

2007 ISTAS Conference Hosting Proposal

Location: University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Dates: June 1-2, 2007

Theme:

Risk, Vulnerability, Uncertainty, Technology and Society

Sub-themes:

- Risk, technology and the nuclear weapons legacy (old weapons, new weapons, testing)
- Risk, technology and the nuclear present and future (new construction, waste disposal)
- Gaming technology and society (surveillance, computing, internet gaming, gambling addictions)
- Tourism and public health vulnerability (food and water safety, infectious disease prevention and containment, large scale evacuation and crowd management)
- Infrastructure vulnerability (water, energy, transportation; natural and human caused hazards)
- Managing uncertainty (statistics, modeling, communication)
- Financial risk and insurance (global warming, extreme events)

We also welcome submissions on other traditional ISTAS topics including environmental, health and safety implications of technology; engineering ethics and professional responsibility; history of technology; technical expertise and public policy; peace technology; and social issues related to energy, information technology and telecommunications.

Cosponsors: IEEE SSIT, UNLV, and the Risk Assessment and Policy Association (RAPA)

Conference Leadership:

Conference chair:

- Dr. David M. Hassenzahl (UNLV/ SSIT / RAPA)

Organizing Committee:

- Dr. Clinton J. Andrews, Rutgers University / SSIT
- Karl Perusich, 2006 SSIT President
- Gene Hoffnagle, IEEE Board of Directors, SSIT Board of Governors
- Dr. Roberta Brody, CUNY / Organizer of ISTAS'06
- Dr. Branden Johnson, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection / RAPA
- Dottie Shank, UNLV Environmental Studies Department Office Manager
- Martha Watson, Dean, UNLV Greenspun College of Urban Affairs and / or Stuart Mann, Dean, UNLV Harrah School of Hotel Administration
- Dr. James O'Brien, Clark County Emergency Management
- Dr. Anthony Hechanova, UNLV Harry Reid Center for Environmental Research

- UNLV Graduate Students TBD

Technical Program Committee:

- Dr. Clinton J. Andrews, Rutgers University / SSIT
- Brian O'Connell, SSIT
- Joseph Herkert, SSIT
- Dr. Kenneth Foster, University of Pennsylvania / SSIT
- Dr. Julian Kilker, School of Journalism and Media Studies
- Dr. James O'Brien, Clark County Emergency Management
- Dr. Branden Johnson, NJ Department of Environmental Protection
- Dr. Ilene Ruhoy, UNLV Department of Environmental Studies
- Tara Sweeney, Institute for Security Studies
- Dr. Bill Smith, UNLV Department of Environmental Studies
- Dr. Tim Farnham, UNLV Department of Environmental Studies *
- Dr. Helen Neill, UNLV Department of Environmental Studies
- Dr. Larry Ashley, UNLV Department of Counseling
- Dr. Kathy Nelson, UNLV Department of Tourism and Convention Administration
- Dr. Tom Piechota, UNLV Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
- Dr. Julie Stagers, UNLV Department of English
- Dr. Denise Tillery, UNLV Department of English *

* Farnham and Tillery presented or coauthored papers at ISTAS 2005

Las Vegas ISTAS Conference Overview

A number of factors make Las Vegas is an ideal fit for an ISTAS conference focusing on risk, vulnerability, uncertainty, technology and society. Most salient are the Nevada Test Site / Yucca Mountain, the massive tourism industry, gambling venues and technology, and extreme weather with associated water, energy and transportation infrastructure challenges.

A year round spring has sustained a small population at least part of the year in the Las Vegas valley for millennia. Beginning in the 1700's, with the availability of water from the springs, then ground water, and finally the Hoover Dam, Las Vegas became an inhabitable oasis in a desert where temperatures reach 120 F on the hottest days of summer. Las Vegas remains vulnerable to threats to its water and energy supplies, and with a rapidly growing population during consecutive droughts, technology to increase supply and / or reduce demand are critical to its future.

Three additional risk and technology issues have dominated the history of Las Vegas: gaming (the industry's preferred term for gambling), associated tourism and events, and nuclear testing / storage. The gaming industry generates dramatic technological advances for promoting risk by visitors, as well as the growing threat / challenge of internet gaming. At the same time, the gaming industry must avoid a range of risks and vulnerabilities using tools of surveillance, statistical analysis, and public health management. Additional vulnerabilities include a major international airport within a short distance of the Strip hotels, a massive itinerate (and often inebriated)

population, as well as a large population of retirees who rely on air conditioning—and thus a large and reliable electricity infrastructure—during the summer.

The UNLV College of Hotel Management is consistently ranked among the one or two hotel schools in the US, and houses a mock casino floor for student training. While the gaming industry is a major source of income for Las Vegas, it also represents a societal vulnerability: the rate of addictive gambling among Nevada residents is substantially higher than that in other States. UNLV houses one of the first programs in Addictive Gambling Counseling, led by Larry Ashley.

90 miles North of Las Vegas is the Nevada Test Site, where most of this country's above and below ground nuclear tests were held over the past half century. Located on the Nevada Test Site is Yucca Mountain, the proposed repository for civilian high-level nuclear waste. Both of these continue to be subjects of debate about the role of risk, uncertainty and technology in societal decision making. A large number of technical personnel from Bechtel Nevada, the Department of Energy and other ancillary companies reside and work in the Las Vegas area.

UNLV is well positioned to host this conference. The spring semester ends in early May, and residence halls and classrooms will be available for conference participants. In addition, non-gaming and gaming-themed hotels are available within walking distance of campus, and the Strip hotels and airport are a short cab ride. Las Vegas is easily accessible, with direct flights to most major US destinations. It is the gateway to Zion National Park, the Grand Canyon is a half-day drive (or helicopter ride) away, and the Hoover Dam is about one hour from campus. Day tours to the Nevada Test Site and Yucca Mountain are available, and the Nevada Test Site Museum, opened in late 2004, is located at the Desert Research Institute, across the street from the UNLV campus.

Co-sponsor:

The Risk Assessment and Policy Association (RAPA) was formed almost two decades ago by a group of risk academics and practitioners concerned that other risk organizations were not focused sufficiently on policy aspects of the risk assessment process. RAPA currently has a small but dedicated membership, and is interested in holding a conference. Co-sponsorship with SSIT, whose members share an interest in technology and social issues, would make such a conference viable for RAPA and more substantial for SSIT. The conference—whether SSIT alone or jointly with RAPA—would maintain the ISTAS tradition of having sessions with common themes, rather than separate sessions for the two organizations.

Conference Coordination Chair

David M. Hassenzahl is at the UNLV Department of Environmental Studies. He is President Elect of the Risk Assessment and Policy Association, and Chairs the Education Committee for the Society for Risk Analysis. He has presented at four ISTAS conferences—most recently in 2004 and 2005—and as a graduate student he helped coordinate the ISTAS 1996 and 1997 conferences. In 2004, he organized a conference on managing vulnerability in Clark County, Nevada. His research focuses on the roles of technical information, expertise and uncertainty in societal decision making.