

## **A European Annual Conference, Mentoring and Publication Coverage of European Issues: European Information Professionals Identify ASIS&T Benefits that Would Be of Value**

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*\* The recommendations included in this report have not yet been considered by the Board of Directors of ASIS&T.*

### **1. Introduction**

The ASIS&T Membership Committee was asked by the Board to develop strategies regarding how to attract and retain new members outside the U.S. In particular, the committee was asked to identify benefits and services of value to potential members outside the U.S. During the Membership Committee meeting at the November, 2006 ASIS&T Annual Meeting, Cassidy Sugimoto and Diane Sonnenwald volunteered to address this issue for Europe, with the assistance of Caryn Anderson, Chair of the Membership Committee. The results of their investigation clearly point to a number of potential ASIS&T benefits that European information professionals would find of value and which would encourage them to become members. Holding the annual meeting periodically in Europe, mentoring opportunities, and more coverage of European issues in publications (newsletters or in the Bulletin) top the list of recommendations. The investigation also generated a list of regional professional associations that ASIS&T may be able to partner with in the future as strategies are developed to provide and strengthen these benefits.

### **2. Methodology**

The authors developed an online survey (see Appendix I) to collect data from ASIS&T members and potential members on how to increase and retain membership in Europe. The survey was reviewed by ASIS&T members in Europe (e.g., Michel Menou) and ASIS&T Executive Director Dick Hill before it was distributed. An email request asking message recipients complete the survey (and to forward the survey request to their colleagues) was sent to our colleagues throughout Europe via the ASIS&T European listserv, various professional listservs in European countries, and direct emails to faculty at LIS programs throughout Europe. There is no comprehensive directory for the latter so we initially identified European LIS programs through EUCLID's (European Association for Library and Information Education and Research) and Information Research's (informationr.net) websites. Next we read each program's web site (when available) and searched for faculty email addresses.

Sixty-eight sets of responses were received in May and June of 2007. Open-ended survey questions were analyzed in order to categorize, or code, responses. For example, the category, "Annual meeting in Europe," included the following participant responses:

*A meeting in Europe*

*Conference in Europe every other year, every other in the US.*

*A European information science conference would be nice. There isn't a UK information science conference any more. It would be really nice to have a European ASIS&T annual meeting.*

All open-ended responses regarding benefits were coded into categories. Four themes emerged from these categories: career, information, conferences and other.

All data, including coded data, were imported into SPSS, version 14, and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

### 3. Survey Respondent Profile

**Table 1. National affiliation**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Austria	1	1.5
Belgium	1	1.5
Denmark	5	7.4
Finland	8	11.8
France	9	13.2
Germany	3	4.4
Iceland	1	1.5
Italy	1	1.5
Netherlands	1	1.5
Portugal	1	1.5
Republic of Ireland	3	4.4
Slovakia	1	1.5
Spain	10	14.7
Sweden	13	19.1
Ukraine	1	1.5
United Kingdom	9	13.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>100.0</i>

**Table 2. Membership in ASIS&T**

<b>Current member?</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>% of total</b>
No	42	61.8
Yes	26	38.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>100.0</i>

A total of 68 people from 16 European countries completed the survey (Table 1). Although the responses were not equally distributed across the 16 countries, no one country dominated the responses. Sweden, Spain, France, UK and Finland provided the most responses, followed by Denmark, Germany and Ireland. There was one respondent from each of the remaining countries: Austria, Belgium, Iceland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia and Ukraine.

61.8% of the respondents are not currently ASIS&T members (Table 2), indicating we were successful in reaching people not currently ASIS&T members.

**Table 3. Current job title of respondents**

<b>Job title</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Archivist professional	1	1.5
Consultant	3	4.4
Corporate or government researcher	1	1.5
IS professional/practitioner	5	7.4
Library professional/practitioner	12	17.6
Student	5	7.4
University teacher/researcher	40	58.8
Usability professional	1	1.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Respondents came from both library and information science professions (Table 3). The two largest professional job categories are university teachers and researchers (58.8%) and library professionals (17.6%). The next two largest job categories are information science professional (7.4%) and student (7.4%).

**Table 4. ASIS&T Membership per job title**

<b>Current job</b>	<b>Member of ASIS&amp;T</b>		<b>Total</b>
	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	
Archivist professional	1	0	1
Consultant	3	0	3
Corporate or government researcher	1	0	1
IS professional/practitioner	4	1	5
Library professional/practitioner	11	1	12
Student	3	2	5
University teacher/researcher	18	22	40
Usability professional	1	0	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>68</i>

All job categories included respondents who are not currently ASIS&T members (Table 4). The largest job title, university teacher/researcher, is comprised of 18 respondents who are not members and 22 who are. In all other job categories, there are more non-members than members.

One can always wish for more responses to a survey, but in the 68 responses there is a reasonable representation of European countries, job categories and non-members.

#### **4. Affiliations and Valued Benefits**

Three open-ended questions were used to investigate the benefits of value to European information professionals:

Which is your main professional society?  
 What benefits motivate you to retain that membership?  
 What benefits should ASIS&T provide to members in Europe?

#### 4.1 Professional Affiliation

**Table 5. Main professional society<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Geographic region</b>	<b>Main Professional Society</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
American	1. ASIS&T 2. CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) in that order	1	1.5
	American Chemical Society	1	1.5
	American Library Association (USA) Sociedad Española de Documentación e Información - SEDIC	1	1.5
	ASIS&T	13	19.1
	ASIS&T DGI (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Informationswissenschaft = German Society for Information Science)	1	1.5
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>25.0</i>
	European	Association des Archivistes français (French Archivists Association)	1
Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals		2	2.9
Dansk psykologforening (Danish psychological society)		1	1.5
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Informationswissenschaft und Informationspraxis		1	1.5
Documentation et Lecture en Guadeloupe*		1	1.5
FESABID: Federación Española de Sociedades de Archivística, Biblioteconomía, Documentación y Museística		1	1.5
Finnish Information Specialists		1	1.5
Finnish Research Library Association		1	1.5
FSU snasub/ SYNDICAT NATIONAL DES BIBLIOTHEQUES*		1	1.5
Institut des Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication (ISIC), Université de Bordeaux 3 - Michel de Montaigne*		1	1.5
School Library Association Republic of Ireland		1	1.5
SEDIC		1	1.5
Swedish Association for Information Specialists (SFIS)		1	1.5
Swedish Library Association		3	4.4

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report when 2 or more societies were listed by a respondent, the first society was used as main society during data analysis, but the second society was not discarded and appears in the table.

	The Institucion Futuro	1	1.5
	Library Association of Ireland	2	2.9
	The University of the West of England - UWE Bristol*	1	1.5
	Turku Public Libraries*	1	1.5
	Université Nancy2*	1	1.5
	ANABAD	1	1.5
	ADBS, ISKO France, Society of Indexers (UK)	1	1.5
	The Union for Documentation, Information and Culture	1	1.5
	<i>Subtotal</i>	27	39.7
International	International Society for Scientometrics and Informetrics (ISSI, Society for the Social Studies of Science (4S))	1	1.5
	International Council on Archives/ICA	1	1.5
	Society for the Social Studies of Science	1	1.5
	UPA (Usability Professional Association)	1	1.5
	UPA, CHI, STC	1	1.5
	<i>Subtotal</i>	5	7.4
<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>29.4</b>
	<i>Total</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>100.0</i>

\* These responses are not professional societies per se, but are the name of organizations. It may be that these organizations have active communities of practice that function as a professional society, or that the survey question 'Which is your primary, or main, professional society or organization?' was poorly worded.

As shown in Table 5, only 15 of the 26 respondents who are ASIS&T members listed ASIS&T as their primary professional society. (This includes two respondents who listed a second society in addition to ASIS&T as their primary society.) That is, *57.7% of ASIS&T European members who responded to the survey perceive ASIS&T as their primary professional association*. In comparison, 50.8% of respondents in the 2003 ASIS&T membership survey claimed ASIS&T as their primary society (Vaughn & Hahn, 2005). If our survey respondents are representative of ASIS&T European membership in general, then European ASIS&T membership may be a valuable dedicated constituency for the society.

Many respondents (almost 40%) view a national professional society as their main society. No one national society dominated in the responses; both librarian and information science societies in various countries were identified as main societies. This result appears to indicate that there is no one society that ASIS&T could establish a strong affiliation with in order to attract new European members. However, it may also imply that partnering with national societies in some way may increase the visibility of ASIS&T in Europe.

Approximately 30% of the respondents did not identify any society as their main society. If so many across Europe do not belong to a society, it seems to indicate there is an opportunity for ASIS&T to expand its membership numbers in Europe.

#### 4.2 Current benefits from main professional societies

**Table 6. Current benefits from professional societies**

Type of Benefit	Benefit	ASIS&T your main society?		Total Responses	
		No	Yes	N	%
Information	Scholarly Publications	7	5	12	15.2
	Current Information	11	0	11	13.9
	<i>JASIS&amp;T</i>	1	6	7	8.9
	Research Information	3	0	3	3.8
	<i>Bulletin</i>	0	1	1	1.3
	Monthly Newsletter	1	0	1	1.3
	Information on Forthcoming Titles	0	1	1	1.3
	Information on EU Policies	1	0	1	1.3
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>46.8</i>
Career	Networking	11	5	16	20.3
	Continuing Education	5	0	5	6.3
	Prestige	3	1	4	5.1
	Financial resources to develop career	1	0	1	1.3
	Negotiate Salary	1	0	1	1.3
	Job Alert	0	1	1	1.3
	Mentoring PhD Students	1	0	1	1.3
	SIGs	0	1	1	1.3
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>38.0</i>	
Conferences	Conferences	4	5	9	11.4
	Conference Discount	0	2	2	2.5
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>13.9</i>
Other	Honorary membership/no dues	1	0	1	1.3
Total				79	100

By investigating the current benefits Europeans receive from their main professional society, we can gain insights regarding how ASIS&T compares to other societies from a European perspective. Information is the single largest type of benefit (Table 6) identified by all respondents, including those who do not list ASIS&T as their main professional society. This includes scholarly publications, but also current information. *JASIS&T*, a scholarly publication, is identified as a specific benefit by those respondents who identified ASIS&T as their main society.

The second largest category of benefits focuses on careers. In fact, networking, the top ranked career benefit is also the single largest benefit identified overall (20%). Other top career benefits include continuing education, salary negotiation and prestige. The third category is conferences, and the fourth category, Other, includes honorary memberships (where no dues are charged.)

By looking at responses from the thirteen people who are ASIS&T members but do not perceive ASIS&T as their main professional society, we can gain insights regarding what benefits current European ASIS&T members value from other societies. As shown in Table 7, European ASIS&T

members who do not perceive ASIS&T as their main professional society value networking, continuing education, prestige, salary negotiation assistance, scholarly publications, current information, research information, conferences and honorary membership from their main professional society. Although the number of responses and differences are small, it may be that if ASIS&T would increase benefits in these areas, ASIS&T would become the professional society of choice for these respondents.

**Table 7. Main benefits from professional societies perceived by ASIS&T members**

Type of Benefit	Benefit	Responses from:		Difference
		ASIS&T member	ASIS&T main society	
Information	Scholarly Publications	6	5	1
	Current Information	1	0	1
	JASIS&T	7	6	1
	Research Information	1	0	1
	Bulletin	1	1	0
	Monthly Newsletter	0	0	0
	Information on Forthcoming Titles	1	1	0
	Information on EU Policies	0	0	0
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>4</i>
Career	Networking	7	5	2
	Continuing Education	1	0	1
	Prestige	3	1	2
	Financial resources to develop career	0	0	0
	Negotiate Salary	1	0	1
	Job Alert	1	1	0
	Mentoring PhD Students	0	0	0
	SIGs	1	1	0
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>6</i>	
Conferences	Conferences	7	5	2
	Conference Discount	2	2	0
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>2</i>
Other	Honorary membership/no dues	1	0	1
Total		41	28	13

#### 4.3 Benefits ASIS&T should considering providing to Europeans

**Table 8. Proposed activities for ASIS&T to attract European members**

Type of Activity	Activity	Is ASIS&T your main society?		Total # of suggestions	
		No	Yes	N	%
Conferences	Annual conference in Europe	21	14	35	38.9
	Higher quality conference	1	0	1	1.1
	Change conference deadlines	0	1	1	1.1
	Incentives to attend conference	2	0	2	2.2
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>41.1%</i>
Career	Mentoring	6	3	9	10
	Publish in many languages	5	0	5	5.6
	Help editing papers	2	1	3	3.3
	European Networking	3	2	5	5.6
	Continuing Education	2	0	2	2.2
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>25.3%</i>	
Information	European Newsletter	5	3	8	8.9
	Info on US libraries	1	0	1	1.1
	Intelligence awareness conference	1	0	1	1.1
	Create a Who's Who	1	0	1	1.1
	Access to & interest in EU Research	1	1	2	2.2
	Publish research for practitioners	1	0	1	1.1
	Create publications not related to conference			1	1.1
	Info on financial aid for students	1	0	1	1.1
	Best practice	1	0	1	1.1
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>17.9%</i>
Other	EU discussion forum	1	0	1	1.1
	EU portal	2	0	2	2.2
	Joint US-EU projects	1	0	1	1.1
	Name change	2	1	3	2.2
	Have an international Board Member	2	0	2	2.2
	Life membership >60 yrs of age	1	0	1	1.1
	Active local/national chapter	2	2	4	3.3
	Professional associations network	1	0	1	1.1
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>15.8%</i>	
Totals		67	28	95	100.0%

Note: This table includes responses to the survey question and any "other comments" that could be classified as suggested benefits.

The top-ranked suggestion regarding benefits ASIS&T should provide to more effectively serve members in Europe is holding an annual conference in Europe (Table 8). This suggestion was mentioned 35 times (37.2% of all suggestions.) Although the primary job category of those who

suggested holding an ASIS&T Conference (annual meeting) in Europe are university teachers and researchers, in fact, respondents in almost all job categories made this suggestion (Table 9).

**Table 9. Job categories of respondents recommending an annual ASIS&T conference to be held in Europe**

Job category	# of responses	% of respondents in job category
Consultant	1	50%
IS professional/practitioner	4	80%
Library professional/practitioner	2	17%
Student	3	60%
University teacher/researcher	25	63%
Overall average across categories		51%

In addition, respondents from 13 (out of 16) countries suggested ASIS&T conference(s) in Europe. Several respondents suggested that the annual conference be held periodically in Europe. They reported:

*Why not do as, e.g., ACM SIGIR [does. Holding a conference] in America one year, and in Europe the next? And soon Asia will be the third continent in the mix.*

*It would be really nice to have an ASIS&T meeting in Europe form time to time...say every three years would be great.*

*Regularly placing the Annual Meeting in Europe*

Others also suggested that an annual conference in Europe be held in conjunction with an established European conference and that the January/February conference submission deadline be changed to March/April. Another respondent also suggested there be incentives to attend the annual meeting in the U.S., although no details regarding types of incentives were mentioned. It should also be noted that cost can be an issue in some European countries. One respondent said:

*International associations are often very expensive and a lot of European countries cannot pay 300 or 400 euros to only take part in a congress (without travel and hotel)*

The second ranked suggestion was mentoring (9 responses, 10%). Mentoring was suggested by 2 library professionals, 2 students and 4 university teachers/researchers, indicating that a broad range of mentoring may be ideal.

The third ranked suggestion focused on a European newsletter, including having a section in the *ASIS&T Bulletin* that regularly focuses on Europe. For example, coverage of European research, activities and EU policies could be provided on a regular basis.

Other suggestions that at least 5 respondents recommended are support for European networking, opportunities to publish in different languages. Related to the latter suggestion is the recommendation to provide help by editing papers written in English.

All other suggestions made by 2 or 1 respondent can be found in Table 8. In sum, the suggestions indicate a need for ASIS&T as an organization to better understand and respect national and LIS cultures in Europe. As two respondents reported:

*I know you can't help the cultural climate right now, but I got the feeling ASIS&T is just for Americans. So many people have little interest for what is done in Europe, no matter what that may be.*

*[ASIS&T's] entire ethos is US-based.*

## 5. Discussion

Based on the results of this informal survey, it appears that the greatest benefit that ASIS&T could provide to European information professionals is to hold an annual meeting periodically in Europe. A follow-up study to assess whether ASIS&T members in the U.S. and other non-European countries would also support such a conference could be beneficial. Holding a conference in Europe involves some risk, but there may be strategies to reduce this risk. This survey has generated a list of professional associations in Europe that might be potential partners in an annual meeting. In addition, some European countries, such as Sweden, as well as European universities have special grant funds to support international conferences held in their country or at their university. Partnering with local ASIS&T members who are willing to apply for these funds can reduce the financial risk of an annual meeting in Europe.

Regarding mentoring and more publication of European information issues, it is possible that with a modest increase in financial, technical and coordination support, the current ASIS&T chapter in Europe might be able to take the lead on such endeavors. However, further study is needed to identify what type of mentoring is most needed. For example, is mentoring between junior and senior colleagues in academia or in practice most needed? Is mentoring regarding opportunities in U.S. academia and/or practice needed?

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the results of this survey, we recommend that ASIS&T investigate holding an annual meeting in Europe. We also recommend that the ASIS&T board (or a representative from the Membership Committee sanctioned by the Board) engage in further conversations with the European chapter to explore what it would take to implement the mentoring and information dissemination strategies outlined above.

Certainly there are other good suggestions that emerged from this study, but we feel that it is most logical, and will be most productive, to pursue the ideas that emerged most frequently. We look forward to continuing to work on expanding the reach and benefits of ASIS&T in Europe. Our thanks to everyone who completed the survey and provided feedback on earlier drafts of this report.

## References

Vaughn, L. & Hahn, T.B. (2005). Profiles, needs and expectations of information professionals: What we learned from the 2003 ASIST membership survey, *JASIS&T*, 56(1), 95-105.

## Appendix 1. Survey Questions

For what type of organization do you primarily work? (Business/commercial, Educational, Central or local government agency, Military, Nongovernmental/nonprofit organization, Self-employed/consultant, Other (please specify))

What European country is your primary place of work? (Select from list)

Which of the following most closely describes your current, primary work function? (Library professional/practitioner, IS professional/practitioner, Student, University teacher/researcher, Corporate or government researcher, Other (please specify))

Are you currently a member of ASIS&T? (Yes, No)

Which is your primary, or main, professional society or organization? (If other than ASIS&T, please spell out the full name)

For the professional society you listed in 5, which two benefits most motivate you to maintain your membership?

Please list two benefits that ASIST should provide in order to more effectively serve members in Europe (e.g., a conference in Europe, opportunities for publishing in your language, mentoring in the field, etc.).

Please add any other comments you wish to make.