As this is my farewell column as president, the tendency to take stock and attempt to tidy up loose ends proves irresistible. The term of the Association’s presidency, however, allows little chance of completing an agenda, no matter what we hope for or promise in our original statements of candidacy. In reality, you take office with some ideas, immediately face pressing existing business from the last term and if you’re lucky, you initiate some of your own projects before handing off to the next incumbent. Since we all know our replacements, there is little time for any one of us to become too comfortable as president.

In a very real way, this weaving together of presidential activities and initiatives across the years is good for the Association. It ensures a slow, hopefully methodical, process of leadership and goal setting. This weaving works particularly well when a group of leaders share similar ideals for the association, as I believe I have been fortunate to experience in both my predecessors and my successors. Few remember our statements when we sought election, but I know from speaking to those who served and will serve as ASIS&T president that we all have similar hopes and plans for our Association.

Primarily, this year will be remembered for the name change overwhelmingly approved by members to reflect our global reach. The explosion of interest in information and its underlying technologies and the impact they have on human activities knows no national boundaries. Why then, many of us asked, did our name not reflect this? But a name change does not happen overnight. The process we followed was the product
of several years’ deliberation, and while my statement of intent when running for president included a promise to explore this option seriously, I was actually able to preside over its full implementation thanks to the work of former president Diane Sonnenwald, who laid the groundwork for the ballot. Even then, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that it was an issue that was first discussed under the terms of Nick Belkin, Sam Hastings and Trudi Bellardo Hahn. All this reflection to say, serious changes are the result of years of discussion, and many people play a role in shaping the society, though the record might not always reflect it.

A less visible but no doubt likely important set of tasks has been ongoing since the name change. Thanks to our leading international members, we are beginning to target potential new members in other parts of the world by direct outreach. By issuing personal presidential invitations to join and explaining the benefits of membership in the recipients’ native language, we are hoping to increase the number of members from key geographic regions. We are starting with China, but the initiative will spread to other countries. This project will outlive my term as we actively pursue all approaches to growing our membership and positioning ASIS&T as the primary professional association for information science around the world.

No less ambitious but certainly more visible to all is the commitment taken at the summer retreat to hold an ASIS&T Annual Meeting outside of North America in the next few years. Europe is likely the venue and 2016 the probable year, given the contractual commitments already made. We run Euro IA already, but a full Annual Meeting on another continent is important if we are to deliver our promise of being the international society for information professionals.

As I sign off, I know we are putting in place processes to position ASIS&T at the forefront of information science discourse. Our society is also in need of internal reorganization to improve our web presence, and you can expect announcements about the steps we are taking here in due course. We are building new relationships through our partnership with DCMI. We are examining ways to make the connection between student and local chapters more seamless, to make clearer and more obvious the membership transition between student and professional status (did you know we allow reduced membership rates for the three years post-graduation?). And yes, we are rethinking how ASIS&T is organized around committees and task forces as well as how we might broaden our publication coverage through different outlets. You will witness outcomes from our current work and witness further new initiatives under the terms of future presidents. This is as it should be for an ongoing, evolving professional association. But you don’t just have to witness these changes; you can get involved and directly shape them.

When I accepted the presidency, I looked at the list of names of those who had gone before me and wondered how it was that I had come this far. I still wonder. In every life, luck plays a far greater role than the successful will ever admit, but I have no problem acknowledging it. I have been so very fortunate to work with and for this Association, and I will not forget the gift bestowed upon me when I was elected. Thank you for your support, for your commitment to ASIS&T and to the values of our field in shaping a better world.