SIG Newsletter   asis

1984-1985 SIG/AH OFFICERS

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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR AND CHAIRMAN

You have undoubtedly been anxious over the non-appearance of the newsletter over the past several months and perhaps have feared that SIG/AH has slipped into oblivion. Not so! We have an exciting conference program lined up for Las Vegas, and our other initiatives and accomplishments are described below.

For the hiatus in publication I plead guilty with extenuating circumstances. I have twice undergone changes of city and occupation since the annual meeting. Acclimatization to new circumstances and lack of ready access to a personal computer made it difficult for me to keep up with my responsibilities. I first moved to Baltimore to do lexicographical work related to the development of an automatic indexing system at the NASA Scientific and Technical Information Facility. Now I am employed as a librarian at Congressional Quarterly, Inc. in Washington. Please note my current address, above.

Our official publication schedule is now quarterly. Any gap in publication will be compensated for by larger subsequent issues. Currently, I plan to publish 20-32 or even more pages per year, depending on budgetary constraints.

We are in a position to produce a top-notch newsletter that will include book reviews, bibliographies, and other substantive information in addition to reports on SIG/AH conference activities and other business and that will not duplicate the work of newsletters of organizations such as the Association for Computers and the Humanities. I have more ideas for this newsletter than I can possibly squeeze into the space allotted. The more members you bring into SIG/AH, the more voluminous will be our newsletters. And by all means send in your own contributions to the newsletter.

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Furthermore, I am constantly receiving requests from non-ASIS-members (largely from academic humanists) for subscriptions, thanks to my publicity efforts with respect to other societies and newsletters. We have no provision as yet for charging subscription fees to outsiders, but I am looking into the possibility of doing so.

I have been trying to promote cooperation with other humanities organizations that have a similar mission. The SIG/AH newsletter and conference programs have been reported in other newsletters such as <u>Research in Word Processing Newsletter</u> and <u>ACH Newsletter</u> (Association for Computers and the Humanities). I have also set up newsletter exchanges with other newsletters. Important information from these newsletters will be mentioned here as well.

From time to time we are solicited by members of the general public for expert advice on humanities and information science and technology related affairs.

The next issue will appear by the beginning of December.

Except for the report by Elizabeth Davis, the material in this issue was written by Ralph Dumain.

1984 SIG/AH ELECTIONS: EXPLANATION

Rarely can even one person be found who is willing to serve as an officer in our SIG; competition between two people for the same office is unheard of. Therefore it was decided at our business meeting in Philadelphia not to waste precious talent. By unanimous decision of the attendees and consent of the parties concerned, it was decided that the office of Secretary-Treasurer be split into two offices for the 1984-1985 term and that Ms. Macioroski serve as Treasurer and Ms. Gelinas serve as Secretary.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to those who have helped SIG/AH carry out its activities during the 1983-84 membership year: to Karen Markey for organizing the midyear program in Bloomington, to Robert Barnes for bringing in Myron Krueger as a plenary speaker and organizing the panel discussion on 'artificial reality' for the annual meeting, to Howard White for moderating our session on bibliometrics, to our officers Karen Meizner for fulfilling her obligations as Chairman and assisting me in my transition to Chairman and Margaret Jennings for ably representing us in the SIG Cabinet. I would like to express special gratitude to Shannon Macioroski for fulfilling the often torturous demands placed on her as Secretary-Treasurer. Finally, let me express my appreciation to our new 1984-85 officers Elizabeth Davis and Renee Gelinas for their efforts and enthusiasm. Elizabeth Davis has been especially eager to step into her coming role as Chairman and help out with SIG/AH activities.

A MESSAGE TO NEW MEMBERS, 1984-85, 1985-86

Please let us know how we can serve you. The officers are active behind the scenes in spite of our infrequent communications. New members are urged to write the editor for back issues of the newsletter from 1983-1984. That is an excellent way to acquaint yourself with your SIG and its recent activities.

SIG/AH OFFICERS: CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

We are urgently in need of a Chairman-elect for the 1985-86 membership year who will then assume the chairmanship for 1986-87. Please submit the name of your nominee (yourself or another) for a given office together with a brief biography, qualifications, and/or statement of goals for SIG/AH to Elizabeth Davis (see address above) by Nov. 30.

<u>Chairman</u>. Responsible for coordination, development, implementation, and reporting of SIG activities.

<u>Chairman-elect</u>. Automatically becomes Chairman at end of term. Assumes chair in event of premature termination of current Chairman's office. Works closely with Chairman. Usually assumes responsibility for implementation of SIG conference programs.

We are also looking for candidates for 1986-87. The other offices and their responsibilities are listed below.

Secretary-Treasurer. Records expenditures. Interprets budget. Submits annual SIG Budget Plan. May write reports of SIG activities for external dissemination.

Cabinet Representative. Represents SIG/AH at SIG Cabinet Meetings.

Alternate Cabinet Representative. Represents SIG/AH at SIG Cabinet Meetings in lieu of Cabinet Representative.

Officers must be able to attend the annual ASIS meeting. The Cabinet or Alternate Cabinet Representative must attend the mid-year meeting.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR SIG/AH COMMITTEES

SIG/AH has been operating on a hand-to-mouth basis for too long, surviving only through the energies of one or two enthusiasts. Conference program plans are usually made and speakers solicited within a month or two after the annual meeting in a rush to beat the deadline. I have been doing some long-range planning in the two years that I have been active in SIG/AH, but I tend to carry out my ideas within the cramped time frame just mentioned. We need a more coordinated effort for both short-term and long-term conference organizing.

The conference committee should map out areas of interest and ascertain the information needs of the humanities disciplines and then seek to address them. Individual conferences should have a guiding theme and there should be a coherent plan for the next several years.

I can think of at least two ways of categorizing conference topics: by discipline or by technique/application/method. In recent years we had a session devoted to the visual arts. This year we are concentrating on techniques and applications, ie. content analysis and textual database organization. Every committee member should pick a discipline or methodology to concentrate on. I hereby volunteer myself as a committee member for philosophy.

We also need a nominations committee to coordinate the election process and solicit future SIG/AH officers. Elections have not proceeded smoothly the past few years.

Feel free to suggest other committees. Please sign up for one.

FUTURE CONFERENCE PLANS

Please submit to Elizabeth Davis your suggestions for the 1986 mid-year and annual conferences. The 49th annual meeting is in Chicago, Sept. 28 - Oct. 2, 1986.

The 1987 50th annual meeting will be held in Boston. Help celebrate the golden anniversary with ideas for a special SIG/AH program. For example, you might come up with a good idea for a continuing education workshop.

My pet project is a SIG/AH theme devoted to philosophy for the 1987 conference. My ideal program, which should comprise at least two sessions, would cover the range of information science approaches to the discipline of philosophy: retrieval effectiveness and search strategies using philosophy databases, problems of subject access to philosophical literature (indexing, thesauri, classifications), content, stylistic and discourse analysis of philosophical texts, the use of personal computers in philosophical research, other computer applications in philosophy, bibliometric properties of the philosophical literature and the social structure of and information flow within and beyond the professional philosophical community, and perhaps even the application of "artificial intelligence" techniques.

Diane Woodward suggested that we do a program devoted to philosophical perspectives on information science, eg. issues involving knowledge representation, semantics, and logic.

We might also think of continuing the work started in the 1984 annual meeting and pursue philosophical implications of the computer revolution.

We should also consider co-sponsoring our program with another professional society and/or

publishing a collection of papers. In general, we should be thinking about joint meetings of SIG/AH with other groups, eg. the Association for Computers and the Humanities.

I have been kicking around these plans for some time now. Before I go into action, please let me know what you think.

THE MISSION OF SIG/AH

The following paragraph constitutes the official description of the mission of SIG/AH (from the ASIS Handbook & Directory).

SIG/AH explores the applications of information technology to: a) humanistic scholarship, such as language, history, philosophy, and archaeology; and b) in the creative process, including literature, music, the visual and fine arts, and dance. It aims to place critical theory within the framework of information science and to improve information flow in the arts and humanities. Illustrative activities include making concordances, collating texts, discovering verbal correspondences between passages, characterizing styles, machine-editing bibliographies, choreographing dance, and computer art.

In my view this description is obsolete and misleading and a new mission statement needs to be formulated. Firstly, the meaning of "critical theory" in this paragraph is a mystery. Secondly, many of the activities described have been more comprehensively dealt with by the Association for Computers and the Humanities (ACH) and the Association for Literary and Linguistic Computing (ALLC). Less intellectually interesting or technically novel topics such as computer-generated concordances are not prominent as they once were in conferences and literature devoted to computers and the humanities.

Do SIG/AH and ACH differ at all in scope? If there is a basis for distinction it is that ASIS covers a wider domain than computer applications but may be narrower in its focus on those computer applications which are related to information science or information retrieval concerns. Even that distinction is being obliterated. The Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Computers and the Humanities (ICCH/6) indicate a major shift and expansion of interests of ACH. Earlier ICCH proceedings do not contain many contributions which are centrally related to information science, but ICCH/6 is full of papers that are right in the mainstream of information science concerns.

I hope that there can be greater cooperation between SIG/AH and other organizations, especially ACH, and that at the same time we can delineate our areas of activity. Research and computer applications which are mainly discipline-oriented (eg. lexicography, stylistic analysis) should be left in the hands of ACH, ALLC, and similar societies, in my view. SIG/AH should emphasize humanities research with an information science slant, librarianship-related concerns, databases and information retrieval, and bibliometric studies and other studies of information flow in and social structure of the humanities disciplines. When we deal with computer applications we should strive for generality of significance and theoretical interest. We may also wish to deal with philosophical, humanistic and social implications of information technology.

I invite your opinions on our mission and your participation in rewriting our mission statement.

MESSAGE FROM ELIZABETH DAVIS, SIG/AH CHAIR-ELECT

Biographical data: Present position: Supervisor of Reference Cataloging and Acquisitions, Pierpont Morgan Library. Education: MLS, Indiana University, 1972; MA (Musicology), New York University, 1975; Ph.D. (Musicology), New York University, in progress.

First, let me thank those of you who sent me project ideas over the past year. I feel very honored having been chosen to serve the special needs of SIG/AH. I am committed to the use of technology in carrying out humanistic and artistic research. Please get in touch with me concerning your program ideas and goals for SIG/AH. Your feedback on the following suggestions is invited.

Suggestions for the newsletter:

(1) statement of members' interests

(2) spotlight on our members: news concerning you, your projects, work-related activities, accomplishments, publications

(3) material that cannot be found elsewhere: arts and humanities discipline-specific material, subject-specific perspective (eg. use of personal computers in humanistically-oriented studies)

(4) calendars of relevant meetings

(5) ASIS-oriented news

Other ideas:

(1) produce publications in addition to newsletters

(2) publish starter bibliographies or pathfinders

(3) reconsider our mission

Please get involved on committees:

(1) nominating committee

(2) liaisons with chapters (report on relevant material from their meetings)

(3) long-range planning

Please get in touch with me concerning these or any other suggestions you may have.

I attended the 1985 ASIS mid-year meeting in Fort Lauderdale. Here are the highlights of the SIG Cabinet meeting held Sunday May 19, chaired by George Abbott:

1. Jeff Jackson is the SIG/AH liaison.

2. 1986 ASIS Annual Meeting, Sept. 26 - October 4, Chicago: The conference theme is "Shaping the Future: The Sky's the Limit." SIG/AH session descriptions are due December 15, 1985.

3. The 1986 mid-year meeting is scheduled for Portland, Oregon.

4. George Abbott stressed the need for SIG recruitment.

5. There was discussion of whether SIG papers can be included in the Proceedings. George Abbott said they can be if the deadlines are met.

6. Complaints were rampant concerning the scheduling for Las Vegas, ie. restriction of the number of SIG sessions and of the time slots to 45 minutes. SIGs expressed dismay at taking a back seat to product review sessions. Linda Resnick stated that the schedulers had tried to accomodate a felt need for no-conflict exhibit hours, and that these have been arranged for two hours each day on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. George Abbott offered to take SIG concerns to the Las Vegas planning committee. Discussion culminated in the approval of two motions: (1) SIG concerns over the above be brought to the Conferences and Meetings Committee, (2) SIGs have a representative on the Conference and Meetings Committee.

In Fort Lauderdale I learned that, over a seven-year period, our membership has fluctuated from 87 - 199 members. In 1984 our membership was in the low 100s. We are one of seven SIGS, the largest grouping, which have memberships in the range of 100-199.

1985 ASIS ANNUAL MEETING: SIG/AH PROGRAM, CO-SPONSORED WITH SIG/CR

PERSONAL DATABASES, ONLINE ORGANIZATION OF TEXT, AND THE FUTURE OF SCHOLARLY WORK

Synopsis. How can the scholar exploit the possibilities of the computer in organizing his ideas, notes, textual fragments, works in progress, bibliographic references, quotations, etc.? The humanities scholar in particular is liable to delve into disparate sources and disciplines and create complex interrelations among and novel classifications of his source materials. This session will deal with forms of textual organization and display, textual database management systems, idea processing, outline processing and word-processing-related software, and the needs of the humanities scholar.

Papers:

NARRATION, HIERARCHY, AND AUTONOMY: THE PROBLEM OF ONLINE TEXT STRUCTURE. T. R. Girill, National Magnetic Fusion Energy Computer Center, Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, Livermore, CA.

INFORMATION RESOURCE MANAGEMENT POTENTIAL USING NEW MICROCOMPUTER BASED BIBLIOGRAPHIC AND TEXTUAL DATABASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS. Sidney Robbins, USDA SOUTHFORNET, Science Library, University of Georgia, Athens, GA.

MICROCOMPUTER SOFTWARE FOR THE SCHOLAR: NEEDS VS. ACHIEVEMENTS. Bradford A. Morgan and James M. Schwartz, Editors, Research in Word Processing Newsletter, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, Rapid City, SD.

"CONTENT ANALYSIS" IN THE HUMANITIES

Synopsis. This session deals with recent research in the discipline of "content analysis," historically based in studies of mass communications and literary texts, and its possible relevance to subject analysis for information retrieval.

CAN THERE BE A SYMBIOSIS BETWEEN NATURAL LANGUAGE MEANING AND CONCEPT? CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS IN THE HUMANITIES. Klaus M. Schmidt, Dept. of German, Russian and East Asian Languages, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH.

COMPUTATIONAL LITERARY THEMATIC ANALYSIS: THE POSSIBILITY OF A GENERAL SOLUTION. Sally Yeates Sedelow, Depts. of Computer Science and Linguistics, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

SEMANTICS FOR HUMANITIES APPLICATIONS: CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SEMANTIC "STORES." Walter A. Sedelow, Depts. of Computer Science, Sociology, and History and Philosophy of Science, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

NEXT ISSUE:

report on the 1985 annual meeting
conference announcements
relevant organizations and newsletters
bibliographies
recent books and journal articles
ballots

FUTURE ISSUES:

report on the 1984 annual meeting
software
book reviews
news
quotes