Changing with the Times? Library Associations and New Librarians

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OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

Objective: To determine what services and programs of national library associations are most valuable to newer librarians.

Methods: As young librarians enter the workforce, many are deciding whether or not to join and become involved with library associations such as SLA, MLA, and their regional chapters. What they decide will become increasingly important to library associations as the traditional member base reaches retirement age. To determine what might attract younger librarians, a survey was emailed to various listservs to ascertain what services are considered most valuable.

The survey was emailed to the following listservs (We received 682 responses):

- ALA-NMRT
- HLIL-NW
- ilii-sla.org
- MACMLA-L
- MLA-NYNU
- MLA-PHIL-L
- MLGSCA
- NAHSL-L
- NEMLALIST
- S LA Environment & Resource Management Division
- S LA Leadership & Mangement Division
- S LA-PHIL
- S LA Washington DC Chapter

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CONCLUSIONS AND RESULTS

97% of respondents belong to an association. Associations remain very much a part of librarian culture. 74% currently serve or previously served on any committee and 79% plan to serve on any committee in the future. Surprisingly, only 46% of respondents subscribe to listservs or RSS feeds for associations, sections or chapters that they DO NOT belong to, 20% subscribe to at least two. Even more shocking, the majority of respondents—36%—do not read or subscribe to any blogs on library or librarian issues, although a quarter of respondents do read four or more blogs. Librarians are either avid librarian blog readers or not at all.

WHAT MEMBERS WANT FROM THEIR ASSOCIATIONS (Ranked)

1. Reduce the cost of participation: Make dues, conferences, and classes more affordable
2. Advocate for the profession: Speak to administrators on the national and state levels; Promote better standards (e.g., JCAHO), hot issues (i.e., PATRIOT Act), better salaries for librarians
3. Collaborate: Team up with other library associations, outside organizations (including healthcare, technology and subject-specific organizations), and co-sponsor meetings
4. (TIED) Offer more diverse training topics: more IT, management, metrics, diversity, communications, and issues for solo librarians or librarians from rural communities
4. (TIED) Engage the Membership / Reach out to New Members: Reach out to students, library schools, old and new members, members in nontraditional library-settings; Engage in recruitment (minorities, undergraduate science majors); Create scholarships, grants and internships
5. Offer ways to meet, learn and network virtually: Virtual Conference, Meetings and CE

Based on 196 relevant open-ended answers, 80 to “Are there other program areas, services or resources in which you would like your association to get involved?” and 116 to “Do you have any additional comments that you would like to share regarding professional associations?”

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