

NEASIS&T Student Travel Award Essay Contest Submission

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*“Be curious always! For knowledge will not acquire you; you must acquire it.”*

Sudie Back

Although academic pursuits may be one way of acquiring knowledge, one of the most important lessons I have learned through my MLIS is that we must work for knowledge; we cannot expect it to follow naturally from coursework, papers, or mere attendance of class lectures. This concept of active knowledge acquisition has guided my degree in Knowledge Management in that I have pushed myself to step out of the academic box and consider the real world application of information science theories and practice. To this end, I have volunteered at local library and archives related conferences; joined several professional associations; attended discussion and networking sessions on pressing topics such as copyright law; and co-organized a conference that explores the intersection of our profession with social media and Web 2.0 technologies.

Knowledge management, while a fast-growing field, is often treated as a corollary or special interest group within the predominant associations in Canada, the Canadian Library Association and the Special Libraries Association. After recently discovering both ASIS&T and the newly approved student chapter at McGill, I was excited to learn that an organization dedicated to so many of my professional interests existed! As an event that balances the research perspective with informal workshops and discussions, the Annual Meeting represents an ideal opportunity for active knowledge acquisition, especially for new graduates. The event's tracks, particularly those on interactive information & design and information and knowledge management, are directly relevant to my own work, which has focused on the application of new tools to information and knowledge management in the enterprise setting. Therefore, I would like to attend in order to interact with my colleagues and learn from their experiences with projects that have an impact on my own career.

Simply joining professional associations does not automatically impact one's career; like knowledge, a membership becomes more valuable the more it is used. Conferences and events like the Annual Meeting are opportunities to 'get known' and to begin building relationships with colleagues working in diverse environments. I believe that this conference experience will help me to establish a presence among my peers while maintaining momentum during my transition from a student to a professional. I am fortunate to have had my internship extended into a full time position after graduation, and I hope to use my conference experience in order to prepare for the career challenges I will face. I believe that by sharing knowledge in venues such as the Annual Meeting, participants can gain new perspectives on common problems and are often prompted to think about relevant issues in new ways. Therefore, I see this conference experience as a way to jumpstart my professional life by establishing connections that will last throughout my career.

Given the especially pertinent need for ongoing learning in the information professions, I view professional development as a commitment. I have consistently found that my colleagues are more than willing to share their knowledge with a new generation, and I believe that sharing should go both ways. As a younger information professional who has grown up with technology, I have a new perspective to contribute; moreover, I feel an obligation to do so in light of the rapid changes that face our profession. I have consistently taken on leadership roles in student associations during my studies, and I look forward to continuing the tradition with an active involvement with ASIS&T via the McGill Student Chapter. In the future, I see myself presenting my work at conferences like ASIS&T and contributing to the professional development of my colleagues across North America.