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From the President

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In library instruction sessions, I prefer to illustrate searches in databases using rare but interesting terms. Doing so yields better search results, and as a bonus, an opportunity to toss out an idea on the bigger picture of life, usually with a smile. Recently I stumbled on the term “sociality.” It is certainly not a word I use in my everyday speech, and given the search results, I fear it must be classified as the disciplinary jargon of both sociologists and biologists. Apparently the term is used to envelope all that happens to bind communities together, whether it is humans in a city or ants in an anthill. If this makes you curious, hurray!

One article I found that intrigued me, and which inspires some happy thoughts about ASDAL, our upcoming conference, and the work we do, is by David Copp: “Social glue and norms of sociality,” (*Philosophical Studies* (2015) no. 172, pp. 3387-3397). I did skim the article and focus in on the conclusion. The article is for the most part taking an everyday tacit reality, notching it up about ten layers of abstraction with polysyllabic vocabulary, and then parsing a range of ambiguities for all of ten pages, only to conclude with a simple proposition, something that seems so obvious that I had never thought to put it into words..

The quote that caught my interest in the first place is in the abstract: “Social glue consists of actual and intended meshing of intentions and shared knowledge combined with a kind of normative pressure that has normative authority—along with other more familiar factors such as familial connections, cooperative arrangements, and affective states such as loyalties.”

In thinking about ASDAL and the conference experience, I suggest that applying the jargon, “social glue,” to what we do is a fit metaphor. Once a year we assemble, share knowledge, make connections, plan and carry out cooperative arrangements, all the while encouraging and inspiring one another in the pursuit of our shared expertise. The “normative pressure and normative authority” is not imposed from the outside, but emerges on the inside out of friendship and trust, inspiring healthy loyalties.

This “actual and intended meshing” takes much planning and effort, particularly for our hosts, and the contribution of the presenters cannot be overestimated. I trust we all took delight in finding transportation and planning for housing and food. All of this planning and working will bear fruit as we experience ASDAL 2017 together, and I am confident that collectively we will leave the conference both professionally and personally enriched..

And so what is the simple proposition that concludes these ten pages of detailed polysyllabic argument? “Rational and moral agents will tend to be willing to act together with those who are willing to act with them, and willing to support the efforts of those with whom they are acting.” Who are more rational and moral than ASDAL members? In academes, “tend to be willing to” may allow for exceptions to the rule, but in my opinion, ASDAL is a shining example of the proposition. All the more reason why we value this time together!

Safe travels, looking forward with much anticipation to meeting you at the conference, and it is my hope that the experience will indeed function for us as a “social glue.”

Terry Dwain Robertson
ASDAL President