With 2014 in front of us, I want to wish all members of ASIS&T a Happy New Year! 2013 was a challenging year for me. As I reflect over the past year, I have come to understand that we are all called to live our lives more joyfully and thankfully. There are many things that bring joy and appreciation into my life. For example, I am both joyful and thankful to be serving this year as ASIS&T president. My thanks go to each member of our Association – I am grateful that you choose to affiliate with ASIS&T. I am grateful for all the engagements of our members: submissions to our publications, contributions to our Annual Meeting, participation in Webinars and similar activities. And I am grateful for our member volunteers who serve on the Board, committees and task forces, SIGs and chapters that make up the leadership and governance structure of ASIS&T.

Our volunteer and distributed governance structure has many advantages. It allows us to canvas and incorporate the multiple and diverse expertise of participating members. It demonstrates that our Association is member driven and member responsive. It motivates us to constantly refine and enhance the value of ASIS&T membership. It reinforces the importance of affiliation and engagement, and it allows our Association to reflect the passion of our highly engaged members.

There are some disadvantages of course. Our governance structure means that we are a little less nimble in terms of decision-making and in the implementation of initiatives. Apart from our excellent headquarters office staff, the Association relies entirely upon members who volunteer their time and
I believe that we must be the world’s premier association for information professionals and information scholars.

expertise to the leadership and governance roles. This means quite simply that our governance structure relies almost entirely upon people who must prioritize between two roles: one as employee and one as member of ASIS&T. We all have other pressing roles to perform for our employers, and it is appropriate that this role is given higher priority than the leadership and governance role for ASIS&T.

My view is that our current governance structure is more beneficial than detrimental for ASIS&T. I want to share with you an update on work that is being done by the Board and several ASIS&T committees. First, let me update you on several Board initiatives. At the Board retreat in Summer 2013, we received a detailed report from the Web Presence Task Force. The Board discussed this report in detail leading up to the Annual Meeting in Montreal, and it was decided that the Association would commission a redesign of the ASIS&T website. A survey conducted by the Web Presence Task Force, chaired by Diane Rasmussen Pennington, revealed the urgent need for updating and upgrading to current technology and design so that our website better reflects a world-leading information association. We will soon be releasing a call for proposals from experts in the field of website design and construction to submit outlined plans for the website. In the meantime, the Board has decided to commission the Web Presence Task Force with the implementation of several changes to the current ASIS&T website including

1. creating a central, rotating-image, news banner that makes it easy to refresh and update important information that is relevant to ASIS&T members;

2. changing location of the login section and making it uncomplicated for users to log in and stay logged in;

3. altering the size of the main ASIS&T banner on the homepage to allow for more usable space for essential items; and

4. tidying up the layout and navigation “above the fold” to ensure essential activities (such as connecting to the Digital Library) are easy to find.

I am grateful to the members of the Web Presence Task Force for their expertise and for their willingness to take on this additional work.

As I stated in my last Bulletin column, my primary goal for this year of my presidency is to focus on addressing the steady decline in ASIS&T membership that has been occurring for the past couple of decades. I want to stop this decline in 2014 and create the beginning of a steady increase in ASIS&T membership in the coming years. To achieve this goal, I have asked the Membership Committee, led by Bill Edgar, to develop strategies that will lead to increased professional and institutional membership and to the translation of student members into professional or academic members after graduation. I have also asked the International Relations Committee, led by Mei Mei Wu, Yan Zhang and Diane Sonnenwald, to develop strategies that will lead to increased international membership. If members have ideas regarding how to recruit and retain international members, please contact the International Relations Committee.

In my last Bulletin column, I also identified where our
greatest potential for membership growth resides. I think this potential is in professional members. I believe that we must be the world’s premier association for information professionals and information scholars. Is ASIS&T a scholarly or a professional association? My response to this fair question is that ASIS&T is an association for information scholars and information professionals. Some scholarly members of ASIS&T may be concerned that we will lose some members who want the Association to be more focused upon the needs of information scholars. My reply to this concern is that I believe as an information scholar my intellectual life is enriched by meaningful engagement with information practitioners and that the purpose of my research is to impact users of information and information professionals who focus upon information access and provision. Is it possible for ASIS&T to be the association of choice for both information scholars and information professionals? I believe that it is possible and certainly desirable. It was the case in past years of the Association’s history, and it not only can be the case for our future but also needs to be, if we are to ensure a brighter future for our Association. There are, after all, many more information professionals working around the world than there are information scholars. This point has been reinforced by the Information Professionals Task Force, which has been doing a remarkable job explicating the many titles and job descriptions that come under the term information professional.

I am certain that we can and must do a better job of communicating the value of ASIS&T membership to information professionals. The membership committee will help us develop methods for doing so, but they will need your help. If you are a member of ASIS&T and an information professional, someone on the membership committee might approach you about why you regard ASIS&T membership as important to your role. What value do you see in your affiliation with the Association? How can we strengthen this value proposition for you and other information professionals? If the membership committee does not contact you in the next few months, I invite you to get in touch with Bill Edgar, with another member of the committee, with the committee’s board liaison, Sanda Erdelez, or with me. You might also talk with your colleagues who are not currently ASIS&T members. Ask them why they have not joined the Association and what might persuade them to reconsider doing so. If there are issues, themes or topics that arise from these conversations, please share these observations with Bill and the Membership Committee.

So returning to my theme of living more joyfully and thankfully, let me close this column with my deep appreciation for all that you do to actively engage with, promote and advance ASIS&T. Every member of our Association is vitally important. Please know that I am very grateful for your support and participation in building the world’s premier information association.