We are pleased to bring you this special issue of the Bulletin of the Association of Information Science and Technology, dedicated to international information issues and topics related to ASIS&T’s activities, special interest groups (SIGs), chapters and members. ASIS&T was established in 1937 with the goal of stimulating communications and interactions within the information science community. Despite the evolving focus areas reflecting the range of its members’ academic and professional interests, this goal remains highly relevant and even more pressing in today’s globalized world. ASIS&T is a truly international organization, with members from over 50 countries from around the world. The international nature of ASIS&T has allowed a cross-continental network of information scholars and professionals to develop. This in turn has allowed exchanges on international information issues, challenges and opportunities to take place. A number of ASIS&T presidents, including Harry Bruce, Donald Case, Andrew Dillon and Diane Sonnenwald, and their respective boards of directors, much to their...
credit, worked tirelessly for these interactions to happen. They recognized that ASIS&T’s future growth is partly tied to its internationalization and, accordingly, they set in motion various reforms [1] [2] [3] [4].

In addition to ASIS&T’s efforts and activities as an umbrella professional organization, its special interest groups (SIGs) provide a focal point for members with common interests to interact and share information. SIGs and chapters are where most of ASIS&T’s activities take place. For instance, Special Interest Group/International Information Issues (SIG/III), which is one of the largest of the ASIS&T SIGs, provides a forum for members to explore, share and discuss international information issues as well as ways to address them. What is more, SIGs and chapters are at the forefront of membership recruitment. Programs such as SIG/III’s InfoShare have introduced ASIS&T to numerous information professionals around the world. Through InfoShare, SIG/III has sponsored over 150 annual ASIS&T memberships of individual information professionals and students from more than 30 developing countries (Figure 1). Also, for the past 15 years, SIG/III has organized the International Paper Contest. While there can be up to six winners (each winner receives a two-year individual membership to ASIS&T), the first place winner (who is a citizen of and resides in a developing country) is often fully funded to attend the ASIS&T Annual Meeting. So far, about 400 authors from more than 50 countries have participated in the International Paper Contest. A number of winning papers have also been published in International Information and Library Review. These and similar efforts by other SIGs with international members and/or focus provide a wonderful opportunity to learn from our colleagues in developing countries and to share ideas and experiences.

To highlight some of the activities and provide insight into ASIS&T (including its internationalization), we put together this special issue of the Bulletin. The special issue contains eight great contributions by some of the most active and leading members of the ASIS&T community. The first set of articles highlights the challenges as well as successes that ASIS&T and its wider community have had in the past. In the first of this set, Daniel Alemneh provides a summary of interviews conducted with Toni Carbo and Michel Menou, co-founders of SIG/III along with Tefko Saracevic and countless other pioneers and leading figures of the field. The interviews were originally conducted as part of ASIS&T’s 75th anniversary and the 30th anniversary commemorative publication of SIG/III [5]. Continuing the topic of SIGs, Naresh Agarwal (the current director of the ASIS&T Chapter Assembly) discusses how enhancing communication among the different ASIS&T chapters and SIGs can strengthen the Association. He emphasizes the need to evolve from a platform of information dissemination to one of information creation, contribution and shared participation. Similarly, in a student perspective article, Catherine Dumas and Abebe Rorissa advocate for strengthening ASIS&T’s 43 student chapters and 13 regional chapters, most of which have student members.

In “We’ve Built It, But Are They Coming? International Participation in ASIS&T Online Educational Offerings,” June Abbas and Diane Pennington lead us through our existing virtual networking activities and suggest further conversations to identify mechanisms to foster and enhance ASIS&T’s online presence. In “Some Points about ASIS&T Global Initiatives,” Diane
Sonnenwald (ASIS&T past president) summarizes some of the recent initiatives undertaken by ASIS&T, which are, in many ways, a continuation of past activities and efforts by many members over the years with some new ones added. Among other things, she invites members to propose additional initiatives.

Lee Wilson and Anatoliy Gruzd use their article “MOOCs – International Information and Education Phenomenon?” to show the sudden rise of MOOCs as vehicles for a new age in education wherein anyone, anywhere can have access to free, high quality education. In a slightly different vein, Jamila Ghaddar and Nadia Caidi urge us to incorporate indigenous views and values into our knowledge organization and representation approaches in “Indigenous Knowledge in a Post-Apology Era: Steps Toward Healing and Bridge-Building.” Finally, in “Information Policy: Global Issues and Opportunities for Engagement,” Kristene Unsworth challenges us to find an issue in our daily lives that does not potentially have some information policy element, be it an international, ethics, government, education or other information policy issue.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the ASIS&T Bulletin Advisory Board for the opportunity to put together this special issue, and Toni Carbo for her guidance and constant feedback. As the past chairs of SIG/III, we both are particularly delighted that this special issue focuses on international information issues. We would like to thank our contributors and colleagues for such wonderful articles. With individual and institutional members from around the globe, ASIS&T is a truly international society. We echo our contributors in saying that ASIS&T’s initiatives are already global initiatives. Indeed, there is no other place to get the gist of current knowledge, issues and questions regarding information science and technology on a global scale. Let’s get involved and be part of the global phenomena as our association continues to embark on another chapter in its evolution and, of course, progression!

Resources Mentioned in the Article


