Words cannot express how honored I feel in receiving this award, which is especially meaningful to me because I regard ASIS&T as my primary scholarly and professional society. I am also grateful that this award is being given during a year when the ASIS&T conference is being held in Pittsburgh, 90 miles south of Meadville, Pennsylvania, where I began my freshman year at Allegheny College in the fall of 1967. Today we are joined by Dr. Barbara Lotze, professor emerita of physics from Allegheny, who was my undergraduate advisor. In the fall of 1977, I joined the faculty of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where I have pursued my career ever since.

My involvement in ASIS&T has been integral to my career development, beginning with attendance at my first ASIS&T conference in Washington, DC, in 1972. During that conference I sought out Vladimir Slamecka, director of the School of Information and Computer Science at Georgia Institute of Technology, to learn more about its graduate programs. After completing a year as a trainee in computer librarianship at the Washington University School of Medicine Library, I began studies as a graduate student at Georgia Tech, where I also worked as a literature searcher in the library.

While I have been inspired by the accomplishments of many previous Award of Merit winners, I have worked directly with and would like to pay tribute to six. I studied with F.W. Lancaster as an M.S. student in library science at Illinois, and it was he who introduced me to information science as a research area. During my time as a doctoral student in the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University, I was inspired by Robert Taylor’s leadership of the school and Pauline Atherton Cochrane’s contributions as a member of my dissertation committee. Pauline later joined me as a faculty colleague at Illinois. I worked with Gerard Salton for four years in ACM when he served as chair of ACM/SIGIR during my tenure as secretary. At Illinois I collaborated closely with Martha Williams for many years, especially on the Annual Review of Information Science and Technology.

Finally, Carol Tenopir, one of my early doctoral student advisees, was recognized with the 2009 Award of Merit 25 years after completing her Ph.D. at Illinois.

In my remaining remarks, I would like to briefly comment on three themes that have been salient in my career and that have particular relevance to ASIS&T: information science as a liberal art; innovation in education; and the importance of professional service.

**Theme 1: Information Science as a Liberal Art**

In 2005 William Arms, then co-director of the information science program at Cornell University, wrote an article titled “Information Science as a Liberal Art,” in which he seeks “to deal with the issue of how we can educate the next generation of leaders for the information needs of the future.” He argues that we should be “developing information science as a bridge between computer science and the social sciences – in the liberal arts tradition.” In this article he notes that Eugene Garfield, who has also been recognized with the ASIS&T Award of Merit, has an educational background that is “a template for today’s information scientists: an undergraduate science major (chemistry), a master’s in librarianship, and a Ph.D. in structural linguistics.”
My undergraduate liberal arts education at Allegheny spanned disciplines, a practice made even more explicit now with the encouragement to current students to explore “unusual combinations” in their choices of majors and minors. As one example of my student experience, Barbara Lotze saw to it that I studied mathematical physics “auf Deutsch,” solidifying my knowledge of physics and scientific German simultaneously. My education as an information science researcher likewise took place in interdisciplinary programs. In the mid-1970s the School of Information and Computer Science at Georgia Tech included faculty with backgrounds in linguistics, human information processing, operations research, library science and computer science, to name only a few. It was there that Michael Kelly, who had a Ph.D. in computer science from Stanford University with an emphasis in artificial intelligence, encouraged me to explore ways to build connections between information retrieval and artificial intelligence, which became the focus of my dissertation research at Syracuse. Under Dean Robert Taylor’s “Copernican world view with information at the center,” the doctoral program at Syracuse was a vibrant interdisciplinary environment with strengths in behavioral sciences, information systems and a wide range of research methods. At Illinois under the leadership of first Leigh Estabrook and now John Unsworth as dean, we have built up an interdisciplinary faculty in GSLIS. Perhaps not surprisingly, my affinity for ASIS&T for almost 40 years reflects my delight with its interdisciplinarity.

Theme II: Innovation in Education

I have had the privilege of being an educator for more than 30 years, a period in which innovation has been possible with applications of information and communication technologies and substantial federal investment from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). For the first 20 years I taught in a physical classroom; since 1997 I have shifted to teaching online as Illinois launched the LEEP option for our M.S. program. LEEP originally stood for Library Education Experimental Program and from the beginning there has been a commitment to research and assessment to enable continuous program improvement. I have been fortunate to oversee the growth and development of the program over this period, collaborating with a talented staff. Just as we and other library and information science programs have been pioneers in developing this new mode of teaching and learning on our own campuses, we have also been leaders in inter-institutional collaboration through the web-based Information Science Education consortium that now encompasses 15 schools in 5 countries. Illinois and Syracuse co-founded WISE, which grew with support from two IMLS grants.

Theme III: Importance of Professional Service

Beginning with Barbara Lotze’s service to associations in physics and continuing with my supervisors Estelle Brodmian at Washington University (who served the Medical Library Association as president) and James B. Dodd at Georgia Tech (who served the Special Libraries Association as president), I was shown by example the importance of professional service. This is a lesson that I try to impart to my own students. ASIS&T is especially welcoming and open to contributions by new members, a lesson I learned early on when James Cretsos, whose memory we honor with the Leadership Award, appointed me special consultant to the ASIS president on student membership in 1979. This was the first of many rewarding opportunities to contribute to the work of the Society. The introduction of the ASIS&T New Leaders Award this year continues this practice of encouraging new member involvement in professional service.

In conclusion, I will echo Richard Cook, who served as president of Allegheny College for 12 years. He observed, “I don’t cherish the spotlight. Reflected light is the most satisfying for me.” In accepting this award I celebrate my mentors, my colleagues at Illinois and in ASIS&T, and especially my students.