

## ProQuest Doctoral Dissertation Award

The 2015 ProQuest Doctoral Dissertation Award is presented to **Chris Cunningham**, University of South Carolina, for his dissertation entitled, *Government Structure, Social Inclusion and the Digital Divide: A Discourse on the Affinity Between the Effects of Freedom and Access to Online Information Resources*.

This study examines the relationship between democracy and access to online information. Democracy was operationalized using the ratings of political rights and civil liberties available from Freedom House (<https://freedomhouse.org/>) and additional data from a prior published study, as well as two economic variables (using data from the World Bank): Gross Domestic Product and Foreign Direct Investment. Access to online information was operationalized as the number of internet users per capita (using data from the United Nations). An OLS regression model was used to test the null hypothesis that the level of democracy within a country does not affect level of access to online resources. The model (level of democracy) explained ~57% of the variation in the number of people using the internet per capita ( $p=0.019$ ). In addition, the civil liberties ranking of a country was determined to have a statistically significant relationship to the number of internet users while the political rights of a country did not.

Chris' advisor, Dr. Kendra Albright, noted that, "The particular strength of this dissertation is that much of the research on the digital divide looks at the changes over time in general access (e.g., the information rich vs. the information poor), rather than on the impacts of the digital divide caused by other aspects; in this case, the effects of democracy on information access. It raises important new questions and reveals new data that can contribute to policymaking for future digital divide issues." The jury agreed, noting that "the analysis of elements related/contributing to the digital divide remains a vitally important topic and, to the author's credit, this is a strong effort at applying quantitative examination to a serious issue."

## CHAPTER AWARDS

### Student Chapter-of-the-Year

For 2015, Student Chapter-of-the-Year honors go to the student chapter at **San Jose State University (SJSU ASIS&T)** in recognition of chapter's membership, activities, communications, financial and administrative management and overall contributions to both ASIS&T and the broader information science community. Operating as an online, virtual chapter, SJSU held a total of 15 meetings and 18 events with 29 speakers, including eight cooperative ventures with other ASIS&T and iSchool organizations (out of 14 eligible events). A 35% increase in membership, increased event attendance and community engagement were driven through social media, SJSU YouTube and the new ScholarWorks repositories. Administratively, new bylaws and enhancements to chapter management helped drive growth. SJSU members actively supported the Association through SIG leadership, social media contributions and task force support. As of June 2015, SJSU reported the highest number of current ASIS&T student members in the chapter's four-year history, including three ASIS&T New Leader Award winners in the past two years. SJSU developed the #HUGASIG campaign that was distributed around ASIS&T this year; now we can return the gift with a congratulatory hug to SJSU ASIS&T!

For all these reasons and others, the student chapter of **San Jose State University** is the 2015 Student Chapter-of-the-Year.

## SIG AWARDS

### SIG-of-the-Year

The ASIS&T 2015 SIG-of-the-Year Award is presented to **SIG/Arts & Humanities (SIG/AH)** in recognition of its enthusiasm and concerted efforts to increase membership and outreach, innovative and collaborative programs and for assiduous use of social media and other channels, such as an enhanced website and newsletters, to reach out to all SIG/AH members. Their generative work with SIGs/VIS & DL will continue to bear fruit for years to come. This SIG has embarked on several commendable special projects such as the virtual symposium, the student paper competition and the archive project. SIG/AH enriches the ASIS&T experience, not just for its own members, but also for the association as a whole. We will all look forward to and benefit from the SIG's plans for the coming year.

For all these reasons, **SIG/Arts & Humanities (SIG/AH)** is the 2015 ASIS&T SIG-of-the-Year.

### SIG Member-of-the-Year

In recognition of significant efforts on behalf of ASIS&T SIGs, the 2015 SIG-of-the-Year Award goes to two members: **Gary Burnett** and **Jeremy McLaughlin**.

**Gary Burnett** has been extremely active in SIG/Information Needs, Seeking and Use (SIG/USE) for nearly a decade. His passion and dedication to the SIG have been evident throughout his activities, ranging from participation in the SIG's business meetings to service on committees and projects undertaken by the SIG. He has served on the SIG/USE Awards Committee continuously for the past five years, chairing it for the last three. He also created the SIG/USE Innovation Award honoring individuals whose work may not fit within more traditional models of scholarly research. Gary presented a very moving remembrance of Elfreda Chatman on the occasion of her nomination as a Fellow of the Academy of SIG/USE. He co-authored (with Sanda Erdelez) an article in the *Bulletin of the Association for Information Science and Technology* that earned the 2010 SIG Publication-of-the-Year Award. Gary is now preparing to lead SIG/USE in 2015/2016. SIG/USE has benefited enormously from Gary's generosity with his time, his devotion and his invaluable expertise.

**Jeremy McLaughlin** has demonstrated exceptional leadership this year as chair of SIG/Arts & Humanities (SIG/AH), carrying out an ambitious set of activities focused on member engagement. Jeremy successfully planned and executed collaboratively with SIG/Visualization, Images & Sound (SIG/VIS) a virtual symposium on information and technology in the arts and humanities. The symposium featured six professional speakers, as well as two winners of a Student Research Paper contest. Jeremy's achievement was a landmark springtime event that energized SIG/AH's membership between Annual Meetings. Jeremy also boosted member engagement with an active social media presence on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube for the entire year which brought new members both to ASIS&T and SIG/AH. Jeremy also enthusiastically promoted ASIS&T special interest groups (specifically SIG/AH) on the ASIS&T blog. In addition to his SIG/AH work throughout the year, he also served as an ASIS&T New Leader and as a student chapter chair. Jeremy has proven himself to be a skillful leader and a model ASIS&T member whose involvement in multiple groups redefines contributions to ASIS&T.