

ISSA Women in Leadership and Digital Collaboration Forum

In partnership with its allies at the Association for Financial Markets in Europe (AFME), the International Capital Market Association (ICMA), the London Women's Forum (LWF) and Swift, the International Securities Services Association's (ISSA) delivered its Women Of ISSA and their Allies Leadership and Digital Collaboration event in London on April 14. Over the course of two panels, leading women from across financial services reflected on their careers, learning experiences and expectations for the future. They also provided unique insights into some of the digital trends shaping the industry.

Below, ISSA has summarized the key themes highlighted at the event.

Future Woman

The first panel was moderated by Gina Slotosch ISSA Board Member and Global COO, HSBC Securities Services. Speakers stressed that successful careers hinge on hard work, subject matter expertise, a constant willingness to learn new things, setting ambitious personal goals and an ability to adapt quickly to change. "In markets being rocked by geopolitical tensions, shifting regulations, and digital disruption, being able to make clear-cut decisions amidst the uncertainty is an essential quality to have in financial services," said Slotosch.

Building relationships and embracing collaboration were also vital ingredients for personal development and career progression, according to the panellists. Tough conversations with senior leaders, for example, could often be much easier if people arrived at those meetings with an abundance of relationship capital. "To get ahead, people need to build an edge. A lot of the focus today is on technology, data and Artificial Intelligence (AI), but the edge is obtained more on the emotional side of the business and by establishing meaningful relationships," highlighted Slotosch.

Tenacity and persistence were also considered key attributes. It was felt that, if you cared enough about a cause, you should not buckle at the first hurdle but continue to speak up and push for what you believed.. During the formative stages of their careers, several speakers recalled being brushed off by their bosses after making the case for embracing sustainability and disruptive technology. Instead of giving up, they doubled down. That their bosses eventually took their advice underlined the importance of having dogged determination in the workplace.

It was also recognized that rising up the corporate ladder had its challenges. Speakers admitted that striking a sensible work-life balance was not always easy. However, one panellist did reflect that family support could make a big difference.

"The reality is that, if you want to further your career, there are sacrifices involved. You might occasionally have to spend time studying rather than doing something you enjoy in your spare time," commented Slotosch.

Digital Dimensions

The second panel of the day was moderated by Jane Karczewski, Head of Key Client Partnerships, EMEA, Alter Domus, and Chair, LWF. During this panel, experts looked at how digitalization is disrupting capital markets.

Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) and digital assets both featured extensively during the event, with the experts noting that the technologies were shifting away from the experimental phase to the live production stage.

Citing AFME data, the panel noted that global DLT-based fixed income issuances hit EUR 4.8 billion in 2025, a 48% year-on-year increase.¹ They also added that daily DLT repo transactions, which totalled just USD6.2 billion in 2021, skyrocketed to USD384 billion in December 2025.²

This came following a recent study by ISSA and The Value Exchange, which found that 36% of financial institutions were involved in DLT and digital asset projects, up from just 4% in 2020. It continued that 72% of firms had issued a digital asset in the last year; 60% were providing digital asset custody solutions, and 56% plan to pledge tokenized collateral in the next 12 months.³ “Standard Chartered has been an early mover in the digital asset space, incorporating a number of DLT-based solutions within that agenda as well. Notable examples included our institutional-grade crypto-custody solution – Zodia Custody. We created this from scratch and the solution sits within Standard Chartered Ventures, with the capabilities build now being deployed within the core Securities Services business at the Bank” according to Margaret Harwood-Jones, Global Head, Financing and Securities Services, Standard Chartered and ISSA Board Chair.

However, for DLT and digital assets to scale even further, there was recognition that there needed to be shared standards and interoperability. This was something the panel felt could only be facilitated by cross-industry dialogue and collaboration. “Collaboration is a key criterium for success. Organizations such as ISSA, through its Working Groups, help bring the ecosystem together on the big issues,” said Kelli West, Global Head of Securities & FX Strategy, Swift.

AI came up repeatedly during the event, as more providers incorporated the technology into their operating models. One speaker said that employees at their organization were now required to use AI at least 25 each day - an edict that came straight from the top. Although AI had lots of applications in financial services, the technology had been hobbled by data quality issues. If AI was consuming bad data, the output would be littered with errors. Equally, even when data was in good shape, strict governance rules, at some firms, could prevent that data from being used for AI training purposes.

Finally, the panel cautioned that new technologies could also bring new risks. The Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation (DTCC) identified cyber-crime as being the second most potent risk facing the financial system in 2026, putting it behind geopolitical risks and trade tensions.⁴ “As we digitalize and develop new products, cyber-security is something that needs to be kept front of mind. We are operating in an environment where the pace of change is accelerating and we are still learning about new technologies, like agentic AI. We need to constantly ask how we are protecting ourselves and mitigating the risk of cyber-threats,” said Harwood-Jones.

The oversubscribed event was a great success, and we look forward to the next event in New York in September 2026.

¹ AFME – February 24, 2026 – [DLT based capital market report 2025 FY](#)

² AFME – February 24, 2026 – [DLT based capital market report 2025 FY](#)

³ ISSA – [DLT and Digital Assets in the Real World](#)

⁴ DTCC – December 10, 2025 – [Entering 2026: Geopolitical risk and trade tensions, cyber-risk, and US economic slowdown named as top risks facing global finance, according to new DTCC survey](#)