**Meeting Model Subcommittee**

**2013 Survey Summary**

In February 2013 the AMTF Meeting Model Subcommittee distributed a survey to 14 organizations of similar interest or function as SAA to collect comparative conference data, with eight responding. The survey was modified slightly from the 2012 version, including additional specific questions requiring text based answers. Through both surveys, we received 17 responses. The value of responses varies based on null responses or skipped questions.

**Scope**

Organizations that were approached with the survey included those that offer both institutional memberships and individual memberships. Membership numbers ranged from 56 to 227 Institutional Members and from 600 to 58,000 Individual Members. Budgets ranged from $145,000 to $50 million. For most organizations, the annual meeting provided a portion of their annual budget (10% to 40%); but a small number indicated that the conference was at cost or at a planned deficit.

Many of the conference model responses do not seem to be dependent on the size of membership, budget, or attendance.

**Frequency and Attendance**

The majority of responders (85%) hold an annual conference while the remainder hold meetings semi- or bi-annually.

47% of the responders include committee, section or roundtable meetings only at the annual meetings, approximately 30% hold section, committee or roundtable meetings in addition to annual meetings, 17% hold these meeting only outside of the annual meeting, and the remainder do not hold any additional meetings.

Attendance varies greatly. The question was posed as “How many members attend the annual conference?” but many responders included members, nonmembers, and presenters or others in their responses. This gave us a greater perspective of *who* attends meetings as well as *how many* attend and can be helpful for evaluating the SAA meeting model as well as content and delivery.

Attendance reports varied from 11% to 86% of membership base for most organizations although, as noted, these attendees included members, nonmembers, and presenters or others as well. The three organizations having primarily “Institutional Members” reported greater attendance numbers at: 100%, 145%, and over 300% attendance at annual meetings. Again, these included non-member attendees.

Many responders noted that the conference city impacted attendance. Comments generally stated that attendance “varied by city” or “depended on city” and specifically one responder cited a significant drop in attendance “due to our Yukon location”.

**Location and Lodging**

Almost 60% of responders hold their annual meeting at a single hotel, 17% at a single conference center, and 23% utilize multiple locations. One responder is in the process of moving the meeting to a university.

Lodging was reported as being primarily at one hotel by almost 65% of responders. The remainder reported utilizing multiple hotels and no responders reported currently utilizing university or dormitory lodging. Additionally, no responders reported an absence of group rates at hotels during meetings indicating that all responders offer a group rate.

As expected the larger the organizations with high attendance and budget reported utilizing multiple locations for sessions and lodging. Organizations with smaller membership and attendance arranged for a single conference hotel.

**Content Location and Delivery**

Regarding ‘virtual’ conference options we received only 8 responses and all indicated that they are not currently offering any form of live streaming or live interaction for virtual attendance. Of these 8 responders all offer meeting content after the conference digitally in a text, video, slide presentation, or other media format. All maintain a content archive for several years and in some cases indefinitely. Only two charge fees; all others provide content for free after the conference has ended. Most (excepting the two fee-based) make these items available to members and the public via their website or other internet media sources.

Less than half of the responders offer speed-dating or unconference style sessions, but of those that do offer these options most include the nontraditional session in the registration fee. A small number charge a fee for these options. The majority of responders do not offer “mapped” or suggested interest conference tracks.

Almost half of responders do not offer sessions at local repositories; a quarter do offer sessions at local repositories and charge a fee in addition to the registration fee; and a more than a quarter include these in the registration fee. 24% of responders do not offer tours of local repositories at all; 36% offer tours at no extra charge and 40% offer tours for an additional fee. This may indicate an option for an innovative change in the SAA Meeting Model. Although presenting logistical challenges, holding sessions at local repositories may offer a change of venue, pace, and content for attendees while providing higher traffic and awareness for local repositories.

**Budget, Revenue, and Fees**

As previously mentioned, budgets ranged from $145,000 to $50 million. For most organizations, the annual meeting provided a portion of their annual budget (10% to 40%); but a small number indicated that the conference was at cost or at a planned deficit.

The majority of responders (86%) have tiered registration fees.

Four respondents indicated that sponsors or exhibitors provided no income to the annual meeting. The majority indicated that sponsors or exhibitors provided 8% - 25% of the conference budget; and two indicated revenue of over 50% from sponsors and exhibitors.

Almost all respondents offered exhibits hall booths (78%), title sponsorships (60%), logo placement on registration bags (69%), badge logo (61%), meal or special event sponsorship (92%), advertisement in printed programs (84%), and online advertising (92%). Only 33% offered the option to sponsor a meeting room.

**General Comments and Suggestions**

Respondents were asked to share their “dream list” for future conferences. Not all respondents commented. Comments are listed below:

* That's a discussion.
* Affordable AV
* Lower audio visual costs, Internet costs. Incorporating additional digital content--right now seems cost prohibitive.
* Increased attendance, exhibitors, and sponsors; providing complimentary wireless throughout the event; increased use of new media; expansive program to cover the needs of all attendees; lower hotel costs (sleeping rooms), etc.
* Expanding the window of acceptable dates so as to access lower hotel rates
* Our constitutents continue to support it by attending!
* A more profitable conference would be desirable but we need to balance this against affordability for members.
* Recovery from current economic downturn!
* That the live feed from our work session is flawless!

Respondents were asked for general suggestions or observations. Not all respondents commented. Comments are listed below:

* While our solo conferences have been successful in ways other than financial (that is they rarely break even) our financially successful conferences are joint conferences (e.g. VRA + ARLIS/NA). So while joint conferences are a tremendous logistical challenge, they can be rewarding.
* Again - a discussion.
* Visit http://www.archivists.ca/content/past-conferences for results, @Glance & programs of recent conferences
* Conferences provide a pivotal opportunity for members to physically meet, interact and learn together. The Regrettably the ASA canceled its 2011 conference due to financial issues which generated significant backlash from members. The annual conference is clearly a critical member benefit and should be preserved.
* We include pre &/or post-conference workshops or an institute where the opportunity presents itself and where there are synergies in combining the events
* Our members appreciate interactive, open discussion sessions more than traditional panels built on the scholarly conference model. We're also having great success with monthly web conferences designed to help members and their staff keep in touch between meetings. These are offered free of charge, focus on a topic of high interest, and include time for discussion. We clearly have a much different business model than SAA (relatively tiny # of members and very different sources of revenue/expense), so not all will apply to SAA.

**Organizations Responding to 2012 and 2013 Survey (2013 responders starred)**

American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)

American Historical Association \*

American Library Association\*

Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland)

ARMA International \*

Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) (replied to both 2012 and 2013 surveys)\*

Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC)

Association of Moving Image Archivists

Australian Society of Archivists

Coalition for Networked Information (CNI)\*

Council of State Archivists

Digital Library Federation Program Council on Library and Information Resources \*

National Association of Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA)

Organization of American Historians \*

Public Library Association

Visual Resources Association\*