As I write this column there are renewed calls for national governments to spend money on public projects that promise to stimulate their economies. Even though some economic indicators have been improving, unemployment is up while most real estate and retail sales remain down – at least in North America and Europe. The thinking among some economic advisors is that more intervention is needed to jumpstart spending and thus stimulate job growth.

Within ASIS&T we have our own version of such “stimulus funding,” however it is not targeted towards economic activity but rather towards the long-term well-being of the Society and its membership. Given the healthy income stream that ASIS&T receives from its publishing contract, coupled with surpluses from previous years, the Board has proposed increased spending on a broad range of member benefits.

In my previous column I wrote about most of the objectives that the Board had identified in its annual retreat (and in earlier meetings). These include such actions as increasing the rate for funding of regional and student chapters; funding more scholarships for students to attend the Annual Meeting; broadening the “hardship” category so that more low-income members can continue membership benefits when they need them most and at a subsidized rate; and hiring a part-time “interaction manager” devoted to making ASIS&T more participatory by promoting social media (such as blogs, wikis and Second Life).

The ASIS&T Version of “Stimulus Funding” by Donald Case

Donald Case has just completed his term as 2009 ASIS&T president and will now serve one year as past president. He is a professor in the University of Kentucky College of Communication and Information Studies. He can be reached at dcase<at>uky.edu.

A SIS&T is the leading society devoted to concepts and issues in information science, and I am honored and enthusiastic to serve as president for 2010. As ASIS&T enters the second decade of the 21st century we find new possibilities for expanding member participation in a myriad of information activities and for our society to participate more actively in the international discourse related to information concepts, issues and policies. I aim to focus my attention on increasing participation in ASIS&T on several fronts and in helping ASIS&T take on new leadership roles in information science as a vibrant field that supports a broad range of professionals.

This general mission will be operationalized on several fronts in the year ahead. Some will require new initiatives; others will require changes to our mode of operation and all will need the active participation and engagement of ASIS&T members. Today’s social media offer substantial new opportunities for broader and more frequent information exchange, and professional societies are poised to take advantage of Douglas Engelbart’s bootstrapping ideas – just as information professionals adopted his ideas of computational cognitive augmentation in the past. Participation takes many forms, but always entails action. In our frenetic world of ubiquitous information flows and viral trends, it is evident that even small actions by people at scale lead to significant effects. I ask that every ASIS&T

Message from the Incoming President

ASIS&T Participation Agenda by Gary Marchionini

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to keep in touch with members, generate content and stimulate professional activity and interaction within the Society.

Ah, but here is the rub: Doing all that we want to do requires a deficit budget for the fiscal year 2009-2010. Not only will new initiatives require financial outlays starting in 2010, but as I write this column the outlook is uncertain for the attendance at the Annual Meeting in Vancouver. Given the cutbacks in travel funds at many institutions in which our members work, coupled with an unusual location for the Annual Meeting, it is possible that the conference will not create the surplus that it usually does; non-East coast meetings tend to draw fewer members, and travel to this one is more expensive than usual (although well worth the price, in my opinion).

This led some of us into protracted discussion about what we could do to balance the budget even if the 2009 Annual Meeting were to suffer a small loss. We considered delaying certain expenses, such as the interaction manager post, but ultimately decided that all these initiatives were too urgently needed to delay any longer; like nearly all associations these days, our membership base continues to slowly erode; we need to improve our value to our members. Therefore we have proposed a modest deficit for this coming year.

Fortunately the latest word on advance registrations puts the Vancouver Annual Meeting on a track comparable to recent meetings in eastern U.S. cities, and there are early indications that we will get the additional Asian and European attendees that originally led the Board to advocate the British Columbia location. Internationalizing the Society continues to be a priority for us, and eventually that path will lead to an enriched, larger and more participatory Society. Another encouraging sign is a growing number of positions available and candidates seeking positions that were in the online system for the Annual Meeting.

We are not counting on the 2009 Annual Meeting to generate a surplus that would balance the projected deficit. Yet, we are confident that the Vancouver meeting, like the initiatives mentioned above, will create long-term benefits for the Society.

M A R C H I O N I N I , c o n t i n u e d

member commit to taking some new action for ASIS&T. The following categories of action serve as a beginning agenda, and I welcome your suggestions for expanding the agenda (www.asis.org/wiki/bits/ is one place to post ideas).

Membership

It will be challenging to grow membership, given the current economy. I see a two-prong strategy. First, I strongly believe that the growth trajectory is in international members, especially from Europe and Asia/Australia. We have an active European Chapter, and I hope that we can add several new chapters around the globe. Many of us have colleagues in these regions, and I encourage everyone to reach out and welcome them to ASIS&T. Second, I believe that personal social networks are powerful means to attract members and leaders. I encourage all ASIS&T members to recruit their own personal contacts to ASIS&T and to use social networking tools to maintain and extend ASIS&T connections.

Leadership

For ASIS&T to flourish we must continue to inspire and nourish young information scientists to make ASIS&T their primary professional organization. In addition to leadership within the society it is essential that ASIS&T be the lead society in defining and promoting information science as a field and profession. I challenge each ASIS&T member in the following ways:

- Promote ASIS&T in some tangible way. For example, as you Twitter, blog, or participate in other social networking activities, mention ASIS&T or specifically write about ASIS&T. Join and participate in ASIS&T groups on Facebook and other services. Put your ASIS&T affiliation on your web pages and mention your ASIS&T affiliation when writing position statements or other papers.
- Invite and mentor one or more potential ASIS&T leaders to join the society and help shape the future of our field.
We can focus on people we know who are intellectually curious, who may be isolated in their professional roles and who have not been ASIS&T members.

- Make ASIS&T synonymous with IS. Promote the ASIS&T brand via connecting ASIS&T to information research, education and outreach events and services. As you plan and attend events, bring handouts or contact ASIS&T headquarters for promotional items to share. Give trip reports about ASIS&T events or activities to colleagues at work.

- Foster information science as a field. For example, volunteer in K-16 settings to talk to students about information science. Share articles from ASIS&T publications at government and policy meetings.

- Forge cooperative ventures with other societies to advance national and international agendas. As you see opportunities for ASIS&T to participate in collaborative position statements or events, discuss ways to get ASIS&T leaders and members involved.

**Participation as a Continual Process**

ASIS&T members must think and act beyond the Annual Meeting and other formal event inflection points. This entails re-conceptualizing our formal events and increasing our ASIS&T participation on a more regular basis.

I believe we can restructure the Annual Meetings on several fronts to make them more interactive and ongoing. Some goals include

- Link the Annual Meeting and Summit(s), chapter events and SIG events. For example, add short “best of” summaries from the Annual Meeting at local events and add short summaries or reprises of presentations from chapter and SIG events at the Annual Meeting.

- Increase use of virtual participation. Add video contributions and social networking services before, during and after ASIS&T meetings. Invite participation via remote connections (e.g., Skype appearances by commentators or reporters).

- Broaden the use of special sessions or tracks that broaden participation at meetings. For example, add an industry track or topic tracks to meetings; add more spontaneous and inclusive sessions.

- Propose and organize new ASIS&T summits on important topics. For 2010, we will introduce a new Summit on Research Data Access and Preservation. The summit will take place in Phoenix, April 9-10, 2010, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in conjunction with the IA Summit. Please check the ASIS&T website for details. It will be chaired by Reagan Moore and has an advisory board that includes William Anderson, Christine Borgman, Hsinchun Chen, Sayeed Choudhury, Michael Lesk, Gary Marchionini, William Michener, Art Pasquonelli, Sudha Ram and Stu Weibel. The summit will address three main questions: (1) What data access and preservation capabilities are required within and across research groups? (2) What technical solutions exist to meet these needs and how do they scale across domains? (3) What are the social contexts under which research communities assemble to share data?

To increase participation on a daily basis, the following activities are encouraged:

- Reinvigorate communication media (Bulletin, blog, website, Facebook) by following and adding your voice through comments and suggestions. Create your own blogs, groups and discussion forums to address information topics and issues that affect your career or interests.

- Increase roles in information science career development and education. Use ASIS&T publications and communications streams as continuing education for yourself and your colleagues. Participate in formal training
and certification functions at schools and universities. Help develop the ASIS&T career placement services (for example, use the Annual Meeting placement service, post positions to the ASIS&T Jobline, help human resource departments understand the value of information science degrees).

- Leverage social networking to personally invite participation both physically and virtually.

- Make chapter and SIG events more broadly accessible. For example, put highlights of chapter and SIG events on websites, use newsfeeds or other streams to share and promote these events. Be sure that your local media know about ASIS&T events.

These ideas are a first step and I welcome additional ideas and improvements on these to extend participation in ASIS&T and participation by ASIS&T.