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*30 Years of NJ-ASIS&T*

*The New Jersey Chapter  
of the American Society for  
Information Science and Technology  
1975-2005*

*A Historical Note*

*New Brunswick, 2006*

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of the American Society for  
Information Science and Technology  
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*A Historical Note*

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*This history was researched and written by Ellen Pozzi. Marija Dalbello provided the organizing framework and conceptual guidance and some writing for this anniversary edition.*

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*And it cannot be but that each generation succeeding to the knowledge acquired by all those who preceded it, adding to it their own acquisitions and discoveries, and handing the mass down for successive and constant accumulation, must advance the knowledge and well-being of mankind, not infinitely, as some have said, but indefinitely, and to a term which no one can fix and foresee.*

- Jefferson (1818)

# **Thirty Years of the New Jersey Chapter of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 1975-2005**

## **A Historical Note**

The New Jersey chapter of the American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T) was founded in 1975 through the efforts of a number of individuals who were interested in having a local chapter and a regional presence for information science community of New Jersey. According to three of the founding members, Don King, Roger Smith, and Leny Struminger, this was in part for geographic reasons. The burgeoning number of New Jersey members considered the commute to meetings organized by the nearest chapter in New York to be too difficult. Roger Smith (one of the early chapter chairs and a founding member), in an interview conducted in 2004 recalls: "There was a lot of enthusiasm for having a separate New Jersey chapter among a lot of the New Jersey people. ... They thought [ASIS] was a good organization, but didn't like the hassle of going into the city" (Oral communication, November 23, 2004).

New Jersey had a large telecom industry at that time, in addition to the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, which generated a vibrant community of information science practitioners. The library school at Rutgers has been another hub for information science. Indeed, according to Roger Smith "[t]he people from, probably Bell and Rutgers were the two main groups of people that were really behind this move to start a separate chapter" (Oral communication, November 23, 2004). Also, according to Don King, the first chapter chair who was Associate Dean of the library school at Rutgers at the time, the efforts were related to educational goals: "We tried to get students involved, which was one of the reasons for starting the local chapter" (Oral communication, October 11, 2004). The synergies of industry and the library school at Rutgers can be considered to have provided that initial impetus for founding the chapter in 1975.

The proposal for beginning a separate chapter was brought to the national association. At the national meeting of the American

Society for Information Science, this proposal was presented and approved (Oral communication, Don King, October 11, 2004). And thus, the New Jersey Chapter was created. The chapter archives at the Alexander Library at Rutgers University contain documents from 1983, and among them a set of bylaws that were adopted in 1975 and amended in 1983. The bylaws included the following statement:

The purpose of the chapter is to provide an organization through which members of ASIS located within the chapter area or who elect to become Members of the Chapter may participate in and carry forward the programs and purposes of ASIS. The Chapter shall promote the professional interests of its Members and of the Society and shall endeavor to involve students of information science who are located within the chapter area. [Manuscript Collection 1193 , Box #1, Folder #1]

The stated rationale for the establishment of chapter reveals a strong connection of practice and education in the field of information science. This confirms the original purpose of its founders in their account of the first years of the chapter.

## **IDENTITY**

**The Name:** The chapter was originally named the Central New Jersey Chapter of ASIS (American Society for Information Science). It later became the New Jersey chapter of ASIS. A newsletter that was originally called the Central New Jersey ASIS Newsletter changed its title in September 1984 to the New Jersey ASIS Chapter Newsletter—Key Words. Another name change followed the national organization's name change to ASIS&T (the American Society for Information Science & Technology) in 2001.

**Chapter Logo:** While Roger Smith was the chair of the chapter from 1979 to 1980, the chapter held a contest to develop a chapter logo. Eighteen entries were received and the winning entry won a \$25 prize (Chapter Annual Activities Report, November 7, 1980). Once the logo was chosen, the Chapter had T-shirts produced with

the new logo and these shirts were sold at Chapter meetings and through the newsletter.

**Chapter Chairs, 1975-2005.** According to an unwritten tradition, chapter chairs were elected among individuals who represented information professionals from industry and the information science educators. The records available in the archives allow the reconstruction of the following succession of Chapter Chairs:

1975-1976 Dr. Donald R. King  
1976-1977 Maryann (Mislavitz) Grandy  
1977-1978 Robert O. Stanton  
1978-1979 Dr. Maurice J. (Mitch) Freedman  
1979-1980 Roger Smith  
1980-1981 Louis Cole  
1981-1982 Claire McDonnell  
1982-1983 David Johnson  
1983-1984 Dale Elizabeth Lewis  
1984-1985 Janet (Chapman) Muscarella  
1985-1986 Lorene (Lingelbach) Connolly  
1986-1987 Dr. Louis Torre  
1987-1988 Anne Buck\*  
1988-1989 Leny Struminger  
1989-1990 Lynette Schneider  
1990-1991 Asha Capoor  
1991-1992 Maurica Fedors  
1992-1993 Kathleen Millington\*  
1993-1994 Irene Gyori  
1994-1995 Dr. Pam Richards\*  
1995-1996 Deborah Juterbock  
1996-1997 Mark Thompson  
1997-1998 Tim Fortin  
1998-1999 Jana Volavka  
1999-2000 Greg Paris  
2000-2001 Dr. Lauren Harrison  
2001-2002 Dr. Colleen Cool  
2002-2003 Dr. Pam Savage-Knepshield  
2003-2004 Dr. Marija Dalbello  
2004-2005 Dr. Xiangmin Zhang  
2005-2006 Gerry Grenier

\*Indicates former chairs of NJ-ASIS&T who passed away at the time of writing this historical note.



## **EXCELLENCE**

**The Awards:** The chapter has been awarded Chapter of the Year several times, and has also had individual members recognized as Chapter Member of the Year.

### *Chapter of the Year Awards*

1985  
1988  
1992  
1996

### *Chapter Member of the Year*

1992 Maurica Fedors  
1996 Kathleen Millington

The New Jersey chapter has contributed to the national organization through innovative programs, strong leadership and active participation in programs. Several members of the chapter have led the national organization: Tefko Saracevic (1991) and Nicholas J. Belkin (2005). Members also include recipients of ASIS&T highest awards. ASIS&T Award of Merit, the highest honor for outstanding contributions in the field of information science was awarded to Tefko Saracevic (1995) and Nicholas J. Belkin (2003). Nicholas J. Belkin (1997), Paul Kantor (2001) and Carol Kuhlthau (2005) were recipients of the prestigious ASIS&T Research Award.

**Distinguished Lectureship:** One of the most important programs presented by the New Jersey Chapter is the Distinguished Lectureship. This award is given annually to individuals who meet the following criteria: advancement of the knowledge base of Information Science, promotion of high professional standards and ethics, and recognition within the Information profession as an outstanding contributor to the field. Roderick McNeil (Chairman of the Awards and Lecture Series) in his proposal of November 1984 recommended that the chapter initiate the program to:

- 1) Demonstrate an awareness of and commitment to the problems and developments in Information Science;

- 2) Recognize the achievements of Information theorists and practitioners;
- 3) Promote the standards and interests of the profession to the wider community;
- 4) Induce a greater professional awareness to Library and Information students by introducing them to significant personally in the field with a broad range of interests;
- 5) Continue to develop a high level of programming for the Chapter Membership.

The first Distinguished Lectureship was awarded in 1985 to Dr. Gerald Salton. According to Maurica Fedors, the Distinguished Lectureship was originally meant to be self-supporting. The creators of the program “went to the corporations and the vendors and gathered a fair amount of funding...each year the expense of the plaque and the speaker’s travel and all the incidentals were to be covered by that fund” (Oral communication, October 22, 2004). And, according to Janet Muscarella, “the impetus behind [the Distinguished Lectureship] really began with David Johnson when he was chair, and then continued in the following year when Dale Lewis was the chair, then really was implemented during my term as chairperson” (Oral communication, October 22, 2004). This program continues to be one of the gems of the chapter.

Distinguished Lecturers and the titles of the papers given at the evening program (when available) include:

- 1985 Gerald Salton  
“Advances in Automatic Information Retrieval”
- 1986 Charles T. Meadow
- 1987 Belver C. Griffith  
“Studies of Information and Communication and the Revolution in Understanding Science”
- 1988 Thomas J. Allen
- 1989 Stephen E. Arnold  
“The Ethics of the New Information Technology”
- 1990 Karen Sparck Jones  
“Some Essential Features in Information System Design: Implications for Local Selection and Applications”
- 1991 Marcia J. Bates
- 1992 W. Bruce Croft  
“Putting Information Retrieval to the Test: Experiences from the TIPSTER Project”

- 1993 W. David Penniman  
“The Changing Environment for Information Service Professionals”
- 1994 Peter Ingwersen  
“Information Management and Retrieval: Partnership in Practice”
- 1995 Raya Fidel  
“Is the customer always right?”
- 1996 Ben Schneiderman  
“Information-Abundant Website Design: Overviews for Browsing and a 6-Facet Framework for Searching”
- 1997 Peter Willett  
“Similarity Measures for Database Searching”
- 1998 Michael Lesk  
“Why Digital Libraries?”
- 1999 Not Awarded
- 2000 Not Awarded
- 2001 Carol Tenopir  
“The Use and Value of Scientific Journals: Impact on Practitioners”
- 2002 Gary Marchionini  
“Dynamic Interfaces for Digital Libraries: The Open Video Project”
- 2003 Christine L. Borgman  
“Digital Libraries: Past, Present, and Future”
- 2004 Eugene Garfield  
“A Prospective View of Citation Indexing and Information Retrieval in the 21st Century”
- 2005 Susan Dumais  
“Personal information management: Helping finders become keepers”

## **HISTORY IN THE MAKING**

**The Archive:** The archive for the chapter was deposited at the Special Collections and University Archives of the Alexander Library (Rutgers University) on January 20, 1997 but it was not processed until 2004. The archive was established in 1996 by Mark Thompson (Email communication from Deborah Juterbock, February 20, 2006). The processing was enabled by a chapter development grant obtained from the national ASIS&T in 2004. The grant supported the organization of the archives and creation of a finding aid by Maria Deptula in Summer 2004. Annual

Reports, Minutes of Meetings, copies of Newsletters, Membership Files, Chairperson's General Files, Distinguished Lectureships, Programs/Activities/Events, copies of papers delivered at meetings, and national publications provide a glimpse into the life of the chapter from those beginnings in 1975. Although there are gaps in the information for years, the archive provides a record of the thirty-year history of a professional organization for information professionals in the state of New Jersey.

Records in the archives show some of the subjects of the chapter meetings over the years, showing the importance of continuing education for its members. The records allow reconstruction of some earlier meetings. In 1978, James P. Duncanson presented a paper on "How to Ask Questions: A Tutorial on Questionnaire Design." In 1981, Karen Landsberg from the Information Center at Exxon presented a program on "Full-Text Searching." In 1982 Eugene Garfield addressed a meeting with the talk titled, "Value-added Information: How ISI's Clustering Technique Reveals the Most Relevant Literature." In a joint meeting with NJ-SLA in 1982 the speaker was Dr. John McQuillan, President of the BBN Information Management Corporation; the Cuadra Association presented a workshop on "The ADONIS Service: Optical Videodiscs and Document Delivery of Journal Articles." In 1993 the chapter sponsored the joint two day program with the NY/NJ Chapter of the Medical Library Association "Partnerships: Responding to Health Crises." Eugene Garfield returned as a speaker again in 1995, while in 1996 Nicholas Belkin presented a paper on "Best Match Techniques in Information Retrieval Systems. David Barber, Director of New Service Development at OHIOLink presented a program on "WWW and Visualization" in 1996. These presentations show the variety of programs and presenters that the chapter has offered to its members over the years.

There have also been several anniversary programs. The tenth anniversary celebration is well documented in the archives with a flyer that boasts:

"By the tenth year our chapter:

- Won the Chapter-of -the-Year-Award;
- Increased our membership tenfold since 1975;
- Initiated the Annual Distinguished Lectureship Series;

Is publishing a membership directory;  
Continued a successful internship program;  
Developed into a thriving chapter with ambitious program,  
workshops and dinner-meetings.” (Flyer, 1985)

**Oral History Project:** In Fall 2004, Ellen Pozzi and Marija Dalbello conducted an oral history project, which provided an extensive record of the thirty-year history of the chapter. Interviews were collected from former chairs and members of the chapter. They were subsequently transcribed, and prepared to be added to the existing archive of the chapter. This endeavor resulted in a better understanding of the history of the chapter in the context of information science in New Jersey. Information on the founding of the chapter, and events during the first years of the chapter’s existence were discovered in the course of the oral histories. A paper at the 2005 Annual Meeting of ASIS&T in Charlotte, North Carolina (Pozzi & Dalbello 2005), brought attention of the national membership to the activities of the chapter focusing on its history. It set an example for other chapters to conduct similar projects and validated the need to study the history of information science in the context of its regional associations.

## **IN CONCLUSION**

In its thirty years of continuous presence in New Jersey, the chapter of ASIS&T has articulated innovative programs and provided networking opportunities for information professionals. The chapter has also been an important venue of student activity, helping those entering the information science field to get socialized in the world of practice community. At the same time, its members have achieved high distinctions in the national and international arena of information science. This brief historical note could only bring out highlights of the activities of a professional organization that largely subsisted on voluntary efforts of its members. From its inception in 1975 and through the time of growth in the 1980s, and excellence throughout the 1990s and 2000s, it has been on a transformative course open to the challenges in the interactions of people, technology, and information.

This history was researched and written by Ellen Pozzi. Marija Dalbello provided the organizing framework and conceptual guidance and some writing for this anniversary edition. Completed: February 4, 2006. Revised: March 4, 2006.

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**Sources:**

- Central New Jersey ASIS Chapter Annual Activities Report for 1979-1980. Prepared by Roger Smith, November 7, 1980. Manuscript Collection 1193, Alexander Library at Rutgers University.
- Interview with Maurica Fedors, October 22, 2004.
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