

# Introduction

by Caryn L. Anderson, Editor of Special Section

## Information Professionals in a Globalized World

This special international section of the *Bulletin* is dedicated to our dear friend and colleague Susan O'Neill Johnson, who passed away last fall. Sue contributed tremendously to ASIS&T's efforts to reach out to librarians and information professionals in developing countries and provide them sustained encouragement, support and opportunities. She helped institutionalize the InfoShare Program of Special Interest Group/International Information Issues (SIG/III) and enthusiastically raised money for it. She co-founded the SIG/III International Paper Contest and worked very hard to initiate its travel grant program, all of which have richly expanded the ASIS&T community of colleagues, including the key authors of this special section. We are honored to dedicate these words, and the spirit they represent, to Sue's memory.

This introduction to the special section includes four topics to help focus our attention on information professionals in a globalized world:

- Visions from a Globalized Society
- ASIS&T International Relations Committee Report
- Survey of European Information Scientists
- Global Information Resources

Caryn L. Anderson is doctoral studies program manager at the Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. She can be reached by email at [caryn.anderson@simmons.edu](mailto:caryn.anderson@simmons.edu).

### Visions from a Globalized Information Society by Caryn L. Anderson

On behalf of the officers and members of the ASIS&T Special Interest Group on International Information Issues (SIG/III) ([www.asis.org/SIG/SIGIII/index.htm](http://www.asis.org/SIG/SIGIII/index.htm)), I am pleased to share with you the perspectives of some of our fellow information professionals and ASIS&T colleagues from around the world. These essays represent a small window into a vast and diverse information-focused community. As our world becomes more globally interconnected, it is increasingly important to be aware of how our information science research and practice can affect, engage and benefit from information activities and environments on every continent.

We open with a brief outline of strategies approved by the ASIS&T Board of Directors in October 2007 to expand and integrate ASIS&T's global sensibilities and engagement. These strategies were proposed and will be executed by the newly formed ASIS&T International Relations Committee, which was established in 2006 by the ASIS&T Board of Directors and charged with advising the Board on ways to increase ASIS&T's international presence. With ASIS&T's global commitment thus established, we turn to our colleagues around the world.

Seven winners of the SIG/III International Paper Contest and InfoShare awards profile specific initiatives and the general information climates in their regions. It is their hope, and ours, that readers will gain stimulating insight into the ways in which information problems around the world are both similar and unique. If readers are inspired to learn more or to reach out to partner with colleagues in other countries, we will consider this special section a great success.

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Dr. Goswami and P.K. Jain discuss challenges faced by libraries in India as they work to remain relevant in an increasingly technology-based culture. Maria José Vicentini Jorente describes the ongoing activities and results of the New Technologies in Information Group in Brazil, which is focused on improving digital inclusion initiatives in schools and social programs through comprehensive investigation of cognitive behavior, theories of education and information technology adoption strategies. Ala'a Al-Din J. Kadhem Al-Radhi is an Iraqi national currently working in Jordan. He presents a road map for crafting new models of distance learning to help rebuild and strengthen the Iraqi higher education systems so that Iraq citizens can develop the knowledge and skills to compete in an increasingly technology-driven world economy.

Besim J. Kokollari works for the national and university library of Kosova and is engaged in library and information science studies through a variety of institutions in North America and Europe. He discusses the significant infrastructure problems for Kosova libraries, ranging from the practical (many libraries were burnt down and not rebuilt) to the political (Kosova is currently still administered by the United Nations Mission in Kosova (UNMIK) and therefore not eligible for much of the financial and technical assistance that sovereign nations are). Ifeanyi Njoku is a librarian at the Central Bank of Nigeria and discusses infrastructure challenges for libraries in Nigeria and the difficulty of operating in an atmosphere where information is often perceived as a commodity to be owned, rather than a public good to be shared – a perception reinforced by low literacy rates. Liauw Toong Tjiek (Aditya Nugraha) concludes our abbreviated world tour with a discussion of the low credibility of library and information scientists in

Indonesia, aggravated by a deficiency in the volume of quality educational and professional certification. He places the current condition in an historical context that enables us to view the position and potential of information professionals in Indonesia (and, by extension, the entire profession) from a holistic perspective. In this way, we are inspired to see our profession as part of a larger continuum, both geographically and historically – a vantage point that motivates us to explore, engage and contribute to a mutually beneficial future for all of our information colleagues.

Now that we are enlightened and motivated, we present a brief discussion of a survey conducted in 2007 of European information professionals. The summary of the full report, conducted by Diane Sonnenwald and Cassidy Sugimoto, highlights the areas in which ASIS&T can provide the most benefit to our European colleagues. The report suggests that an ASIS&T conference in Europe and the coordination of a Europe-focused information publication and mentoring program would be of greatest value. The survey also serves as a model for similar explorations that could be conducted in other regions.

We conclude with a brief list of global information resources that provide an excellent starting point for exploration and engagement in the global information professional community. We hope that this special section will leave you thoughtful about the expansive and diverse network of professionals contributing their knowledge and expertise to the information age and motivated to learn more, establish partnerships and share this information with your colleagues. ■

*Many thanks to Michel Menou, Terry Plum, Abebe Rorissa and Dangzhi Zhao for their assistance.*

## ASIS&T Strategic Responses to a Globalized Information Society: Excerpts from the Report of the ASIS&T International Relations Committee (IRC)

Discussions among IRC committee members, review of the global information scene and feedback from ASIS&T members to a special call from the IRC and to a survey of European colleagues has led the committee to recommend calling on other information science-related societies around the world to jointly establish a global alliance of information science that would facilitate interaction among them, reciprocal benefits and global representation.

Information professionals work with increasingly international resources and within organizations that are increasingly involved in, or dependent on, global markets and interactions. These organizations are often multinational themselves. The constituents they serve, or indirectly reach by posting information on the public Internet, are also multinational and multicultural. Legislation, regulation mechanisms, technologies and policies related to information activities are increasingly shaped by international influences.

The international dimensions of information work can no longer be treated as a marginal elective interest. In order to remain informed and relevant in an increasingly global society, ASIS&T members need and want to be able to expand their networks to learn from and partner with professional colleagues in other countries. Without coordinated efforts of information science researchers and practitioners, influence on national, regional and supra-national information policy is limited.

ASIS&T shall make a clear and firm commitment toward the stepwise development of an effective meta-organization among the professional and scientific societies that are active in whole or part of the broad information science field. This meta-organization could be given a neutral name such as the Global Alliance of Information Science. The IRC recommends that ASIS&T take the initiative in calling other societies to join in its creation. The following would be among the aims of the alliance:

- Facilitate regular interaction among the partner societies
- Facilitate the identification and implementation of possible joint activities
- Facilitate the sharing of resources
- Thus expand benefits for members

The following are short or medium term activities that could occur:

- Co-sponsoring of events
- Sessions at each other events
- Joint events
- Joint publications
- Wider authorship for publications and events
- Wider audiences
- Joint representation at international meetings
- Joint advocacy

After initial contacts among partners, the Global Alliance should seek to implement a few specific activities of high practical relevance within a couple of years. Among areas to be considered might be future directions in information science education, lifelong learning, certification of professional experience, international programs using distance education or international mobility of information professionals and issues considered within the follow-up process of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). Innovative approaches to world conferences, building up from the local level and linguistic areas to a global level, might prove attractive to potential participants since no world congress on information science has taken place for a long time.

ASIS&T plans to establish relations with scientific and professional societies, whether national or international, which are active in the broad field of information science, with a view to possibly forming the proposed Global Alliance. We hope this partnership with our global information colleagues will enable us to explore, engage and contribute to a mutually beneficial future for all of us in the information age. ■

*To contact the International Relations Committee with comments and suggestions, please email Michel Menou ([michel.menou<at>orange.fr](mailto:michel.menou@orange.fr)) and Kendra Albright ([K.Albright<at>Sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:K.Albright@Sheffield.ac.uk)).*

## Survey of European Information Scientists: European Information Professionals Identify ASIS&T Benefits that Would Be of Value

by Diane H. Sonnenwald, Caryn L. Anderson and Cassidy R. Sugimoto

The ASIS&T Membership Committee was asked by the Board of Directors to develop strategies regarding how to attract and retain new members outside the United States. In particular, the committee was asked to identify benefits and services of value to potential international members. During the Membership Committee meeting at the November 2006 ASIS&T Annual Meeting, we volunteered to address this issue for Europe. The results of our 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 in Europe periodically, providing mentoring opportunities and including 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.

A total of 68 people from 16 European countries completed the survey (Table 1). Although the responses are not equally distributed across the 16 countries, no single country dominates the responses. Of the respondents 61.8% are not currently ASIS&T members. Respondents are both library and information science professionals. The two largest job categories represented in the survey are university teacher and researcher (58.8%) and

Diane Sonnenwald is professor at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science of the University Collage of Borås (diane.sonnenwald<at>hb.se). Caryn L. Anderson is doctoral studies program manager at the Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science (caryn.anderson<at>simmons.edu). Cassidy R. Sugimoto is a doctoral student at the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (csugimoto<at>unc.edu).

library professional (17.6%). The next two largest job categories are information science professional (7.4%) and student (7.4%).

The most frequently mentioned suggestions regarding activities to attract European members are listed in Table 2. The top-ranked response, holding an ASIS&T Annual Meeting periodically in Europe, was mentioned by respondents from every job category and from 13 (out of 16) countries. These are among the respondents' comments:

- 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 from time to time...say every three years would be great.

Holding a conference involves a financial risk; however, it could be possible for ASIS&T to hold an annual meeting in collaboration with other

European professional associations. In addition, some European countries, such as Sweden, as well as European universities have special grant funds to support international conferences held in their countries or at their universities. 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, 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?

**TABLE 1. National affiliation**

| Country             | Number of respondents | % of Total   |
|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 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         |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>68</b>             | <b>100.0</b> |

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**TABLE 2. Top-ranked suggested activities for ASIS&T to attract European members**

| Activity                            | Total Number of Suggestions |      |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------|
|                                     | Number                      | %    |
| Annual conference in Europe         | 35                          | 38.9 |
| Mentoring                           | 9                           | 10   |
| European newsletter                 | 8                           | 8.9  |
| Publish in many languages           | 5                           | 5.6  |
| European networking                 | 5                           | 5.6  |
| Active local/national chapter       | 4                           | 3.3  |
| Help editing papers                 | 3                           | 3.3  |
| Name change                         | 3                           | 2.2  |
| Access to & interest in EU Research | 2                           | 2.2  |
| EU portal                           | 2                           | 2.2  |
| Have an international Board Member  | 2                           | 2.2  |
| Continuing education                | 2                           | 2.2  |

Certainly there are other good suggestions that emerged from this study, and the full report is available for download from the ASIS&T website:

[www.asis.org/Membership/2007\\_ASIST\\_Europe\\_survey.pdf](http://www.asis.org/Membership/2007_ASIST_Europe_survey.pdf) ■

## Global Information Resources

A variety of resources and reference materials are useful for staying connected with the global evolution of information science. The following is a brief list of excellent places to start. We encourage you to explore these resources and regularly consider how information science research and practice might affect, engage and benefit from the global community of information professionals.

### International Calendar of Information Science Conferences

The International Calendar of Information Science Conferences (<http://icisc.neasist.org/>) is a nonprofit collaboration between Special Interest Group/ International Information Issues (SIG/III) and the European (ASIST/EC) and New England (NEASIST) chapters of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, with the additional support of Haworth Press.

More than 500 conferences hosted by organizations in 75 countries on all continents were listed in the past year. With more than 9000 visits to the site each month, more than 80 countries are represented.

If you work in the information sciences and related disciplines (libraries, archives, museums, information and communication technology, telecommunications, etc.), be sure to stay up to date on the latest opportunities to learn and share your work throughout the world by regularly checking (RSS available) and posting your events in the calendar. Help colleagues by registering the conferences you are aware of, if they are not listed.

### InformationR.net

Tom Wilson has established a terrific set of free electronic resources related to research on information management, information science and information systems (<http://informationr.net/>). These are of particular note:

- **World List of Departments and Schools of Information Studies, Information Management, Information Systems, etc.** – useful for contacting colleagues for collaboration or experts for consultation
- **Digital Information in the Information Research Field: A Guide to Freely Accessible Journals and Newsletters** – useful for information professionals who may not have the resources to purchase commercial publications

Please note that Tom Wilson has been providing this excellent service for many years on a pro bono basis. We at SIG/III encourage you to offer him a donation if you find his resources useful.

### Information Societies around the World

The International Calendar of Information Science Conferences maintains a list of international resources (<http://icisc.neasist.org/resources.html>), which includes many societies and networks of information professionals. Below are listed a few regional associations that give a sense of our colleagues around the world. Readers are encouraged to explore the full list, which includes more regional associations as well as international and topically focused organizations, and to submit additions.

- ABD, Association Belge de Documentation/Belgische Vereniging voor Documentatie/Belgian Association of Documentation: [www.abd-bvd.be/](http://www.abd-bvd.be/)
- ABECIN, Associação Brasileira de Educação em Ciência da Informação, Brazil/Brazilian Association of Education in Information Science: [www.abecin.org.br/portal/index.php](http://www.abecin.org.br/portal/index.php)
- ADADB, Association pour le développement des activités documentaires au Bénin/Association for the Development of Documentary Activities in Benin: [www.adadb.bj.refer.org/](http://www.adadb.bj.refer.org/)
- ADBS, Association des professionnels de l'information et de la documentation/French Association of Professionals of Information and Documentation: [www.adbs.fr/site/](http://www.adbs.fr/site/)
- AIDA, Associazione Italiana per la Documentazione Avanzata, Italy/Italian Association for Advanced Documentation: [www.aidaweb.it/](http://www.aidaweb.it/)
- Aardvark – Asian Resources for Librarians: [www.aardvarknet.info/user/aardvarkwelcome/](http://www.aardvarknet.info/user/aardvarkwelcome/)
- ASBAD, Association senegalaise des bibliothécaires, archivistes et documentalistes/Sengalese Association of Librarians, Archivists and Documentalists: [www.ebad.ucad.sn/](http://www.ebad.ucad.sn/)
- CAIS, Canadian Association of Information Science/L'Association canadienne des sciences de l'information: [www.cais-acsi.ca/](http://www.cais-acsi.ca/)
- CILIP, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals: [www.cilip.org.uk/default.cilip](http://www.cilip.org.uk/default.cilip)
- DGI, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Informationswissenschaft und Informationspraxis e.V./German Society for Information Science and Practice: [www.dgd.de/](http://www.dgd.de/)
- HID, Hrvatsko informacijsko i dokumentacijsko drustvo,

Croatia/Croatian Association for Information and Documentation:

- <http://public.carnet.hr/hid/>
- ILISKMA, Indian Library, Information Science & Knowledge Management Association: No working URL found on December 11, 2007
- INCITE, Associação Portuguesa para o Desenvolvimento da Informação Científica e Técnica, Portugal/Portuguese Association for the Development of Scientific and Technical Information: [www.incite.pt/](http://www.incite.pt/)
- LIASA, Library and Information Association of South Africa: [www.liasa.org.za/](http://www.liasa.org.za/)
- NIWA, Namibian Information Workers Association: No current URL found on December 11, 2007
- ÖGDI, Österreichische Gesellschaft für Dokumentation & Information/Austrian Society for Documentation and Information: [www.oegdi.at/](http://www.oegdi.at/)
- SEDIC, Sociedad Española de Documentación e Información Científica, Spain/Spanish Society of Documentation and Scientific Information: [www.sedic.es/](http://www.sedic.es/)
- SKIP, Svaz knihovníků a informacních pracovníků České republiky/Association of Library and Information Professionals of the Czech Republic: <http://skip.nkp.cz/>
- TLA, Tanzania Library Association: [www.tla.or.tz/index.htm](http://www.tla.or.tz/index.htm)
- TLS, Tekniska Litteratursällskapet/Swedish Society for Technical Documentation: [www.sfis.nu/](http://www.sfis.nu/)
- SVD/ASD, Schweizerische Vereinigung für Dokumentation/Association Suisse de Documentation/Swiss Association of Documentation: [www.svd-asd.org/](http://www.svd-asd.org/)
- TIETOPALVELUSEURA, Finnish Society for Information Services: [www.tietopalveluseura.fi/fi/cfmldocs/index.cfm](http://www.tietopalveluseura.fi/fi/cfmldocs/index.cfm)

### Multilingual ASIS&T Information Sheets

ASIS&T has prepared information sheets in 14 languages: Arabic, Chinese (Simplified – Mainland, Traditional – Taiwan), English, French, German, Greek, Indonesian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish

Versions of the information sheets can be downloaded from the ASIS&T website: [www.asist.org/infosheets/](http://www.asist.org/infosheets/) ■