

SLA Biomedical and Life Sciences Division
Member Survey 2005
Summary
January 4, 2006

The DBIO member survey, conducted during the spring of 2005, was intended to solicit members about their reasons for choosing the division; positive and negative impressions of the division, its services and programs; recommendations to improve the division, its services and programs; and overall profession-related concerns. Of the approximately 750 members, 177 responded; this represents a 23.6% response rate. The survey consisted of 44 questions, most of which accommodated comments.

Overall, impressions of the division, its services and programs were positive.

- Members expressed a high level of satisfaction with the division name, acronym and its scope.
- They indicated a high level of involvement with other divisions of SLA and other professional organizations.
- Most members learn about the activities of the division either through the newsletter (Biofeedback) or the DBIO email discussion list.
- 40 of 170 respondents, or 23.6%, have held positions of leadership in the division.
- 25 of 125 respondents, or 20.6%, are interested in becoming more involved in the division.
- Of the services provided by DBIO, those considered the most important are networking opportunities, division annual conference programming, CE courses, Biofeedback, the division web site and the email discussion list.
- 85 of 157 respondents, or 54.1%, were subscribed to the discussion list. This means that 45.9% of surveyed members were not on the list when surveyed. *The list has been changed and all members, with the exception of those who chose to unsubscribe, are now on the list.*
- Biofeedback is most appreciated for its division news and updates on the field.
- New information that would be valuable to members on the division web site would be articles about topics relevant to biomedical librarians, subject specific resources and web site reviews.
- Respondents were most interested in the following services that are not currently offered by the division: pathfinders to resources, virtual CE courses, how to manuals, joint meetings with other biomedical sciences groups and an expert pool.
- Of those who responded, 103 of 130, or 79.2% consider DBIO programming at the annual conference to be either somewhat or very important.
- 60 of 137 respondents, or 43.8% attended a program or CE course at least in part because it was sponsored by DBIO.
- The most popular programs or CE courses previously offered by the division were: e-journals, open access publishing, the role of information in the quality of

- health care, knowledge management and medicine, and molecular biology resources for librarians.
- 41 suggestions for other programs were made, as were 31 suggestions for CE courses.
 - When asked what one thing should be changed about the division, the top two answers were that respondents are happy with the way things are, and more communication.
 - Of the critical issues that the division should face in the next 5 years, the top issues were: remaining current in new technologies, recruiting newer/younger librarians and library research process and content.
 - There were 53 responses to the question: What is the biggest challenge you face? How can the division help you meet that challenge?
 - Of the professional challenges listed in the next question, those that are of highest concern are: technology trends, communication of value, designing new services and e-journals.
 - When asked how the division can help members serve the challenges, the top choices were: resources on the division web site, articles in Biofeedback and SLA conference programming.
 - The division services/activities that received high marks for effectiveness were: Biofeedback, the discussion list, networking opportunities with peers, professional development activities and the web site.
 - 22 of 131 respondents, or 16.8%, indicated that the division has not been responsive to their needs.
 - 65 of 131 respondents, or 49.6%, indicated that the division has been useful in keeping them informed of library trends and new developments.
 - 73 of 131 respondents, or 55.7%, indicated that the division has influenced their way of thinking.
 - Of these, 40 of 68, or 58.8% said it was by introducing them to colleagues who have influenced them, and 49 of 68, or 72.1% said it was by introducing them to topics with which they were unfamiliar.
 - 74 of 131 respondents, or 56.5%, said that the division has provided effective networking in the field.

Responses to Medical Section-specific questions:

- Of the members surveyed, 94 responded that they are members of the section. This represents approximately 53.1% of respondents.
- The top two reasons cited for joining the section were job-related and interest in the subject area.
- When asked why they didn't join the section, 25 of 55 respondents, or 45.4% said that it wasn't their subject area.
- 9 of 149 respondents, or 6%, indicated that they have held a position of leadership in the section.
- 23 of 132 respondents, or 17.4% indicated that they would be interested in becoming more active in the section.

- Respondents were most interested in the following services that are not currently offered by the section: pathfinders to resources, virtual CE courses, how to manuals and an expert pool.

Comments made throughout the survey included:

- There were several comments made about the inactivity of the division. Several respondents indicated that the survey was the first contact they had received from the division and that they would appreciate more communication.
- Several also added that they were unaware that the division has a newsletter and/or a discussion list. Others spoke of problems with subscribing to the discussion list.
- Many respondents indicated that they were extremely busy and didn't have time to explore services that the division offers.
- There were quite a few comments about technology trends and the need to keep up. Although the division wasn't cited particularly for failing to fill this need, it is a gap for which there are many opportunities.
- Several members indicated in their comments that they would be willing to serve in whatever capacity needed for the division.

The survey task force has drawn the following conclusions and recommendations based on the survey results:

- Communication is the key. It is critical for the division to get information into its members' hands.
- The division needs to do a better job of marketing itself. The discussion list was updated in the fall of 2005, and all division members were subscribed to the new list with the option to unsubscribe, so this should help. The division needs to develop a marketing plan that targets the new list.
- The division can offer incentives to get members more involved. For example, it can offer free conference registration or a free CE course.
- Another idea to increase member involvement is to host a poster session that features members' projects at the annual conference. The event should be social to encourage mingling and exchanging ideas.
- The division web site needs to be updated with a new look and feel and improved content. The webmaster has been working on this and the new site should be ready early in 2006. Once launched, the Public Relations committee should keep the site updated.
- The Public Relations committee has a great challenge in front of it and needs more volunteers to function effectively.
- The division should personalize its contacts with members. If a member is identified with unique talents that are needed by a committee, he/she should receive a phone call inviting him/her to join. This is much more effective than email.
- The division should consider holding a regional conference, a teleconference or a webcast. Anything that is done outside of the context of the annual meeting

would be greatly appreciated by members, especially those who are unable to attend the annual conference.

- A division member can partner with MLA for a regional meeting, for instance.
- The division should consider developing a speakers' bureau, that consists of members who are willing to travel outside of their region to talk about their area of expertise and promote the division.
- The suggestions for an expert pool and pathfinders to resources should be pursued in conjunction with a library school. Students can take these projects on for their coursework.