

by Sandy Hirsh

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EDITOR'S SUMMARY

ASIS&T continues to set new directions with a modernized and reorganized website, option for members to join unlimited number of special interest groups without additional fees and updated online bookstore to come. The Association's self-evaluation also continues in efforts to position itself for enhanced and extended success, for members and within the information community. The Strategic Planning Task Force has completed data collection through focus groups and surveys with a diverse group of members and nonmembers from three continents and is analyzing the membership database. The group's goal is to address members' changing needs, assess the benefits of membership, better balance the needs of academics and practitioners, promote internal communications and improve awareness of the Association. A draft of priorities and plans will be complete by the 2015 Annual Meeting. Thanks are extended to all who have participated in the process and provided thoughts and suggestions.

KEYWORDS

Association for Information Science and Technology
 strategic planning
 needs assessment
 communities
 public relations

Springtime is a time of growth and renewal and is a perfect time for us as an association to be setting new directions. ASIS&T kicked off spring with a new website and brand – modernizing the website's look and feel, reorganizing the content to make it easier to find, creating a responsive design and improving the overall user experience. Another welcome change is that you can now join as many SIGs as you want for free. Additional enhancements are forthcoming, such as an updated online bookstore. A huge thank you to **Diane Rasmussen Pennington** (Web Presence Taskforce chair), the Web Presence Taskforce (**Adam Worrall**, **Andy Dillon**, **Beth Lawton**, **Joseph Busch** and **Katherine Dillon**), and ASIS&T staff for their hard work in bringing the new site to life.

ASIS&T, as “the only professional association that bridges the gap between information science practice and research” (see our website at www.asist.org/about/), has an important role to play in the information professions. It is time to examine what we are doing as an association and how we can position our association for success for the future. To help us ensure ongoing success and make sure we are meeting the needs of ASIS&T members, we have undertaken a strategic planning process this year. In this column, I am sharing with you what we have accomplished so far and what the next steps will be.

In my last column, I shared some specific findings from the focus group sessions and poster feedback from the 2014

ASIS&T Annual Meeting. Since then, the Strategic Planning Task Force has been hard at work gathering additional feedback and suggestions through virtual and in-person focus groups, and we have now wrapped up the data collection phase of the strategic planning process. This process included 13 in-person and virtual focus group sessions (approximately 125 people), surveys (approximately 85 people from the Taipei and Asia-Pacific Chapters) and poster feedback. We have heard from a range of members and non-members; practitioners (including those from the IA Summit and RDAP conference), academics and students; and people from different geographic areas (including Europe, Asia and North America). In addition to the focus groups and the surveys, the Strategic Planning Task Force has begun analysis of the membership database, assessing changes in renewals by type, drop rates, transitions (for instance, from student to professional), the effect of bundling membership with the Annual Meeting registration and so forth.

Data analysis is currently under way. However, we can share some of the very preliminary high-level findings:

- **Address practitioner needs:** Many believe that ASIS&T has become overly focused on academics and should do more to address the needs of practitioners and to strengthen the research-practice connection. The upcoming 2015 ASIS&T Annual Meeting theme, *Information Science with Impact: Research in and for the Community*, is a first step toward addressing this need.
- **Improve publicity and awareness of ASIS&T:** Participants sense that ASIS&T could strengthen its name recognition (especially among students) and clarify the benefits of membership.

- **Address changing needs of members:** ASIS&T could explore ways to better address the changing needs of association members, including the increased demand for regional meetings, mentoring and workshops, especially in virtual formats.
- **Improve networking and communication within the association:** ASIS&T could improve connections among its members, enhance communication within the association and expand networking opportunities.
- **Evaluate membership benefit models:** Membership benefit models should be evaluated, developing benefits that attract new members and increase retention for members of the association. Participants in the strategic planning process suggested a variety of ideas for consideration.

Additional analysis and evaluation will be completed in May 2015. After the data analysis is finished, a draft set of strategic priorities and plans will be developed and shared with ASIS&T membership. ASIS&T members will be asked to provide their feedback on the draft plans, and the strategic plan will be finalized in time for the 2015 ASIS&T Annual Meeting.

I want to thank everyone who has participated in the strategic planning process so far – as a participant sharing your thoughts and suggestions, as a facilitator helping to collect information or as a task force member coordinating this critical project and working closely with the Board. I want to give a special thank you to the ASIS&T Strategic Planning Task Force, chaired by **Michael Leach**, with **Maric Kramer**, **Nareh Agarwal**, **Shanju Chang** and **Heather Pfeiffer**. By working together and encouraging broad participation in this process, we will ensure that ASIS&T will continue to thrive and prosper for many years to come. ■