

Summary of DBIO survey results

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Executive summary

DBIO has a wide range of members with various needs, wants, and interests. The survey sent out to DBIO and the SLA community as a whole provided some good feedback, which is summarized below. Included in the summary are some suggested goals. The important takeaways beyond the diversity of our group are that we should focus on providing educational, networking, and volunteer opportunities.

- A large proportion of our members are experienced librarians (more than 11 years in the profession). We should try to attract younger/newer librarians.
- The activity levels in other divisions/chapters are split; some DBIO members are involved in other sections of SLA and others are not.
- A repeated theme is a high interest in education opportunities outside of the annual conference.
- We should continue using a variety of methods to reach members, consider greater use of social media, and explore converting the Biofeedback newsletter to a blog. We should also continue to use SLA Connect, while simultaneously maintaining other methods of communication.
- It may be worth investigating merging with other divisions to really become a bio/medical division in order to provide focused bioscience resources for our members.
- At the annual conference, networking and learning are elements that are important to our membership. There is a desire for expert panels. The cost of programs is a consideration as not many people are willing to pay for programs and cost is already a factor for many people to even attend the conference.
- Advocacy is not a priority for our membership. However, we are well positioned to advocate on issues related to science and health literacy. The Division could work with other groups on advocacy issues, as well as provide support to SLA on their advocacy.
- We should organize our volunteer system - analyze what we need done and write up detailed and concise descriptions of volunteer positions. We should have routine calls for volunteers.

Introduction

At the 2016 Annual Conference of the Special Libraries Association (SLA), the Executive Board of the Biomedical and Life Sciences Division (DBIO) approved the formation of an Ad-hoc Strategic Planning Committee. DBIO's previous Strategic Plan was intended to help guide the Division from 2009 to 2011, so it was time for the Division to revisit its goals and objectives.

Shortly after the Annual Conference, co-chairs of the Ad-hoc committee, Andrea Miller-Nesbitt (Director of the Division at the time) and Danielle Walker (Chair of the Medical Section at the time), began meeting to decide on how to begin the strategic planning process. The first step was to create a committee. A number of people from across the DBIO membership were identified as individuals to approach for membership on the committee, based on the variety of roles and involvement that they represented. By the end of the recruitment process the Ad-hoc Committee had a total of 6 members; Danielle and Andrea (co-chairs), Neyda Gilman, James King, Anne Linton and Cindy Sheffield.

The committee members represent librarians or information professionals from both academic and government libraries, with and without managerial/administrative responsibilities, long-time Division members as well as newer members, and people involved in other SLA Divisions as well as local SLA Chapters. Although this mix of experience does not represent the full spectrum that exists within the larger DBIO membership, we feel as though we were able to find a balance between including a variety of perspectives while keeping the group a manageable size.

The Ad-hoc Strategic Planning Committee met for the first time in November 2016. At that meeting, it was decided that we would focus on a 5-year strategic plan. In order to solicit feedback from the larger DBIO membership, we decided we would run a survey, which would focus on a number of important themes including communication, continuing education and conference program planning.

Over the course of the next couple of months, the Ad-hoc Committee collaboratively worked on creating the survey questions, which were informed by DBIO's past strategic planning survey, as well as surveys developed by other SLA Divisions and used for similar purposes. SurveyMonkey was the chosen platform on which to run the survey. In January 2017, a final draft of the survey was sent to the DBIO Executive Board for feedback. Their suggestions were incorporated and a communication plan was developed.

The survey was distributed to the DBIO membership on March 13th, 2017 via SLA Connect and Google Groups. The survey remained open for a total of one month. Three reminders were sent out and by April 15th (the closing date of the survey), we had received 96 responses (29% of the total DBIO membership based on current membership lists). Below is a summary of the responses for each question.

Demographics

Q.1 What is your job title/role? (Please choose best answer)

Ninety-four (94) respondents answered this question and two (2) skipped it. Over a quarter of respondents (28.72%) indicated that they are either a Library manager, supervisor or director. The next most common role was medical librarian (15.96%) followed by liaison/reference librarian and simply 'librarian' (tied at 12.77%). The remaining job categories, which were instruction librarian (3.19%), informationist or embedded librarian, systems librarian and retired (tied at 2.13%) had far fewer responses.

Nineteen (19) respondents selected the 'other' category. Roles represented in the 'other' category include research librarians, students, special projects librarians, consultants, corporate librarians, librarians in records management, analysts and a vendor.

Q.2 What type of library do you work in?

Ninety-five (95) respondents answered this question and one (1) skipped it. The majority of respondents (34.74%) indicated that they work in an academic library. Corporate libraries (13.68%), government libraries (11.58%) and hospital libraries (8.42%) followed academic libraries. Some respondents (4.21%) indicated that they do not work in a library, while 2.11% were either unemployed or looking for work, and 1.05% were independent consultants.

Twenty-three (23) respondents selected the 'other' category, which included non-profits or NGO's, special libraries (including a zoo and an historical society library), research institutes, and working across two or more types of organizations.

Q.3 How long have you been a librarian/information professional?

Ninety-five (95) respondents answered this question and one (1) skipped it. Almost half of respondents have been a librarian for 20 or more years (48.42%). As the number of years of experience decreases, so to does the number of respondents, 18.95% of respondents have been a librarian or information professional for 11-20 years, 14.74% for 6-10 years, 11.58% for 1-5 years and 4.21% for less than one year. The remaining 2.10% of respondents were either a student or do not identify as a librarian or information professional.

Conclusion: Over one quarter of respondents are in upper level positions (managers, directors, supervisors, etc.). This is not surprising since almost half of respondents are 20 or more years of experience. The majority of the membership work in academic settings.

Involvement in SLA

Q.4 Are you currently a member of SLA?

Ninety-three (93) of respondents (or 96.88%) indicated that they are currently members of SLA. The remaining 3 (or 3.13%) are not.

Q.5 Why have you chosen to not be a member of SLA? (Check all that apply)

There were no responses to this question. This is not surprising since only three people indicated they are not currently members of SLA.

Q.6 Did you attend the SLA Annual Conference in Philadelphia in 2016?

Eighty-nine (89) out of 96 respondents answered this question. Of those who responded, 63% of the participants had attended the Philadelphia conference.

Q.7 Are you active in your local SLA Chapter?

Just under half (44.83%) of respondents are active in their local SLA Chapters while 55.17% are not. In the comments section, a couple of respondents indicated that they are members of local Chapters, but are not active.

Q.8 Are you active in other SLA Divisions?

Thirty-nine (or 43.82%) of respondents indicated that they are active in other SLA Divisions, while 50 (or 56.18%) are not. The most commonly cited other Divisions in the comments sections were Food, Agriculture and Nutrition (FAN); Pharmaceutical and Health Technology (PHT); Physics, Astronomy and Math (PAM); and Science and Technology.

Conclusion: Due to the nature of the Special Libraries Association, it is not surprising that over half of respondents indicated they are not active in their local Chapter of SLA. Nor is it surprising that those who are involved in Divisions other than DBIO have chosen other Divisions dealing with related fields.

Involvement in DBIO

Q.9 Are you currently a member of DBIO?

Ninety (90) people answered this question, with two-thirds (66.67%) of respondents indicating that they are current members of DBIO and one-third (33.33%) saying they are not.

Q.10 How long have you been a member of DBIO?

Fifty-two (52) people answered this question and 44 others skipped it. The majority of respondents (32.69%) indicated that they have been a member of DBIO for between 1 and 5 years. One quarter of respondents (25%), have been a member for less than 1 year. At the other end of the spectrum, 19.23% have been members for 20 years or more. Those who have been members for between either 6 to 10 years, or 11-20 years number 11.54% each.

Q.11 Why are you a member of DBIO? (Check all that apply)

Fifty-two (52) people answered this question. Note that respondents could select more than one answer. Continuing education was the most popular answer followed by networking (with 37 and 36 responses respectively). Leadership or service opportunities received 20 responses while job requirement received only four. Some of the answers in the 'other' category include not sure yet, to stay informed on trends, to support my colleagues and to promote a project.

Conclusion: Over half of DBIO's membership have been members for between 0 to 5 years. However, demographic questions indicate that many survey respondents (67.3%) have been a professional for 11 years or more. One possibility is that people come to DBIO at different stages in their career, for example if they take on a new role or subject responsibility. It is not surprising that both continuing education and networking opportunities were highly ranked as reasons for joining DBIO. Given the nature of SLA's governance structure, leadership opportunities is also an expected result.

Continuing Education

Q.12 Would you like DBIO to provide educational opportunities outside of the annual conference?

Although 40% of respondents skipped this question of those who answered, 90% said yes. The inference might be there is an equal distribution of interest.

Q.13 Would you consider participating in the following (Check all that apply)

Forty-four (44) of the 96 participants skipped the question, however for those who responded there seems to be a strong interest in fee based webinars with (74%) or without (79%) continuing education credits. Behind that were regional half-day events. (52% without CE credits, 50% with CE credits). Answers in the 'other' category included free educational events, twitter chats, an online journal or book club and collaborating with other SLA Divisions/Chapters to provide opportunities.

Q.14 What topics would you like to see covered in a continuing education event? (Check all that apply)

Fifty-two (52) of 96 people answered this question. Topics of greatest interest for these events are Emerging Technologies (73%), Research Synthesis (71%), Open Access (64%), Expert Searching (60%), and Data Management (56%). Other topics include:

- Data analysis qualitative and quantitative
- Subject-oriented overviews from Biology and the Clinical Sciences
- Innovative & emerging ideas for biomed librarians and libraries
- Consider something subject specific to DBIO, such as overview of the core resources in a particular specialty geared for new librarians or someone changing subject areas? Or something about how to learn what they are so you can get up to speed quickly? I know my area well but when I get an off question, I am often stuck with looking for subject guides from other libraries, etc. I would also be interested in topics supporting writing and publishing for librarians and not just about supporting our users in those activities. I am looking for unique, subject-focused content from my divisions.
- Reviews and comparisons of popular e reference resources
- New ideas/programs in Liaisonship and outreach

Q.15 Does your employer support your involvement in continuing education opportunities?

Approximately 55% of the participants answered this question. Of those:

- 75% stating they received time off and financial help
- 10% get time off, approximately
- 5% receive some sort of financial help
- 15% responded either No or Not applicable

Conclusion: Members would like to see more educational opportunities outside of the annual conference. Webinars are the format of choice for such events and there is interest in a range of topics including emerging technologies, research syntheses and open access (to name a few). The majority of respondents receive both time off and financial help from their places of work for such events.

Communication

Q.16 How satisfied are you with the effectiveness of the following methods of communication?

Fifty (50) respondents answered this question and 46 skipped it. Most respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with all the methods of communication listed. The DBIO website and the Biofeedback newsletter received the greatest share of “very satisfied” responses. The SLA Connect listserv received the greatest share of “satisfied” responses but it also received the highest number of “somewhat unsatisfied” or “not at all satisfied” responses! Respondents who had accessed them were satisfied with posted meeting minutes but a large number listed meeting minutes as “not applicable.”

There were five (5) comments under the “other” category. Two respondents commented that they had not really participated in DBIO. The remaining responses indicated that one respondent used the “Community Digest” and the remaining respondent found the website confusing to navigate. I am not sure what the respondent meant by “Community Digest.” I assume the last respondent was commenting on the DBIO website.

Q. 17 Would having a DBIO presence on LinkedIn be valuable?

There were 49 responses to this question and they were nearly evenly split, with 51% answering yes and 49% answering no.

Q. 18 What other methods of communication should DBIO implement in 2017?

Fifteen (15) answers were received for this question. This is not surprising considering the high levels of satisfaction recorded in question 16. Two trends emerged—direct emails and social media. Five (5) respondents like to receive direct emails. Six (6) respondents are interested in communication via social media. Twitter and Facebook were specifically mentioned. Surprisingly, no one mentioned LinkedIn even though twenty-five (25) respondents in question 17 indicated that a DBIO presence on LinkedIn would be valuable. Three respondents wanted to see greater use of SLA Connect and one respondent wanted DBIO to use a listserv that was not SLA Connect. There was one request for snail mail and one request to make the Biofeedback newsletter a blog. One respondent noted that redundancy in communication is

good and that DBIO should use multiple communication methods. This comment is not surprising since most respondents were satisfied with most methods of communication listed in question 16.

Conclusion: DBIO is communicating effectively and should continue to use a variety of methods to reach members. Perhaps there should be greater use of social media and an exploration of converting the Biofeedback newsletter to a blog.

Programming

Q.19 What do you appreciate about the programming offered by DBIO at the annual conference?

Exactly half (48) answered this question. Networking opportunities (50%); Exposure to different libraries and their work (46%); Quality of programming (42%); Relevance to my work and Variety of programming (both 38%).

Q.20 What would you like to see as part of DBIO's Annual Conference programming? (Check all that apply)

The breakdown of responses is as follows: Expert Panel (89%); Poster session (60%); Social/networking (58%) Contributed papers (53%); Vendor demonstrations (40%). Suggestions in the 'other' category include case studies, lightening talks, mentoring opportunities and interactive sessions (such as roundtables).

Q.21 For the following types of events held at the Annual Conference, what amount (if any) are you willing to pay?

Fifty (50) people answered this question. Between 23%-26% of respondents would be will to pay \$10 - \$20 with food for either educational, business, or social programs. Between 18% and 22% would be willing to pay costs for programs, plus small amount going directly to DBIO. Approximately 20% are willing to pay less than \$20 for Business and Social programming. However, for educational and business programs, a majority of respondents prefer not to pay at all (between 35% and 37%), whereas people seem more willing to pay a small amount for social programs.

Conclusion: Respondents who attend the annual conference appreciate the networking opportunities. Additional types of programming that would be appreciated include expert panels and poster sessions (among others). Generally, respondents prefer not to pay for programing at the annual conference, however, it seems as though their would be slightly more willingness to pay for social events than for other types of events (education or business).

Annual conference

Q.22 If you do not attend the annual conference, why not? (Check all that apply)

Almost 66% of participants skipped this question. Barriers attributed to attending included cost at nearly 60% and Time at nearly 40%. Location was a factor less than 30% of the time and the benefits of attending was considered less than 10%.

Other reasons listed include: family obligations, retired, can only select one conference/so many/limited funding, size of the conference (too big), and other conferences more pertinent to their work.

Conclusion: The costs associated with attending the annual conference seem to be the most prohibitive factor for people. This is understandable given the tight budgets that many libraries are working with these days. Additional programming outside of the conference would be a good way to engage a larger portion of the membership.

Advocacy

Q.23 What professional issues would you like DBIO to advocate for on your behalf? (Check all that apply)

This question received 51 responses. Respondents were encouraged to select more than one answer if they wanted to. Issues related to science and health literacy and demonstrating the value of libraries received 39 and 34 responses respectively. The next most popular issues in descending order were Open Access, library funding, diversity and inclusion and libraries and academic freedom (with 24, 21, 17 and 12 responses respectively).

Two people indicated in their responses that DBIO should not be involved in advocacy. In the comments section one person clarified that they were not looking for advocacy at the unit level, but rather expected that type of work to be done at the association level. They went on to comment that DBIO could have a role in supporting these issues through programming and professional development.

Two comments related to collaborating with either other Divisions or Chapters within SLA, or with other professional associations to work on various professional issues such as the closure of libraries.

Conclusion: Given the nature of DBIO, it makes sense that we would be well positioned to advocate on issues related to science and health literacy. The Division could work with other groups either within or outside of SLA on broader issues, such as demonstrating the value of libraries and Open Access.

Value of DBIO

Q24: What do you think DBIO can offer that other professional associations can't?

The majority of people skipped this question. We did have 21 who responded. Most of these focused on networking and "field expertise" - a smaller more focused version of MLA. The "small" nature was a popular theme too - opportunities to volunteer/lead/learn.

Q25: Based on your experience in DBIO, would you recommend membership in the Division to a colleague in the field?

About half the people responded to this question, and the majority (72%) of those said yes. Another 23% said "other" and most of these specified that they were new or did not have enough experience with DBIO and were therefore unsure. Only 4% (2 respondents) said no. One individual stated that they think DBIO needs to grow and are happy to see us doing this - suggested value added things outside of the annual conference.

Q26: Is there anything else you would like us to know that will help ensure DBIO is responding to your needs as a professional?

There were not too many responses. Respondents repeated answers from other questions - more things outside of the annual conference, focus on the biosciences/medicine in order fill that niche, and increasing/improving communication. These are all things we plan on doing, so that is encouraging.

Q29: What could we do to make membership in DBIO valuable to you? (Check all that apply)

Only 18 people skipped this question, which I think says something in itself (most of the other questions I looked at had many respondents skipping). The most popular responses fit the comments to do more outside of the annual conference: webinars, CEs, and virtual programming. Improving networking opportunities and our content were the next most popular items. About 20% of respondents were in favor of broadening our scope (maybe we should merge with other divisions?). Moreover, over a quarter of respondents (27%) want DBIO to advocate on their behalf in regards to professional issues. The least popular response (18%) was to increase vendor/product demos. We did have five individuals who thought we are doing just dandy as we are and they already get all the value they need.

Other suggestions include mentoring, research and publishing support, and MedD (?) and regulatory issues. One individual mentioned expanding the scope of life sciences coverage, and another wants to make sure our focus stays on biology and medicine. My favorite response is for more ice cream and pony rides. I think they are onto something.

Conclusion:

We should try to provide more outside of the annual conference - provide information online, facilitate communication amongst members, and provide webinars and other CE opportunities. We need to continue working to improve communication - this could fall into the volunteering section by making a communications position(s). It may be worth investigating merging with other divisions to really become a bio/medical division and provide focused bioscience resources for our members.

Volunteering

Q27: Would you like to become more involved in DBIO activities by volunteering?

Most are not interested in volunteering. The majority of people either skipped the question or answered no. However, 12 people (a third of the people who did respond) did say they were interested (only eight actually provided emails). I have also had a couple individuals email me about volunteering in response to my welcome emails.

Q28: If you are active in your local SLA chapter, would you be willing to explore ways to create local programming of interest to DBIO members?

Again, the majority of people either answered no, or skipped the question. Five (5) individuals answered “other” which mostly meant “maybe.” There was a suggestion that DBIO contact local chapters directly. Perhaps this could be a volunteer role. Nineteen (19) people did respond that they would be willing (41% of respondents). It is encouraging that there are some people who we could liaise within this regard.

Conclusion:

We need to get organized in regards to what exactly we need volunteers to do. That information then needs to be shared on the website and with the emails we have. We should refine the list of roles and responsibilities and place more calls for volunteers. We could potentially streamline volunteer positions, thereby reducing the number of positions (and our dependence on them).

Other

Q.30 Are you a member of any other professional associations? (Check all that apply)

Members of DBIO are joiners! Of the 84 people who responded yes to this question, 66 belonged to another professional association. Of those 66 individuals, nearly a quarter (27) belonged to two or more professional associations. The leading contenders were MLA with 26 members and ALA with 21 members. Other associations with two or more members included: ACRL (8), local/regional/state health sciences library groups (5), ASIST (4), AAHSL (3), STS (2), and IAMSLIC (2). A wide range of other professional associations were represented by individual memberships. These included the Cincinnati Bar Association, the University Research Magazine Association, and the American Philosophical Association. Our members join a wide range of professional associations!

Q.31 How did you hear about this survey?

There were 84 responses. Sixty-three percent (63%) heard about the survey from SLA Connect, thirty-one percent (31%) from e-mail, and five percent (5%) from the DBIO Google Group. The only person who responded to the “Other” category heard of the survey through Twitter.

Conclusion: 1) Members of DBIO have a wide range of interests and memberships. As such, they may volunteer their time and efforts strategically. 2) Reaching out to DBIO members via SLA Connect was very successful. This fact is interesting since some negative comments about it were expressed in the responses to questions 16 and 17 on communication.