

## **MLA MEMBERSHIP SURVEYS 1994 vs. 2003**

### **Executive Summary**

In comparing the 2003 and 1994 survey results, several trends were noted. In 2003 members have more benefits and these benefits appear to be more important to them than in 1994, particularly in the area of advocacy. Almost twice as many benefits of membership were listed on the 2003 survey than on the 1994 survey, reflecting the increase in programs and services of the association. Also, more benefits were listed as “extremely important” or “very important” by the respondents. In the 2003 survey, 19 benefits were listed in these two categories by 50% or more of the respondents. In 1994, only six benefits were listed by 50% or more of respondents. Two of the top five benefits in 2003 addressed advocacy (address issues), two focused on creating and communicating our knowledge (publications/standards), and one on recruitment, membership and leadership or life long learning (networking), depending upon your interpretation of networking. In 1994, two of the top five benefits focused on creating and communicating our knowledge (publications), two on recruitment, membership, and leadership (networking), and one on advocacy or life long learning, depending again on interpretation (keep informed on issues). Also, respondents in 2003 ranked advocacy benefits, standards, credentialing, the *JMLA*, section participation, professional recognition and discounts as extremely or very important by almost 20% or more than they did in 1994.

The member data confirmed that the membership is aging, with fewer respondents working in hospitals and more in academic health centers than in 1994. Respondents were also slightly more involved in the association and in chapter activities than before, but feel that they have the same or slightly less time to contribute to volunteer activities.

As far as MLA performance is concerned, respondents were slightly happier with MLA Headquarters than in 1994. Respondents strongly agreed or agreed with MLA’s direction in measures such as expenditure of resources on important programs and services, career assistance, and member involvement in MLA, by 20% or more in 2003 than in 1994. This is one indication that MLA’s initiatives are on the right track. It could also be an indication that MLA programs and services are being communicated better via MLANET and the various distribution lists and listservs to the membership than in 1994 when most of these communication modes either did not exist or were not in general use.

Finally, in 2003 MLA asked members for areas in which they would like resources developed and the format in which they would like these resources. CE courses, symposia, teleconferences, or MLANET resources were by far the most popular formats. The top ten topics are listed in “V. Future products and services”.

The following sections will compare the surveys in greater detail. Survey results about MLANET will be discussed in planning documents found in agenda item 3.k.3.

## I. MLA Benefits

The 2003 and 1994 surveys asked how important specific benefits were to the member. Although the benefits were not exactly comparable in the surveys, we tried to match them as closely as possible. All 2003 benefits that received combined ranking percentages of 50% or more (19 out of 31 possible benefits) are included in the following table in rank order along with the benefits' ranking from the 1994 survey.

### 2003 Results (Rankings are based on combining “extremely important” and “very important” responses.)

Benefits	Ranking percentage	1994 ranking
1. Advocating the value and role of the library and librarians with accrediting bodies	83.7	8
2. Setting professional and library standards	83.6	7
3. Addressing pressing issues in health information management/librarianship	82.9	8
4. <i>Journal of the Medical Library Association</i>	77.5	3
5. Provision of professional networking opportunities	76.0	2
6. Monitoring/alerts about copyright/intellectual property issues/publishing	75.2	1
7. Liaison with NLM and other allied organizations	71.0	ND
8. State-of-the-art programs and practical research at annual meeting	67.9	1
9. <i>MLA News</i>	66.5	4
10. Providing MLA salary survey data	66.0	ND
11. Section meetings and programs	65.3	9
12. Advocacy of the value and role of the librarian with NMLM and other PR activities	63.5	ND
13. CE courses at the annual meeting	63.1	6
14. Recognition of members' professional accomplishments	59.1	12
15. 15%-30% discounts on meetings, CE courses, publications	58.8	11
16. Sponsorship of MEDLIB-L list	53.5	ND
17. Online membership directory	51.9	5
18. MLA-FOCUS email announcements	51.5	ND
19. Medical librarian credentialing	50.8	10

ND= no data

All benefits listed in the 1994 survey are listed below in rank order along with the 2003 rankings.

**1994 Results (Rankings are based on combining “extremely important” and “very important” responses.)**

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Ranking percentage</b>	<b>2003 ranking</b>
1. To be kept up-to-date on health information issues	70.4	6/8
2. Network with other health information professionals	69.5	5
3. <i>Bulletin of the Medical Library Association</i>	56.9	4
4. <i>MLA News</i>	53.8	9
5. MLA membership directory	52.9	17/28
6. Participate in MLA continuing education activities	51.0	13
7. Assist in setting professional standards	49.3	2
8. Be part of a collective voice on health information policies and issues	44.3	1/3
9. Participate in an MLA section	35.6	11
10. Medical librarian credentialing	31.1	19
11. Take advantage of member discounts on meetings, CE courses, publications	27.7	15
12. Receive recognition for professional accomplishments	26.1	14
13. Take advantage of placement services/locate career opportunities	24.4	22
14. To be a leader in the profession	23.3	23
15. MLA exchange	15.1	29

**II. Member data**

The following table compares 1994 member responses with 2003.

<b>Member data</b>	<b>2003 Percentage</b>	<b>1994 Percentage</b>
Hold master’s degree in library/information science	88.8	83.7
Forty years old or older	82.5	78.0
Been in the profession more than ten years	77.7	75.0
Been in the same position less than ten years	63.2	72.0
Work in academic medical centers or medical schools	39.1	29.0
Work in hospitals	34.8	40.0
Characterize current position as administration	49.9	56.8
Make \$50,000 or more per year	48.1	16.8
Have been MLA members less than ten years	43.0	49.2
Have been MLA members ten years or more	57.0	50.0
Membership in at least one chapter	84.4	78.6
Attended chapter meeting last year	52.3	45.4
Membership in at least one section	83.8	76.0
Member of AHIP	46.0	39.1
Do <b>not</b> have individual membership paid by institution	66.6	58.5
Have <b>more</b> time to contribute to volunteer activities	29.8	35.6
Have <b>same amount</b> of time to contribute to volunteer activities	31.7	25.5
Have <b>less</b> time to contribute to volunteer activities	34.6	31.0

**III. MLA scorecard**

In 2003, 63.1% of MLA members thought that overall, MLA served their needs in an “excellent” or “very good” manner compared to 50.8% in 1994. About 55% of 2003 respondents belonged to another national association compared to about 58% of respondents in 1994. SLA was the most often mentioned association in 1994 vs. ALA in 2003. In 2003, 60.1% of MLA members thought that MLA served the needs of medical librarians and libraries in an “excellent” or “very good” manner compared with other national professional associations versus 61.1% in 1994.

Members were asked in 2003 and 1994 to evaluate MLA performance on a variety of topics. The table below compares the results of the surveys. Percentages were calculated by combining “strongly agree” and “agree” responses.

<b>Performance measure</b>	<b>2003 Percentage</b>	<b>1994 Percentage</b>
When I contact MLA Headquarters, I receive friendly and courteous service.	74.3	70.8
When I contact MLA Headquarters, I receive satisfactory answers to my questions and get the help I need.	70.6	66.3
MLA directs its resources to programs and services critical to me.	75.4	52.4
MLA leaders address the critical issues facing our profession.	83.5	67.4
MLA membership has helped my professional development and career advancement.	79.2	61.6
MLA leaders encourage member involvement in planning and policymaking.	76.8	56.7
MLA offers me the opportunity to be involved in committees or as an officer at national, section, or chapter levels.	86.7	67.9
MLA communicates decisions and policy or planning issues in a timely and thorough manner.	81.4	65.3
MLA offers CE courses on the topics I need, at the level I need.	79.0	62.4

#### **IV. Preferred communication methods**

The top two ways that members prefer to receive information about MLA and the profession were the same in 2003 as in 1994 but their positions were reversed. In 2003, 47.8% of respondents preferred receiving information via MLA-FOCUS, MEDLIB-L and other email discussion lists versus 16.6% in 1994 while 28.8% of respondents preferred receiving information via *MLA News* compared to 60.1% in 1994.

#### **V. Future products and services**

In the 2003 survey, MLA asked members to choose from a list of twenty-five topics the topics that were the most important to them and the format in which they would like resources about the topics. Fewer than 20% of respondents wanted print publications for topics listed with the exception of standards where 26.3% would like resources in print format. Fewer than 6% wanted PDA-accessible information or applications. The top ten most important topic areas and the preferred format(s) for each included:

<b>Most important topic areas</b>	<b>CE course, symposia, teleconference</b>	<b>MLANET resources</b>
Management skills (e.g., budgeting, team building, project management)	X	
Copyright/copyright in the electronic age	X	X
E-publications, e-journals, other e-resources; publishing, measuring, evaluating	X	X
Evidence-based health care	X	X
Expert searching	X	
Salary/benchmarking data		X
Computer/PDA technology	X	
Recommended websites for health professionals		X
Development of web-based courses	X	
Organizing, evaluating, quality filtering of health information	X	

Also, in a previous question, respondents had listed library standards as one of the most important benefits of membership. Although not listed in the top ten of most important topics, only 8.5% of respondents indicated that they had no interest in the topic. The majority of respondents (40.1%) wanted library standards available via MLANET.