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President's Column

Trudi Bellardo Hahn

It is a very good thing that a member of the Society, once elected president of ASIST, spends a year as president-elect. This is an astounding period of learning about all the behind-the-scenes work that goes on to sustain and grow the society. By "grow" I do not mean just increasing the membership (or at worst, keeping it from shrinking), although that is an important element. I mean mainly all the activities that keep ASIST alive, vibrant and at the leading edge of developments in the information field.

ASIST established task forces and planning groups this past year to consider ways to improve awards presentations at conferences, to construct the ASIST digital library, to update and implement the ASIST thesaurus, to review benefits to institutional members, to develop an applications magazine to supercede the *Bulletin* and to improve placement services, to name just a few. You can expect in the coming year to see the evidence of these efforts, and I hope that many of you will not only experience the benefits but will also get directly involved in expanding and sustaining them.

One new initiative that is just getting underway is in the area of international relations. During the past year a task force, composed of Steven Hardin (chair of Membership Committee), Michel Menou, Julian Warner, Executive Director Dick Hill and myself, proposed the establishment of a new position of International Liaison that reports to the Board of Directors. I have appointed the first liaison, Julian Warner. In *Inside ASIST* he shares his views and values about the liaison position and communication within the international information community.

The International Liaison has responsibilities for recruitment of international members to ASIST, retention of those members and assisting with and informing the Board about international issues. The following are examples of responsibilities of this position:

- Inform the Board of international developments and global information issues that represent opportunities or challenges for the Society, which might involve writing or commissioning briefing statements on issues that have implications for more than one jurisdiction.
- In cooperation with the Membership Committee, communicate with potential members and encourage them to join.
- Organize international receptions or other special events at conferences.

- Greet international attendees at conferences and help to make them welcome.
- Help international members to network with other ASIST members in their areas of interest (be a "linking agent").
- Maintain contacts with international organizations on behalf of ASIST.
- Work closely with all SIGs in regard to their international information interests, but especially with SIG/International Information Issues, to ensure cooperation and collaboration as appropriate.
- Recruit other ASIST members to work with him/her in accomplishing these goals and objectives.
- Be highly visible, accessible and accommodating to others in ASIST who are interested in recruiting and supporting international members.

You will notice that the liaison does not work alone but is a bridge among several groups within ASIST, most notably the award-winning SIG/International Information Issues and the Membership Committee, as well as headquarters staff. The liaison is also a communication channel to outside international organizations.

In selecting Julian Warner for this position, we looked for an ASIST member with deep international involvement who is willing to stay abreast of relevant international developments, who has excellent communication and interpersonal skills, tact and diplomacy and who can organize and manage a variety of assignments simultaneously. We expected that the individual would likely be an international member, but this was not required. Julian was selected as the liaison to launch the position and help the Board define its role.

Another exciting initiative will be a membership survey. In the past 20 years, the membership has been surveyed several times to gather varying amounts of data about members' demographics, job and career interests and preferences for delivery of Society products – publications, conferences, continuing education and other professional benefits. However, no recent data has been collected, and we know that the membership profile and members' interests have changed considerably in recent years. The current survey will be administered electronically, and we hope to get responses from a very high percentage of members. Planning future directions for the Society will depend very much on what you tell us – so please do respond!

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