asked respondents to identify other conferences that ASIS&T
could co-locate with. Conferences mentioned most frequently were IFLA, SLA and ISIC. Each was mentioned eight times. The next most frequently mentioned conference was CoLIS (mentioned six times), and ACM SIGIR (mentioned four times). Given these responses it appears there is no strong consensus regarding which conference ASIS&T should consider co-locating with. This may be a reflection of the unique multidisciplinary perspective of ASIS&T.

**Recommended Frequency of Co-Located Conferences.** Sixty-two percent suggested ASIS&T should hold a co-located/joint conference every two to three years (Figure 5).

**Recommendations**

The survey results suggest an annual meeting could be held in Europe, ideally in conjunction with another conference every few years. The following action plans are suggested:

1. In addition to the conferences mentioned by respondents, perhaps an option could be to hold the Annual Meeting in conjunction with EuroIA (www.euroia.org), a conference ASIS&T already runs. This option could also help bridge the researcher-practitioner gap that exists in our discipline.
2. ASIS&T could extend a call to the membership asking for proposals with respect to holding an annual meeting in Europe. Each proposal should include cost estimates for travel and for local hotel and food costs as well as other items specified by the Executive Director. In addition any funding and/or sponsorship opportunities should be identified in each proposal. Many cities in Europe have non-profit organizations that can prepare such proposals.

3. Alternatively ASIS&T headquarters can develop a proposal that identifies one or two cost-effective locations in Europe for an annual meeting.

**Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the 247 respondents who participated to the survey. We also bid our appreciation to the Board members for providing precious suggestions for the survey design and Dick Hill for the keen support for running the survey. Vivienne Houghton’s genuine contribution in preparing and running the survey and Dr. Ying-Hsang Liu’s assistance in data analysis are most appreciated.