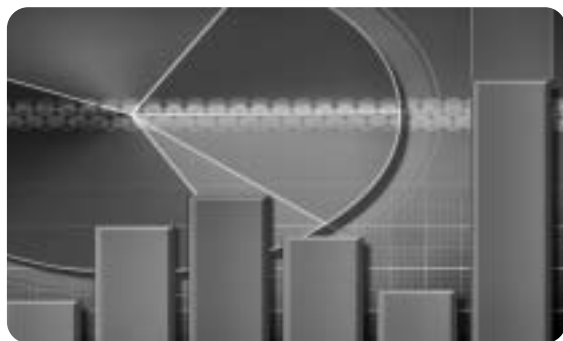


# SEARCHER

The Magazine for Database Professionals

A Reprint From  
SEARCHER



## PUBLISHING TRENDS

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### Everything Old Is New Again: ASIDIC Spring 2007 Meeting

In September 1968, professionals from several information centers were brought together in Columbus, Ohio, at the invitation of the Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS). All the centers represented used CAS magnetic tape resources as well as other electronic databases. Discussions of problems and needs, coupled with encouragement from CAS, led to the formation of the Association of Scientific Information Dissemination Centers (ASIDIC). Charter members included Eastman Kodak Company, IIT Research Institute, the universities of Pittsburgh and Georgia, the Dow Chemical Company, and the National Science Library of Canada. In 1976, ASIDIC changed its name to the current form, Association of Information and Dissemination Centers [<http://www.asidic.org>] and expanded membership to include database producers as full members. Today's association is composed of members representing both public and private organizations across the U.S. and around the

world. Within the private sector, both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations are included.

These days, just like other professional organizations, ASIDIC is considering another name change that better reflects the changing times. In that spirit, as ASIDIC nears its 40th birthday, always a challenging time, I thought it would be interesting to look back, roughly a decade at a time, at past meetings, culminating in a look at this year's spring meeting (March 11–13), to see if anything had really changed and, if so, what.

As to this year's spring meeting, perhaps, the most revealing fact was how the membership and regular attendees to the spring and fall sessions had remained quite consistent, drawn to the unique locations and the culturally invigorating Monday night venues for the key networking event. Generally, about 75 to 100 information industry executives, representing all types of organizations and leaders, attend

and spend a good bit of time exchanging ideas with a group sized to support in-depth discussions.

#### Time Travel

Let's turn back the clock to Chicago, Sept. 25–27, 1974, to a meeting entitled Information Networks. Panels discussed current problems associated with acquiring and processing databases and providing information service from those databases. Issues raised were the dichotomy between libraries and information centers; the need for screening and refereeing of information to assure credibility; new and improved methods of measuring the effectiveness of searches — both online and batch; the need for more meaningful and incisive user studies; the use of centralized versus decentralized searching as it might affect intermediary or end-user searchers. Other hot subjects of the time included automated means for classifying and indexing information; a common language

for networks; theories of information transfer; manipulating data. Any of this sound familiar? Issues of pricing, marketing methodologies, and identifying really vital information also formed a key part of the sessions. Industry leaders, such as Roger Summit from Lockheed Information Systems (Dialog), discussed information suppliers who would not allow their databases to go online.

## How are value-added products and services creating a whole new definition of what it means to be a publisher today?

Leaping forward to Boston, Sept. 30–Oct. 1, 1985, we find a meeting entitled Database Users Continue to Talk Back — Vendors & Producers Respond. Panels discussed views on online databases; command languages; document delivery; training and customer services. New members announced included organizations such as NewsBank, Inc.; Merck; Sharp & Dohme; Information on Demand; and Federal Document Retrieval, Inc. Organizations such as 3M presented ideas about how a universal search language would improve the situation greatly. Issues such as system crashes, response time, “all ports full” messages, and exclusivity amid database producers were all cited as major restrictions in the information retrieval world. Columbia University talked about spending \$4 million per year on information and how better training and quality were key. Wonder what it spends today. Tufts University stated that a common command language will not arrive any time soon. That was in 1985. Wonder if it might think Google has accomplished that goal? Lois Granick of PsycINFO talked about the need for users to understand the many trade-offs involved when asking for improvements — fine lines

between more information in abstracts and data surrogates, updating indexing terminology without removing older terms, the ever-strong issue of data quality. Any of this sound familiar? Customer service, automating customer information, and invoicing information were all common themes. Jim Terragno of Pergamon talked about major innovations to the software as a direct response to user requests.

San Francisco, Oct. 1–3, 1995, the meeting was entitled Information Competency and Information Management. Studies were discussed that compared 1995 with 1990 statistics to show a dramatic increase in the number of small corporate libraries, although many firms still had no way of evaluating the worth of their corporate libraries. Services sought from libraries included Internet capabilities, networked access to online databases, competitive intelligence, and end-user searching. Clifford Lynch from the University of California felt that many people were ill-equipped to deal with the new world of information. They seemed to view the Internet as the source of all information — the world’s libraries online — but failed to question timeliness, author credentials, scope of information, etc. Lynch warned that it was easy to fabricate things that didn’t happen. In this new environment, the roles of librarians would change into providing direct assistance and instruction to users. Organizations including Sun Microsystems, Hewlett-Packard, Boeing, IBM, and Microsoft all discussed issues that faced their information specialists: common interfaces to all application; availability from all platforms, integration, visualiza-

tion, agents, crawlers, search history, collection size, keywords, the limitations of human indexers, etc. Overall, integration was identified as the most important capability of an information system.

ASIDIC introduced its own Web site. Randy Marcinko pondered the role of ASIDIC in the coming era. Over the years, just as the information industry is coming of age, fraught with all the conundrums faced by every other teenager, he found ASIDIC too unsure of its role in the information industry and how to interact with other industry groups. Roles everywhere remain unclear. Now, any of this sound familiar?

### Here in 2007: Day 1

Finally, we arrive in Orlando at the March 11–13, 2007, meeting, and indeed *everything old is new again!!!*

The thrust of the meeting’s program focused on publishers facing a world that blends content and technology services together with contributions from individuals and institutions into powerful new contexts that change how their markets use and pay for their products and services. These changes are forcing content companies to change ideas of how to make money in publishing faster than ever before. Key questions and challenges raised revolved around where the major publishing houses will make money — from technology integration, user communities, media channels, or licensing. Are content technology companies becoming more powerful agents for creating publishing value than publishers themselves? How are value-added products and services creating a whole new definition of what it means to be a publisher today? What is the most effective electronic content packaging for balancing control and user-driven distribution?

Joe Wikert, VP and executive publisher, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., opened as the keynote speaker, ad-

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dressing “Change in the Publishing Business: From Licensor to Solutions Providers for Media and Enterprise Markets.” Wikert started by talking about popular myths such as print is dead; the copyright model is obsolete; publishers will have less relevance and value in the future. He urged attendees to open doors to both friends and foes, determine a Google solution, and dive in. Google won’t lead forever, and publishers must have a strategy that evolves beyond bookstore transactions. Consider how you foster development and contribute overall as a publisher to community ecosystems. He suggested that publishers review the risk versus the reward when looking at different models such as free versus pay. Portability and flexibility will greatly impact the success of a model. Layering of content will broaden the approach to information. Options might include a tutorial approach, utilizing an easy interface, and considering how the data is tagged, indexed, and written.

I was quite surprised to learn that Wiley, the STM publisher, actually owned Betty Crocker, Frohmer’s, and WeightWatchers. Staying alive involves focusing on brands, especially new brands. Publishers shouldn’t focus so intently on current revenue streams that they can’t open their vision to new directions. Embrace the community, they aren’t going away and “we” are smarter than “me.” Attract authors with a strong audience by federating networks with authors, blogs, mailing lists, columnists — distribution! As a publisher, everyone must show commitment, put out content in all possible presentations — from print to online to RSS — through aggregators, piecemeal, to consumers, through mashups. Get it out there every way you can. Frighteningly, Wikert also said that free content can add to sales, not cannibalize them. It all depends on the packaging — make the user hungry for more.

Have the freedom and wisdom to change, be XML-friendly and broaden distribution. Any of this sound familiar?

Mike Buschman from Microsoft talked about multiple search options and overlaying macros. A rather startling statistic held that only about 50 percent of all queries are answered correctly and only

A rather startling statistic held that only about 50 percent of all queries are answered correctly and only about 10 percent of the world’s data is searchable.

about 10 percent of the world’s data is searchable. Google Book Search actually boosted the Springer backlist sales when the academic audience wanted more and got hungrier from the initial taste. Sasha Gurke from Knovel talked about search engine optimization, reviews of pricing, and the fundamental impact of new pricing models. Packaging in such a way that clients who don’t want STM books cover-to-cover can buy by the piece can work. Interoperability was a key theme and a suggestion that Google indeed could be a great first step.

Gabriel Weaver from the Tufts University Perseus Project took data to a new level. He urged people to add value to the Google model. Terms like hierarchical ontologies of text came into play, augmenting data with an additional level. Help folks do mashups. Good enough just isn’t good enough any more. Kick it up another level.

Jay Moore of Nature Publishing brought into play the dreaded Web 2.0. The read-write Web 2.0 has exponentially more sites than the read-only Web 1.0. More buzz terms: MySpace, Wikipedia, Flickr, Digg, YouTube, blogs . . . advertising. Key message: Get users on the site

and capture them; give incentives to register; provide tools; innovate; strengthen other products; get a “second life” in a virtual universe. Any of this sound familiar?

Josh Hallett from the Social Media Consult, Hyku, LLC said something quite provocative: Your failed business model is not my problem. The community is not going away.

Getting power means becoming part of the community, any community, even the dog community (go check out Dogster)! Find out who the people are in your related community and market to them. Don’t wall in the garden — let it grow. Create content for 99 percent of the users, but do your user statistics model starting with 1 percent. OK, I couldn’t get through without mentioning folksonomies, which continued the strong suggestion that control comes through participation.

R. David Lankes of Syracuse University talked about conversation as the creator of knowledge. Libraries have been fixated on items, archives, more metadata, more tagging, *but* all of this is useless without conversation. Seeking active constructive means to “do” knowledge is key. Create a participatory environment; create protest sites; keep your enemies close. (Am I allowed to reference [elseviersucks.com](http://elseviersucks.com)?) Create forums for discussion; meet user groups in their medium; good enough is simply an excuse. Break down all barriers to new conversations; disassemble and reconnect in another way. No item exists in a vacuum; it is simply a data point to

a larger conversation. Metadata might be restrictive. Another plea for simple interfaces. There were great mentions of learning when to compete and when to cooperate, another familiar theme. Think of a mob versus a wise crowd. [*Editor's Note:* For more of Lankes' thoughts, see his article, "Library Association 2.0: 'Will That Be a Name Badge or a Wiki?'" on pp. 50–53 of the September 2007 issue of *Searcher*.]

Reid Conrad of Near Time highlighted collaborative integration. The private, semi-private, and public sectors can all collaborate to maximize interaction and knowledge. This has really been going on forever, so formalize it. You can't cure or control, so you should maximize. Publishing a blog and asking for comments is not creating an interactive community.

The day wound down with noted aggregators and publishers pondering packaging and analytics and debating about functionality. Safari, Knovel, netLibrary, and others all talked about the need for reinvention. Understanding the market and the subsequent subject needs seemed to be key. Diversify content, diversify publishers, while others felt, stay within the lines,

don't multitask. Somehow, everyone truly needs to figure out how to solve user problems and not just create product. Reconsider royalty and revenue models. Any of this sound familiar?

## Day 2

Day 2 brought more interesting discussion from new companies with old challenges. How do you get technology partnerships right? What is the role of content technology providers? How do you get monetization right? How do you get archiving right? All players suggested that there was a disconnect between technology and publishers. Off-shore offerings added to the technology and services disconnect. Firms such as Muse Global and MarkLogic and Highbeam Research and ECNext and Silverchair all talked about the added value they could bring to slow-to-adapt STM publishers. Services that allow external partners to act as a team player to the client, rather than just a vendor, can create growth that publishers, left to their own devices, would not attain. This suggests letting publishers worry about content, their lifeline, and let others grow the model around them. All

agreed that the deeper a user gets into data, in any form, the more likely the user will become a buyer and return. Free offerings lead to paying clients, and paying clients will buy from advertising, in the right blend. It was a little startling to realize how much behavioral searching and advertising is going on. Make no mistake. Big Brother works in marketing.

## But Wait Until Tomorrow

The mantra: Things I think matter a lot don't matter at all and vice versa. Know your goals, plans, content, users. Measure and test everything. Those were the lessons learned.

I stumbled out into the light of day, appropriately enough, very close to Disney World. Everything old is new again. The themes from the past carried very clearly through to today's meetings. Stay tuned for the update at the fall meeting: Trends, Tactics and Truths in the Information Industry. Who will be brave enough to say they pulled out the 1984 strategic planning document, dusted it off, updated it a tad, and resubmitted it, virtually unchanged, and no one noticed? What do you think? Truth or Dare. ♦