During the ASIS&T Annual Meeting in Montreal I had the distinct pleasure of attending a reception for past presidents of ASIS&T. The event was well attended and lively. I was impressed by the deep commitment that our past presidents have to the association. The conversation was a blend of amusing reminiscences and visions for the future of our field and for ASIS&T. As many of you know, an individual elected to the position of ASIS&T president is appointed for three years to the board: in the first year as president-elect, in the second year as president and in the third year as past-president. This arrangement provides a very enlightening introduction to the role of president during the year the individual is serving as president-elect and it offers the opportunity to complete work done as president when serving for a year as past-president. In this way, ASIS&T enjoys a continuity of leadership among its incoming, serving and outgoing presidents.

Our Association has challenges in 2013 that are not surprising to ASIST&T leadership, membership and head-office staff. These challenges relate directly to the future of our Association and what we want it to be. ASIS&T is fundamentally an association for and about us: how we interact; the new ideas we generate; and our exchanges at Annual Meetings, through scholarly papers, in special interest groups and on panels. Our value proposition is the connection that each member feels with other members: an affiliation, a shared expression of identity, of belonging to a worldwide association.

Across the past 20 years, there has been a gradual but steady
Our future rests with being an international, professional and scholarly association for the information field(s).

decline in ASIS&T membership. This decline is a deeply troubling trend. My primary goal in this year as president of ASIS&T is to address this issue. My focus for 2014 is to work with the ASIS&T Board and a number of our relevant committees to stop this decline and achieve an overall increase in ASIS&T membership by targeting international and institutional memberships and retaining our professional member and students after their graduations. As an association, we will always need and depend upon new and renewing members, so it is important to grow. Just as importantly, we need to warmly welcome all who want to affiliate with our association. ASIST&T has a responsibility to promote the information field, to make it more visible and to facilitate its future successes. We can fulfill this responsibility by engaging with a large, comprehensive, diverse and worldwide membership.

The information field is undoubtedly a growing domain. New theoretical perspectives, methods for research and techniques for effective information provision are regularly being introduced and expounded. Surely, then, there is a need for a premier professional and scholarly association capable of providing the benefits of affiliation and enhancing the quality and impact of the work of this community. So reaching out to this widening group of individuals and professional communities that study and work with information and technology is essential. Our future rests with being an international, professional and scholarly association for the information field(s). We have a well-attended Annual Meeting and high-quality publication venues. We need to strengthen opportunities for member engagement throughout the year. We should be welcoming new members to ASIS&T (students, scholars, researchers, teachers and professionals) from around the world every week.

The data on ASIS&T membership reveals two things: 1) The number of professional members is declining; and 2) ASIS&T has a large number of student members, but these memberships are not being renewed when students graduate and become information professionals. Clearly these two factors are related. I propose that we need to focus some attention on addressing the needs of our professional colleagues – to stress that ASIS&T is both a scholarly and professional association.

Of course this support requires a focus on the membership experience itself. We must ask how we can enhance the benefits and perceived value of ASIS&T for all members. We must also explore how we might increase the levels of engagement by all ASIS&T members with the association. This was certainly a theme of the presidencies of both Andrew Dillon and Diane Sonnenwald. This coming year we will continue to leverage the work of the Information Professionals Task Force, the Online Presence Task Force, the visibility and inclusiveness of the information field and the international scale and scope of ASIS&T membership to make affiliation and engagement with the ASIS&T community more fulfilling, rewarding and fun.

So here’s the bottom line – I want to focus my attention as president of ASIS&T on growth. I don’t want ASIS&T membership to continue to decline in numbers. Let’s turn that trend around. It just feels good to be part of something that is becoming more popular, diverse, inclusive and welcoming. I deeply appreciate the wonderful work that ASIS&T members do for our association and for the provision of information and technology services throughout the world. The world is becoming a better place through your important work, and ASIS&T is a better association through your participation and engagement.