The International Calendar of Information Science Conferences (www.asis.org/Conferences/calendar/) is a collaborative effort of the ASIS&T Special Interest Group/International Information Issues (SIG/III), the European Chapter of ASIS&T and the New England Chapter to set up a centralized, master calendar of relevant conferences being held around the world. The compilers identify three goals:

- To help information science researchers and practitioners (and their colleagues in related disciplines) discover which conferences are planned that might fulfill their need to communicate their knowledge and experience and learn from others.
- To help conference organizers avoid time or topic conflicts or coordinate with other groups, leading to more interaction and coherence among professional groups.
- To contribute to facilitating interaction among like-minded professionals working on information problems around the world.

Entries in this calendar demonstrate the continued interest in face-to-face conferences. At the same time there is more experimentation with unconferences (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unconference) and virtual conferences (www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-x6hm8lp9Y) as alternatives or supplements to more conventional conference formats.

For many years ASIS&T has sponsored its Annual Meeting, which has continued to evolve in content and format. As described by Irene Farkas-Conn, almost 50 years ago:
The 1963 Annual Meeting in Chicago turned out to be a technical and financial success, thanks to [Hans Peter] Luhn. The program was more substantive than earlier meetings and included several interdisciplinary presentations. Luhn, marshaling IBM’s resources, arranged for the 700 registrants to receive “preprints” of short papers set into print with a computer-driven composer. ADI [American Documentation Institute, precursor of ASIS&T] members were proud that this volume, the first technical book ever composed on electronic information processing equipment, was produced at their Annual Meeting. (1, p. 193)

In contrast the proceedings of the ASIS&T 2010 Annual Meeting were distributed on a USB flash drive as well as being available on the web in the ASIS&T Digital Library and the ACM Digital Library. The ASIS&T 2011 Information Architecture (IA) Summit made use of Slideshare to provide access to the slides of many of the presentations as well as a blog and a twitter feed. Likewise the ASIS&T Research Data Access and Preservation (RDAP) Summit made use of Slideshare and twitter.

The ASIS&T Annual Meeting is the main venue for disseminating research centered on advances in the information sciences and related applications of information technology. Presenters have a variety of options for contributing through papers, panels, workshops, tutorials, posters, demos and videos. ASIS&T 2011 conference co-chairs Suzie Allard, University of Tennessee, and Lynn Silipigni Connaway, OCLC, have chosen the broad theme “Bridging the Gulf: Communication and Information in Society, Technology and Work,” with the scope spanning information behavior, knowledge organization, interactive information and design, information and knowledge management, information use, and economic, social and political issues. Workshops sponsored by special interest groups (SIGs) offer the opportunity for a “conference within a conference,” such as the planned 2011 SIG/CR (Classification Research) workshop on “Classification, Collections and Curation.”

While the scope of each Annual Meeting is as varied as the range of SIGs that make up ASIS&T, ASIS&T also organizes more focused summits. The IA Summit, held annually since 2000, supports the IA and UX (user experience) communities. Gary Marchionini took the lead in organizing the first RDAP Summit in 2010 as one of his initiatives as ASIS&T president. The 2nd RDAP Summit held March 31-April 1, 2011 focused on the state of institutional repositories (IRs) in the academy and government agencies and efforts toward interoperability across these emerging systems. Panels addressed different approaches to building and operating IRs and efforts to support national and scholarly linkages to IRs. Attendees also participated in open discussions about the future of IRs and digital libraries. While the IA Summit serves well established though rapidly evolving communities, the RDAP Summit is seeking to foster a community focused on issues related to research data access and preservation. The mix of attendees contributed complementary perspectives (for example, social science/science, government/academe, archives/libraries, information science/information technology). The RDAP summit clearly fills a gap by providing a shared forum for discussion of issues of common interest. Planning is already under way for RDAP 2012 under the leadership of Mike Giarlo of Penn State.

The ASIS&T purpose notes that “the Society seeks to stimulate participation and interaction among its members by affording them an environment for substantive professional exchange.” Each year the ASIS&T Annual Meeting and the more focused summits play important roles in realizing this purpose. I welcome member input on how the Annual Meeting can be enhanced and whether there are emerging topic areas beyond IA and RDAP that could benefit from ASIS&T sponsorship of a face-to-face summit.