



Trudi Bellardo Hahn
2003 ASIST President
User Education Services
University of Maryland
Libraries
1103 McKeldin Library
College Park, MD
20742
301-405-9254
th90@umail.umd.edu

ASIST Members Speak: The Board Listens

Thanks to those of you who participated in a Web survey during the month of May 2003, the ASIST leadership will soon have a current and fairly accurate profile of members and their concerns about and suggestions for improving ASIST. An invitation was sent via e-mail to over 2000 members and recently lapsed members, and 856 responded.

All responses were anonymous, which encouraged candor. However, in a few cases we wish we knew who the writer was. For example, someone complained about being owed a refund on the conference registration fee because he or she had served as a volunteer. ASIST headquarters staff would like to give the refund, but do not know to whom to send it. If you have a concern or complaint for which you wish an individual response, please tell Dick Hill (rhill@asis.org) or me (th90@umail.umd.edu), and we will try to resolve your problem.

I will share a few preliminary results here, but the full analysis of the data is being conducted by members of the Membership Committee and will be reported formally at a later time. The results of this survey will also be compared to the results of a member survey conducted in 1979-1980, which was reported in the *Bulletin* in August 1980 by Don King, Cheri Krauser and Virginia Sague. A quick scan of a few data points reveals that some things have not changed as much as you might think. For example, the average age of members in 1980 was 43 years; in 2003 it is 45.5 years. It appears that ASIST keeps you young; in 23 years ASIST members have only aged 2.5 years! About 44% of the members in 1980 were male and 56% were female. In 2003 it is 43% male and 57% female. We often hear comments about how these demographics are changing, but they are not, apparently, to the degree sometimes assumed.

It is not easy to compare salaries from 1980 to today, except to analyze whether discrepancies between men and women have continued or not. This kind of detailed analysis will be reported later. Likewise, a profile of advanced degrees and fields of study will require some time to compile.

We also collected a lot of data about how peo-

ple are funded for attending conferences, reasons for attending conferences and factors that would make an ASIST conference more appealing. For the latter, the highest response categories were practical considerations such as "less expensive conference registration," "less expensive conference hotel" and "conference city closer to home." Other popular responses were "more informal networking opportunities" and "more opportunities to meet leaders in the field of information science and technology."

In response to a question about anticipated level of value to the individual, the three highest rated items were "digital library of ASIST publications," "magazine focused on applications of information science" and "expanded or enhanced ASIST website." All three of these are being planned and will be in next year's budget.

At a two-day retreat in August, the Board of Directors will be scrutinizing and discussing all the survey findings, including the large number of open-ended responses we received in response to the question "What are your ideas for what you would like from ASIST that it does not do now?" Respondents offered a wide range of suggestions – sometimes contradictory or conflicting with each other. Many were related to new categories of membership, ideas for information science research needed or expressions of how ASIST should "look" – less nerdy, less academic, more cutting-edge, more engaged in political and social issues or more focused on practical applications of information science and technology. In analyzing these responses, we must remember that "the plural of anecdote is not data." Nonetheless, the suggestions were thoughtful, critical and creative, and they will be taken seriously in helping the Board set a course for the Society in the next few years.

Watch for a full report from the Membership Committee. In the meantime, I offer my sincere appreciation to everyone who responded. If you did not get a chance to participate, please remember that my e-mail box is always open, and I would be happy to hear from you at any time.