

Liaison Report:  
2018 Association for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T) Annual Meeting  
November 10-14, 2018  
Vancouver, British Columbia.

Conference Theme: *Building and Sustaining an Ethical Future with Emerging Technology*

Report Date: January 30, 2019

Meeting Report:

Attended the ASIS&T annual meeting, where the conference theme focused on the ethical responsibilities of information scientists and practitioners within the context of the role and implementation of emerging technologies in future research and their impact on social and cultural values in areas such as data sharing, practices and ethics. This is of special relevance for contemporary academic libraries. The conference celebrates the plurality in methods, theories and approaches to the implementation and sustainability of emerging and innovative technologies available on the Internet. The conference sponsored research from throughout the world within the context of posters, papers and panels that covered relevant topics regarding emerging technologies in several research areas of interest to science librarians. For example, one session I attended, which would be of interest to science librarians concerned a panel discussion where four sets of information scientists discussed the results of their research regarding scholarly communication involving the area of bibliometrics and its role in measuring scholarly impact. Several panels and papers presented a number of research data management issues such as data sharing, data management best practices, and the structure of data communities especially in regards to data curation. Several panels and presentation also presented research that concerned searching and learning about information behaviors of users as it pertained to innovative information technologies. One workshop towards the end of the conference discussed “blockchain” technology, a very important emerging technology that will reshape not only the role of digital economies and the Internet, but the role of libraries as it relates to data privacy.

Plenary Session. I attended the opening plenary session by keynote speaker, Dr. Ramesh Srinivasan, Director of *UC Digital Cultures Lab* at UCLA. A leading authority on digital literacy, he gave an excellent presentation on the topic *The People’s Internet: How to Arrive at a Digital World that Respects Human Values*. His keynote speech discussed the relationship of digital technologies that shape our online interactions and the impact it has on our social values while it also influences our worldview perceptions. The premise of the presentation focused on the current issues regarding the contemporary Internet in terms of how to can make it more inclusive and allow us to embrace all diverse cultures globally. He spoke about the need to respect and share the diverse values that make us more human. He emphasized how we need to use emerging technologies that create outcomes, which eliminates biases, especially implicit biases in our work, which is especially important to information scientists and information practitioners such as librarians. He discussed how current technologies, especially social media technologies, still have racial and gender biases within their frameworks and how we can work to

eliminate these biases. He discussed some innovative solutions, such as how a few local communities are experimenting with self-contained Internet governance structures that serve their local communities while remaining outside the global umbrella of the Internet. His conclusion emphasized the need to understand how we currently build and design our systems and how it shapes our decisions with the technology in place right now. He stressed the need to create and use emerging technologies in terms that globally respect human values and diverse digital cultures. More importantly, how they help us make better, more informed ethical technology decisions in the future.

Special Interest Group (SIG) Cabinet Meeting. – I attended the annual SIG Steering Committee as a SIG Cabinet Adviser. I rolled off as SIG Cabinet Advisor at the end of the meeting, which covered a number of parliamentary issues concerning the SIG community. One issue discussed during this time concerned the status of the SIG Scientific and Technical Information (STI). Due to lack of leadership and SIG related governance activities, the cabinet rendered a temporary suspension of STI as a SIG in good standing. As a former chair of STI (2014), I am interested in its progress. Furthermore, since no STI officers were present at the SIG Cabinet meeting, and as former chair, I served as its representative for the meeting. The SIG cabinet seriously considered the termination of STI in virtual meetings before the annual meeting. During that time before the annual meeting, Jody Schneider, from the iSchool at the University of Illinois, graciously stepped up to serve as interim and now current Chair of STI. They asked me if I would be willing to serve in an officer capacity of the SIG. I agreed to run for Secretary/Treasurer and am up for election in March. Steve Hardin from Indiana State University also agreed to assist us in our revitalization efforts of STI for the upcoming year. One tentative goal proposed that STI collaborate with another SIG in presenting a workshop at next year's annual meeting in Brisbane, Australia. As a longtime STI member, I believe it is a good vehicle for communicating and addressing STEM issues in the information environment, in which libraries are a viable stakeholder in this scientific community. As STS liaison to ASIS&T, I have been thinking about and had discussed with SIG advisors the possibility of STI collaborating with STS on a workshop or other related activities.

ASIS&T Annual Business Meeting. This was the first annual ASIS&T annual business meeting since the retirement of Richard (Dick) Hill who served as executive director of the association for 27 years. The 2018 Annual Business Meeting, called to order by Lydia Middleton, the new Executive Director of ASIS&T brought the association into a new era. She led the meeting accompanied by the current President, Lynn Silipigni Connaway. The installation of the current President, Elaine Toms, did not take place due to a family emergency, so Lynn presided over the annual meeting, which included bestowing several awards to the association's talented community of scholars and practitioners. The executive director, in her State of the Association Address, elaborated on how the association had endured an almost complete turnover of staff in the Executive Directors' administrative office. She dryly noted the loss of this institutional memory as well as how she endured a short but strong learning curve in understanding the organizational culture of ASIS&T, which was no easy task. She moved on to discuss the slight

increase in this year's conference attendance in Vancouver, British Columbia over the 2017 conference in Washington, D.C. She did admit they anticipate a sharp decline for next years' annual meeting in Brisbane, Australia due to the high cost of travel to the event. The Treasurer gave a report that accounted for a net loss of \$10,000 for the year due to loss of revenues from their spring events, which have since last year become independent venues. She also noted and acknowledged a steady decline in membership over the last ten years. This has caught the attention of the association's leadership and addressed in the 2015-2020 strategic plan but has not stopped the annual decrease in membership. This decrease can be ascribed to the continual reduction in information practitioner members in the association, most notably librarians. Although she emphasized the importance of practitioners and especially librarians in the ASIS&T membership population, she acknowledged she was not altogether clear on how to reverse the trend. ASIS&T, which started initially as an organization composed primarily of librarians, has shifted to become an association of almost exclusively higher education faculty, i.e. LIS faculty and doctoral students. She stated her position that she will continue to address the current downward trend of membership in the association.

