American Society for Information Science's 56th Annual Meeting

Over 800 information professionals, educators, and librarians attended the 56th American Society for Information Science (ASIS) Annual Meeting in Columbus, Ohio, October 24–28. Having attended ASIS conferences for a half-dozen years now, I always come away energized and motivated to pursue research on library topics. For those unfamiliar with the annual ASIS meeting, it focuses on reports of current and in-progress research. In contrast, the association's spring mid-year meeting concentrates on specific topics such as navigating networks (1994) or electronic imaging (1993).

Under the theme of "Integrating Technologies, Converging Professions," 1993 conference attendees could choose from close to 100 program sessions. A few highlights:

In "Debating Different Approaches to Studying the Organization of Information" a panel of scholars discussed and contrasted points of view that lead to distinct styles of research and teaching. Ling Hwey Jeng (UCLA) advocated the traditional approach in which an understanding of information organization stems from an analysis of the information objects themselves. Donald Case (UCLA) argued from the cognitive paradigm which concentrates on the study of how people think as the best way to approach the organization of information. Nicholas Belkin (Rutgers University) sought to dismiss the other three paradigms and maintained that the best method for studying how information is to be organized is to observe how people interact with potential sources. The communication paradigm, championed by Brenda Dervin (Ohio State University), studies information seeking and use by examining how people construct questions and create answers to these questions. This author remains convinced that any useful approach must emphasize some aspect of the user.

In "Online Primary Science Journals: An Experimental System and a Production System" the two projects discussed were the CORE project and the Online Journal of Current Clinical Trials. Researchers from Bellcore, Cornell University, and OCLC addressed preferences and usage patterns of chemists with both page-image and formatted ASCII-based representations of 20 American Chemical Society journals. Pat Morgan (American Association for the Advancement of Science) offered insights into the difficulties and opportunities of a purely electronic online journal.

In "Integrated Information Center" a group from the University of Minnesota reported on the implementation and evaluation of an integrated information center (IIC) at the university's Carlson School of Management and Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. Organizational integration proved to be more challenging than functional and technical integration. A successful service, in this case current awareness, fostered integration of organizational units. In order to measure the impact of the IIC, researchers conducted a baseline evaluation of technology utilization. Results indicate that there are two dominant reasons for use: the fit between a task and a technology and the relative advantage of using the technology. Secondary reasons are social norms, cost, and availability. An unexpected finding was that research in a new area may be the "jolt" needed to move a scholar into a new technology.

In "Integrating Full-Text News Over a Campuswide Network" Karen Howell (University... (Cont. on page 647)
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Selected reading
The development, definition, and updating of a transfer policy is a complex and ongoing process. It requires the exercise of imagination and good judgment, and profits from wide and informed reading. Although there is no literature dealing with transfer per se, the following books, selected from the large literature about books and book collecting, may provide special help to those charged with forming and reforming their library's policies.


(Conference circuit cont. from page 638)

University of Southern California) described the process of adding value to a commercial newswire service and the usage patterns of the resulting full-text news. News from 211 topic areas is brought into the library system and reformatted into seven databases along the lines of a print newspaper, e.g., general news, business, sports. Remote users account for one-half of all use; however, remote users read "recreational" databases such as sports and columns more than library readers. Another difference between library use and remote use occurs in the reading method; library use involves more searching, whereas remote users browse more.

Similar in format to the ACRL conferences, the ASIS conference interspersed four plenary sessions throughout the conference program. Particularly interesting was Lee Olsen's (IBM) presentation "Multimedia: Transforming the Way We Use Computers." Olsen gave a sophisticated multimedia presentation using text and image files stored on his personal computer. The liveliest part of the discussion that followed centered on the ability of multimedia to blur the distinction between archival images of actual events and subsequent recreations. ■

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