

## INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION (ICSTI)

11 Nov 2004

By Wendy Warr

For some years I have had the privilege of being IUPAC's representative to ICSTI, the International Council for Scientific and Technical Information [1]. I have previously written about this in CI in 2002 [2]. ICSTI members include publishers, international unions, national libraries and research councils, government departments, organizations such as ISSN, and so on. Significant numbers of US government employees are involved and IUPAP (the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics), IUCr (the International Union of Crystallography) and the European Patent Office (EPO) are fairly active too, both at meetings and in project activities. At least one public conference is held each year.

Open access (OA) and digital archiving are issues that have come to the fore at ICSTI meetings of late. OA is a call for free, unrestricted access, on the public Internet, to the literature that scholars produce. Researchers often do not understand the costs and complexities of disseminating the results of their research and many of the issues surrounding OA and its economic models are still controversial and unresolved [3]. Learned societies are impacted because society programs are often very dependent on publishing income and international unions need to consider the issues too. The permanent availability of the scientific record in this era of electronic journals is also of great concern to ICSTI.

The Executive Director of ICSTI, Barry Mahon, oversees the organization on a contractual basis from his homes in Ireland and France. One of his functions is to keep member organizations up to date with news from the world of information and publishing. This he does very effectively using the ICSTI listserver, to which I am the IUPAC subscriber. I report on relevant items to the IUPAC Committee on Printed and Electronic Publications (CPEP).

The Secretariat is run under contract by Information International Associates in the United States but the official facility at the ICSU headquarters in Paris is still staffed part-time. The ICSTI Web site [1] is run by CISTI (Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information, National Research Council Canada) in Ottawa, Canada. An electronic magazine, *Forum* [4], is published on the Web site about four times a year: access is open to all, including you, the readers of this article.

The 2004 ICSTI General Assembly was held at the Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) in London on May 13-18, 2004. There were 30 attendees at the member-only sessions, classified by country of residence as USA 9, UK 5, France 3, Taiwan 3, Russia 2, Japan 1, Canada 1, Netherlands 1, India 3, Portugal 1, and Korea 1. The organization does not have substantial funds of its own to apply to projects so it is largely dependent on exerting influence and on using member organizations to do project work. Hussein Rostum's study [5] "The Information Imperative: A Framework for Measuring Impacts of STM Information Services and STM Organizations", funded by CISTI and concluded in 2003, is available on the ICSTI Web site, free for readers who are prepared to register.

The Proceedings of the 2003 ICSTI Conference on open access [6], published by IOS Press are also available on the Web. A French version is available from INIST [7]. ICSTI presented a report to the inquiry on scientific publications of the Science and Technology Committee, (UK) House of Commons, and Barry Mahon has prepared a white paper for ICSTI entitled "Open Access and the Future of Scientific Publishing", a draft of which was presented at the 2004 General Assembly.

ICSTI continues to work on digital archiving in collaboration with CODATA, IUCr and CENDI. CENDI is an interagency working group of senior scientific and technical information (STI) managers from 11 U.S. federal agencies [8]. The four organizations intend to analyze the impact of Open Access, investigate the use of interoperability standards such as OpenGIS, OpenOffice and STEP, and produce a list of foundations that might be interested in supporting digital preservation in science. IUCr is running an ICSTI project within the Union, sending out two questionnaires, one to crystallographers and the other to publishers of crystallographic data, asking for details of formal and informal information and data archives that they keep. Librarians will be asked what provisions they have made for digital archiving. A draft report of the results is planned for fall 2004.

An ICSTI/CODATA portal on access to data in science, especially in developing regions, is being managed by the US National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and their open source software for updating the portal has been made available. The site will be located on the NAS site but a site in the developing world will be sought through INASP (International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications). A demonstration of the site will be made at the CODATA Meeting in Berlin in November 2004.

A proposal from David Brown of the British Library to study the future role of national STI centers in the light of the ongoing changes in the creation and dissemination of STI, has been discussed. The idea is that there should be an initial review of the literature and then a series of questions and issues for study would be created by centers who are ICSTI Members. These centers would be invited to a facilitated discussion meeting to finalize the second stage, a detailed study of the options over (say) five years.

The final day of the 2004 General Assembly was a one-day public conference entitled "Technical and Economic Challenges of Scientific Information: STM Content Access, Linking and Archiving". There were three sessions covering open access; easily accessible content and linking; and archiving, content preservation, and long term access. The PowerPoint presentations are online [9] and a report of the proceedings is available free on my own Web site [10].

Kurt Molholm of DTIC has finished his term of office as President of ICSTI and the following people were elected as Officers: President: Gérard Giroud, EPO; Vice President, Bernard Dumouchel, CISTI, Canada; General Secretary, Elliot Siegel, National Library of Medicine (NLM), USA; and Treasurer, Gabriela Lopez da Silva, Fundagao Para Ciencia e a Tecnologia (FCT), Portugal. VINITI (All-Union Institute of Scientific and Technical Information of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR) will host the next General Assembly in Moscow on May 24-29, 2005.

1. <http://www.icsti.org>
2. <http://www.iupac.org/publications/ci/2002/2406/sti.html>
3. [http://www.iupac.org/publications/ci/2003/2504/2\\_openaccess.html](http://www.iupac.org/publications/ci/2003/2504/2_openaccess.html)
4. <http://www.icsti.org/forum/index.html>
5. [http://www.icsti.org/icsti\\_reports.html](http://www.icsti.org/icsti_reports.html)
6. <http://www.iospress.nl/html/01675265.html> (See Issue 23 Nos. 2-3)
7. <http://www.inist.fr/openaccess/>
8. <http://www.dtic.mil/cendi/>
9. <http://www.icsti.org/forum/46/index.html>
10. <http://www.warr.com/ICSTI.html>

Wendy Warr, [wendy@warr.com](mailto:wendy@warr.com) managing consultant at Wendy Warr & Associates <http://www.warr.com> in the UK, chaired the IUPAC Committee on Printed and Electronic Publications until the end of 2003.