Survey Results, Summer 2013

This summer I set up a survey for the NWA membership: asking what they actually want from pre-conference workshops. I'm hoping to have this piece of it moved over to the NWA site since that really should be the host for NWA survey responses, not my personal site. But in the interim, here's some results from the survey. I had 62 responses, 60 from NWA members. Given that NWA has a current individual membership count of 164, that's a pretty great return rate from the NWA membership (over 1/3.) Clearly, this matters to you all.

Preferred length of workshop:
Nearly 55% said it depends on the content, preference among those who stated something other than "depends on content" runs toward half-day to full-day. Despite the fact that no one chose two days as their preferred length, I wouldn't assume that two-day workshops are completely out of the picture, but their content would have to be of fairly high interest to get sufficient attendees.

The food question: Assuming catering will add to the cost of the workshop, what did people want?
68% wanted coffee/tea/water.
54% wanted snack breaks for workshops over 4 hours.
Less than 10% wanted a sit-down lunch supplied, though 26% wanted the option of boxed lunches.
Based on this and the comments, I think it's safe to say that catered food would need to come with an opt-out option, at a minimum.  Also that food is important, but the ability to do some selection would be preferable. This could be achieved through making sure the workshops are held somewhere that a variety of food options are available.

Cost of workshops:
I provided 3 options. Must be under $75, could be up to $150 if length and content warrant, could be over $150 if length and content warrant.
20% of respondees said that workshops needed to remain under $75.00. 27% said they could be over $150 if length and content warrant. (The rest fell with the middle selection). Though this is difficult to analyze, I think the committee should take from this that in general cheaper is better, but exceptions could be made.

ACA accreditation:
Nearly half of respondents (47.2% of those that answered the question, 40% of all respondents) requested workshops come with ACA re-certification credits. This is relatively easy to obtain for workshops, ACA has a form on their website that needs to be filled out in advance. [*http://www.certifiedarchivists.org/members-area/archival-recertification-credits/*](http://www.certifiedarchivists.org/members-area/archival-recertification-credits/)  Given that nearly half of respondents want this, and presumably it wouldn't affect the rest one way or another, I think we need to ensure that this is an option for most, if not all, of the workshops offered.

Priority for the level of content: broadbased basics, entry-level but focused, or mid-high level specific:
Nearly 3/4 of the respondents said that the focused topics are of high priority. The remaining chose them as medium priority. Broadbased basics were of low priority to most respondents (nearly 90%, 5% each chose them as medium and high priority). Generally the high-low priority followed the spectrum of focused development-related topics to broadbased generic "archival basics." One commenter noted: "Basics are important for the conference to be welcoming to people new to the profession, but mid-high level specific keep more experienced folks engaged. A balance is optimal." At the same time as there was a clear preference for more focused topics, the comments provided were clear that not all focused topics were of interest to attendees and sometimes they were too focused. In terms of taking the Education Committee's marching orders from this: I would assume that a spectrum of workshops offered over time or at the same time might be the way to handle this so as to meet the broader needs while ensuring that those who do need the very specific high level subjects can also obtain them. It might require coming up with a short-range to medium-range prioritization plan for workshop offerings, also with keeping some flexibility in terms of offering topics that may vary in order to meet the needs of the broadest range of the membership.

Topic specific: what do people regard as medium to high priority? The question was structured by giving respondents a list of 22 different topics from which to choose (also allowing them to make suggestions in a comments field, since my brainstorming was unlikely to be a comprehensive list of potential topics). Respondents could chose low, medium, or high for a priority status. These are the suggested topics that were medium to high priority for a significant majority of respondents (i.e. less than one-third of respondents chose them as low priority)

* 98% electronic records (of that, 63% said high priority)
93% digital curation (57% said high priority)
88% metadata/description standards (49% said high priority)
83% preservation (34% said high priority)
??? a/v media (39% said high priority)
81% digital forensics (40% said high priority)
80% outreach (25% said high priority)
72% photographs (25% said high priority)
72% institutional repositories (23% said high priority)
70% records management (32% said high priority)
68% arrangement and description (12% said high priority)
68% grants (25% said high priority)

Source of training, does it matter and what do you prefer?
This was an open-ended question. A lot indicated no preference, or no preference with the caveat that the instructors be well-qualified to teach it (mostly for the learning experience, but also for the ability to argue for institutional funding). Of those who preferred NWA-regional instructors (7 of the 44 people who responded to the question), it was partly because of cost but also because of the ability to keep up connections/networks with the instructors post-workshop. Several mentioned that they really like some of the workshops coming from national organizations (presumed non-NWA instructors) and the reasons, if given, varied from the assumption that training from national organizations would be a simpler argument to make in terms of getting institutional support, to the assumption that we might not have local expertise, to the assumption (mistaken) that ACA recertification credits wouldn't be available for home-grown workshops.

Volunteer teachers?
I found this response somewhat discouraging in light of the interest in NWA teachers in the previous question's responses and given the concern about the costs: most nationally-based workshops are significantly more expensive than home grown. Only 5 people said they'd be willing to teach a workshop and offered their expertise on a subject (only one matched up to a topic that scored above 80% in the med-high priority range). Given that mismatch, going local—at least within the NWA membership--could prove to be a real challenge. It raises some significant question for me: is the expertise in these topics available locally? If so, how do we encourage the NWA membership to view themselves as potential educators for their colleagues? If we need to keep costs low to support the broadest accessibility, how do we build the support within the NWA organization to subsidize or reduce costs for our neediest members and still give them access to the standardized workshops offered by SAA/AMIA/ARMA/etc?

So where next? I'd like to convene a quick committee meeting for those interested in serving on the Education Committee (as chair or otherwise). At the very least, I'd like to get a RFP out for preconference workshops for the May 2014 meeting to see if we can match up any of these priorities with proposals or if we need to start talking to SAA and other orgs about what we might be able to offer from their standard catalogs of available courses. From there, it'll be up to the committee. If you're interested in serving on the committee, please contact me. I'll be trying to get the committee convened—via email at least—by early November.

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