

## Report on the use of an award from the John Campbell Trust to attend the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Information Science & Technology

I applied for a grant from the John Campbell Trust in January 2004, in order to help support participation in the [Annual meeting](#) of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, to be held in Providence, Rhode Island in November 2004. My intention was to make an intellectual contribution to the meeting, presenting a paper, *A labor theoretic approach to information retrieval*, and to participate in society governance, including acting as Joint International Liaison Officer.

I was able to attend the meeting and to participate fully.

The meeting confirmed the intellectual diversity of the society. Presentations revealed broad, and varying, conceptions of information science. Colleagues known through their publications became known by personal contact, and, in turn, personal dialogue may stimulate further presentations and publication.

A number of interesting, although necessarily entirely novel, intellectual issues were raised. A keynote speaker, J.C. Herz, questioned the assumption and method of post-Enlightenment thinking, of breaking issues down into their smallest parts for analysis, was still tenable. Keeping things found was not as well studied as retrieving information (reminiscent of David Lodge's observation on literature being romance and meetings and life about marriage). Mechanisms for forgetting were also alluded to, although Freud's central question – why should anything be forgotten? – was not discussed. Other sessions noted that the provisions of the Patriot Act had long been on the political agenda. Concepts of group size in relation to the limits of human cognition and the connections between open source information and the public sphere were also considered.

One of the most vital and vitalizing sessions was the Global Information Village Plaza. Issues for consideration, many posed as What if? questions, had been circulated in advance and responses were discussed in the session. What if journal submissions were evaluated for their contribution to knowledge rather than their formal correctness? What was the impact of the information society, at both a professional and personal level? Responses revealed a low level of immediate awareness of the pervasiveness of ICTs as control mechanisms.

Society governance and the conference sessions were partly intermingled (business meetings are also open to all society members, apart from deliberately closed sessions). One presentation gave an account of a

survey of ASIS&T members. Their median age had increased slightly since the last survey in 1979 (with reference to the membership not to the surviving individual members, although tautologically true, if understated, of them as well). There was a need for younger members of ASIS&T. Information technologists remained uninterested in ASIS&T. Library and information studies was dominant as members' highest degree.

Formal governance activities also occurred. Some meetings were concerned with issues relevant to European and international members. There was scope for the growth of the European Chapter, with a broad understanding of Europe, and for further internationalization. Committee charges for the 2004-2005 year were reviewed. The growth and size of the information science field was revealed by the increase in the number of papers, already substantial, submitted to JASIS&T. There was a growing professionalisation of information architecture, as a sub-discipline of information science, although also with other connections. A reciprocal sponsorship agreement had been established with Communication and Information Technology Section of the American Sociological Association.

International themes formed a persistent focus of attention. The meeting was marked by the number and range of international visitors. International issues were attracting increasing interest and sympathy among ASIS&T members. The International Reception was well attended. International members were valuable to the society and increasing internationalization of the society was envisaged. International standards represented one significant area where there was need for involvement.

Some innovations to the format of meetings had occurred in recent years. A poster session had been introduced and was expanded for the 2004 meeting. Posters were well attended, with a number of lively and informative dialogues between presenters and other attendees.

The next year's meeting will be Charlotte, North Carolina in November 2005. The conference proceedings will be published in electronic, rather than print on paper form, and will be searchable and include panel presentations. The Global International Village Plaza should be developed further and remain interesting.

I would like to record my appreciation of the John Campbell Trust in assisting me in participating in a successful meeting.

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