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1996 MEMBER STRATEGIC PLANNING SURVEY ANALYSIS
OF THE SCIENCE-TECHNOLOGY DIVISION
BY CATHERINE L. WILLIAMSON

A primary goal for the Science-Technology Division in 1996 was to design and
distribute a comprehensive membership survey. With membership decreasing (500
members dropping over the past 15 years) and new divisions forming and others merging,
it was critical to get current feedback from the members. The objectives of the survey were
to obtain information on:
1. Members’ backgrounds, professional responsibilities, employment setting
2. Members’ participation in Science-Technology Division activities
3. Members’ views on the Division’s future

Results of the survey will be incorporated into a new strategic plan that meets the
needs and reflects the values of our members, while furthering the goals of the Special
Libraries Association.

The purpose of this article is to identify trends in membership based upon the 1996
survey and one made in 1982 (Ref. 1). The 1996 survey represents 377 responses from
1,280 members (a 30% response). The 1982 data represented 151 responses (roughly 10% of
the division membership at that time, but only 20% of the membership was invited to
take part).

Nature of the Membership

Education:
80% decrease in members having a Bachelor’s in Library Science
20% increase in members having a PhD in Library or Information Science
150% increase in members having a Masters in science

Duties:
81% increase in members listing reference/database searching as primary duty
21% increase in members listing management/administration as primary duty

Staff size:
38% increase in number of one-person libraries
120% increase in members who do not supervise employees
40% decrease in members supervising 1 or more employees

Type of Employers:
4% decrease in members working at for-profit corporations
22% increase in members working for academic institutions
25% increase in members working for government agencies (including public libraries)
36% decrease in members working in a non-profit setting
100% increase in members who are self-employed

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Nature of business (disciplines):
- 54% decrease in members at organizations stressing engineering
- 45% decrease in members at organizations stressing chemistry
- 25% decrease in members at organizations stressing biology/medicine

Number of employees:
- 32% decrease in members at organizations with > 500 employees
- 48% increase in members at organizations with 101-500 employees
- 133% increase in members at organizations with 1-10 employees

How learned about Sci-Tech Division:
- 233% increase in members learning about Division from SLA sources
- 64% decrease in members learning about Division from SLA application forms
- 82% increase in members learning about Division from colleagues

Recommendations

Conferences, Meetings:
- Allow more time for networking
- Continue conference programs that are directly related to duties at work
- Develop workshops for promoting the value of the work of members
- Increase the number of CE programs devoted to sci-tech topics
- Focus programs or workshops on improving management skills and skills needed for working in a one-person library
- Provide support to regional conferences and workshops to meet the needs of members who cannot attend the annual conference

Communication:
- Establish channels of communication with vendors and participate in vendor/library committees or forums
- Continue to expand the Division Web page
- Continue to improve Sci-Tech News through with redesign, high quality articles on sci-tech libraries and information sources
- Offer members training in leadership skills
- Identify subject specialties and encourage more sharing of information
- Encourage retirees and experienced members to mentor newcomers

Conclusions

We believe that surveys are an essential tool for obtaining feedback, and Divisions should use them regularly to track their performance and to identify member needs that are not being satisfied. We learned the value of building on previous surveys, keeping terms and categories consistent for better trend analysis, as well as matching categories to SLA
surveys, when possible. We are considering using the Internet to distribute surveys, thus minimizing mailing costs, since 96% have Internet access.

Acknowledgements

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Reference


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Charts to Highlight Major Findings

1. **Organization’s Primary Discipline**—main disciplines or fields in which sponsors of libraries are involved

2. **Full-time Library Employees**—number of library staff who are full-time

3. **Number of Employees in Organization**—number of people served

4. **Number of Employees Supervised**—total size of library staff

5. **Type of Organizations**—whether commercial, educational, governmental, etc.
Organization's Primary Discipline

- Other
- Veterinary Science
- Transportation
- Telecommunications
- Physics/Mathematics
- Pharmaceutical
- Packaging
- Multidisciplinary SciTech
- Military
- Medicine, Health
- Materials Science
- Manufacturing
- Information Technology
- General, Academic
- Food Sciences
- Environment
- Engineering
- Energy, power, mining
- Electronics, computers
- Education
- Earth Science
- Chemistry
- Business
- Biology
- Astronomy
- Aquatic, Marine
- Aerospace

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