

LASA2010 Survey Report

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As was the case for two previous LASA International Congresses, LASA2010 meeting participants were asked to respond to a survey on a range of Congress-related issues. The slightly expanded 2010 questionnaire, with over 20 items, was again conducted on line.

Seven-hundred four LASA2010 participants responded. Although in total numbers this was a decrease of 57 percent from 2009, the number of 2010 respondents represented 23% percent of LASA2010 participants, a respectable response rate.

There were three survey categories: demographics; LASA2010; and future Congresses. Wording of the questions was kept as constant as possible to ensure maximum comparability between the LASA2009 and LASA2010 surveys.

The 2010 survey allowed respondents to indicate satisfaction with several specifics of the Congress, such as panels, receptions, the Film Festival, child care, etc. Overall satisfaction dipped only slightly from LASA2009, from 79 percent to 75 percent.

The last question of the LASA2010 survey was open-ended and allowed respondents to leave both commendations and criticisms. We received 268 unique comments from 244 (or 35 percent of) respondents. Suggestions/criticisms were associated with the three primary areas of the 2009 survey: logistics/scheduling, papers/panels, and cost.

On logistics and scheduling, several respondents were displeased that similarly themed panels and sessions were scheduled at the same time. Some respondents also expressed disappointment that the Congresses are moving from an 18-month cycle to an annual cycle, since it may adversely affect the availability of university funding.

Similar to previous Congresses, respondents commenting on papers insisted on the need for increased quality and selectivity of the papers; panel-related comments were focused on absent panelists or cancelled panels. Additionally, many respondents said some rooms were overcrowded; others wrote that more papers should be accepted and more sessions scheduled. LASA looks forward to seeking the elusive balance between a process of increased quality/selectivity and a schedule that maximizes thematic diversity and opportunities.

Respondents reported that the costs of attending the Toronto Congress were between one and two thousand dollars, roughly equivalent to LASA2009 in Rio de Janeiro. While costs remained nearly constant, ten percent more LASA2010 respondents than for LASA2009 (seventy-three percent in 2010) received partial or full reimbursement from a range of sources, most notably university funds and LASA grants.

LASA takes comments and suggestions about the Congresses very seriously. Many respondents to the LASA2009 survey were displeased that both the book exhibit and *gran baile* were missing in Rio; both returned at LASA2010.

Responses to past surveys have been extremely helpful as the Association has moved to a following Congress, and the present survey will help provide significant guidance as the Association prepares for LASA2012 and beyond. That many respondents also took the time to write in detailed comments, both positive and negative, is especially appreciated. Information that respondents provide ensures that LASA is able to continue what is working and improve on aspects of the Congress that are not.

Once again, our gratitude! ■