

ASIS&T 2009 Award of Merit Speech Facilitating and Enhancing Scientific Discovery

by Carol Tenopir

I am honored and, in fact, thrilled to receive the ASIS&T Award of Merit. ASIS&T is my professional home and has always been very special to me. My first meeting was the 1976 meeting in San Francisco, and I have only missed one or two Annual Meetings since then. Submitting a paper or panel presentation to ASIS&T is a top priority for me each year, as is submitting my best work to *JASIST* and *ARIST*. All of my mentors have been active in ASIS&T (in fact, many served as ASIS&T president). On a very personal note, my husband Jerry Lundeen and I met at the 1979 Mid-Year Meeting in Banff. Our son Andy attended his first ASIS&T meeting in 1985 when he was 3 months old.

These memories are not merely a self-indulgent preface to my remarks; many of them exemplify aspects of my main message today – that is, first, the importance of professional societies; second, preserving research for future generations; and third, building strong mentoring relationships. Research and scientific discovery are facilitated and enhanced through strong professional societies, strong interpersonal mentoring relationships and ensuring that the building blocks and products of our scholarship including articles, reports and data are preserved in ways that make them findable, accessible and usable into the future.

First: Importance of Strong Professional Societies

Strong professional societies bring together present and future colleagues, help identify potential collaborators, expand knowledge, challenge assumptions and stretch thinking. They provide an intellectual home as well as local, national and international venues for publication and presentation. These interactions can be face-to-face as we are here, virtual or, better yet, both.

Membership in many small professional societies has decreased over the

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last decade. Some people blame the economy – saying dues are too expensive or employers no longer pay for dues. Others blame changing cultures – saying the younger generation doesn't value professional memberships or see the benefits. Still others blame technology – saying why belong to a professional society when you can easily and instantly interact with anyone virtually? Perhaps all of these may be contributing factors.

For all of us who know the value of professional societies, it is important to work together to make them flexible and relevant into the future by providing multiple ways to participate and interact. For those of us who work with students or young professionals, it is important that we encourage participation and provide opportunities for leadership and new ideas. And, although I am preaching to the choir by saying this to those who are in attendance here, attending and participating in face-to-face conferences when possible is important to building and sustaining a career and professional identity and hearing new ideas.

At the start of my career, my employers did not always pay for me to attend ASIS&T meetings. After rent, utilities and food, ASIS&T conferences were next on my priority list for several years. It was an investment in my future that I will never regret.

Second: Preserving Research for Future Generations

High-quality publication outlets are another important contribution from professional societies. No matter your age, it is time to start thinking about the preservation of your professional legacy by participating in the web of scholarship. Publishing your best work in high-quality peer-reviewed journals such as *JASIST* is one way, placing your reports, lecture materials and data in institutional or subject repositories is another. Multiple modes of publication and access will help preserve our intellectual heritage into the future and enable new discoveries. There is not just one solution, nor one type of information that we should focus on. ASIS&T members have the obligation

in our role as authors, but also the expertise and interest to take a leadership role in preservation and sustained access to other people's information.

ASIS&T members are leading participants in the first two National Science Foundation (NSF) DataNET projects, described in a session yesterday afternoon. DataNet (or Sustainable Digital Data Preservation and Access Network Partners) from the NSF Office of Cyberinfrastructure seeks to build exemplar organizations and interdisciplinary solutions to digital data capture, preservation, use and reuse. NSF describes it this way:

The new types of organizations envisioned...will integrate library and archival sciences, cyberinfrastructure, computer and information sciences, and domain science expertise to

- provide reliable digital preservation, access, integration and analysis capabilities for science and/or engineering data over a decades-long timeline;
- continuously anticipate and adapt to changes in technologies and in user needs and expectations;
- engage at the frontiers of computer and information science and cyberinfrastructure with research and development to drive the leading edge forward; and
- serve as component elements of an interoperable data preservation and access network. [1]

Information science in general and ASIS&T members in particular are natural leaders in this important work.

Although we are slower than some others, the University of Tennessee libraries have launched an institutional repository focusing on materials that otherwise might be lost, rather than duplicating the existing peer-reviewed-journal system. I have volunteered to be one of the first faculty members to put my speeches, reports and other materials into TRACE (Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange). A personal as well as a professional commitment to such initiatives is important to preserving our digital heritage.

Third: Building Strong Mentoring Relationships

And, finally, I would like to stress the importance of mentoring. Just as we build on past scholarship through citations, record present scholarship

through publication and encourage future scholarship by depositing and providing access to data, we pass on our knowledge and experience to new generations of scholars through mentoring.

I have been fortunate to have strong mentors throughout my career. At the start of my worklife, Pamela Cibbarelli, president of her own information consulting firm, gave me guidance in the work world and the freedom to make decisions. As a doctoral student at the University of Illinois, past ASIS&T president Martha E. Williams and incoming ASIS&T president Linda Smith shared their attention to detail, research expertise and knowledge of the information industry. For the last decade and a half Donald W. King, another former ASIS&T president and also an Award of Merit winner, has shared his extensive research experience, dedication to writing and even his data. Don is in Japan this week at a conference that is featuring the results of our surveys of reading at 20 Japanese universities. We decided it was more important for me to be here.

One never outgrows the need for a mentor, even when turning to mentoring others. Passing on our ideas, insights and even our data to mentees is an important way that scientific discovery advances. I am proud to count ASIS&T members Suzie Allard, Lorraine Normore and Peiling Wang as past and current mentees.

But I am straying into personal reminiscing again, so let me conclude by reiterating the importance for every scholar to bridge generations and build scholarship by serving as both a mentee and mentor; to preserve and pass on our best work, data and reports in scholarly journals and repositories; and to support and improve strong professional societies that provide formal and informal opportunities for collaboration and learning.

ASIS&T has been the center for these activities for my entire career, so I thank you once again for this very special honor. ■

Resource Cited in the Article

[1] Directorate of Computer & Information Science & Engineering, Office of Cyberinfrastructure, National Science Foundation. *Sustainable Digital Data Preservation and Access Network Partners (DataNet): Program solicitation NSF 07-601*. Retrieved October 26, 2009, from www.nsf.gov/pubs/2007/nsf07601/nsf07601.htm.