



DONALD O. CASE

2009 ASIS&T President
University of Kentucky
859-257-8415
[dcase<at>email.uky.edu](mailto:dcase@email.uky.edu)

Having served on the ASIS&T Board for several years before becoming president, I know that a continuing concern has been the erosion of our membership base over the last two decades. Of course we are far from alone in facing this problem. We live in an era of declining support for voluntary organizations. Certainly many societies and associations of various stripes – professional, scholarly and scientific – have experienced membership declines in recent years. I have examined some of the statements made by officers of these groups. The reasons typically given for membership declines implicate factors such as the rise of the Internet and computer-mediated communication, competition from similar organizations and a more general decrease in group participation across society.

Ironically, while our numbers have declined, the financial health of ASIS&T is better than ever. The recent renegotiation of our publishing contract provides the Society with enough revenue to improve what it has to offer to our membership. I believe that a substantial portion of any new monies ought to go back to the membership by lowering costs and adding benefits. Along with improvement of our meetings this strategy is one way to retain and increase membership.

The Board has recently debated a variety of initiatives toward this end, and some of them were already in place for the 2008 Annual Meeting in Columbus. For example we provided a free, one-year membership to all non-members who registered at the regular, full-conference rate. Because we believe

that future growth is partly tied to the internationalization of ASIS&T we have also provided free registration to the presidents of information science organizations outside of North America. We are discussing other incentives for members from lesser-developed nations and ways to attract and retain more student members.

In terms of enhanced benefits, you may have noticed an improved mechanism for employee recruitment at the Annual Meeting, a web-based system for exchanging information about jobs and applicants. Our goal is to make ASIS&T more of a place for recruiting than it has been in recent years. The system – which is very basic in its initial year – is the result of a task force headed by Abby Goodrum and the programming efforts of Dick Hill. We hope that this increased emphasis on recruitment will also attract entirely new attendees to future Annual Meetings.

These are just a few of the things that we have accomplished this year. There are more innovations to come.

I understand that a common way to conclude my first column as your president would be to ask you to “join me in this adventure called ASIS&T.” However, I am reminded of the words of one of my heroes, the explorer Roald Amundsen, who once said “Adventure is just bad planning.” We are lucky to have in our Board a group of dedicated members who will not leave the future of the organization to chance.

I thank all of you for your support of the American Society for Information Science and Technology. ■