

SWST MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

Richard P. Vlosky

Professor

Forest Products Marketing and
Director, Louisiana Forest Products Development Center
School of Renewable Natural Resources
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

In Spring 2002, Dr. Richard Vlosky, Professor, Louisiana Forest Products Development Center, LSU AgCenter, and Chair of the SWST membership committee, conducted a survey of SWST members. The survey was conducted to better understand member opinions on current and potential member services. In addition, respondents evaluated the SWST website and the *Wood and Fiber Science* journal. Survey construction was an iterative process between Dr. Vlosky and the SWST board of directors with the Board having the final say on survey content and structure. This article presents the major findings from the survey.

The survey consisted of one mailing. A personalized signed cover letter explaining the reasons for conducting the study accompanied the surveys. Of the 257 surveys that were mailed, 168 were returned and all were usable, for a response rate of 65 percent.

DEMOGRAPHICS

A number of demographic questions were asked of respondents. This information is potentially valuable as a basis for segmenting SWST offerings. Nearly half of the respondents were from Academia (49 percent) followed by Industry (21 percent), Retirees (14 percent), and Government and Students (both representing 8 percent of respondents). Ninety-two percent of the respondents were male. The mean age was 51 years (minimum 22 years, maximum 87 years), which may indicate that SWST is an aging organization in need of new members for long-term viability. Respondents are highly educated, with 94 per-

cent possessing advanced degrees and the balance having an undergraduate college degree.

SWST MEMBER SERVICES

Survey recipients were asked to evaluate current SWST services on a scale of 1 = not useful at all, to 2 = somewhat useful, to 3 = very useful. Table 1 shows the rankings for these services. Respondents ranked the member journal *Wood and Fiber Science* as the most useful service that SWST provides. Seventy-nine percent of respondents found the journal to be very useful, and 20 percent found it to be moderately useful. Next ranked was the accreditation certification that SWST does for wood and fiber science/wood technology-oriented universities. Ranked last was the annual meeting, with 17 percent finding the meeting not useful at all and 13 percent not having any opinion. Twenty-six percent of respondents found the meeting to be very useful.

Wood and Fiber Science

Respondents ranked *Wood and Fiber Science*, the SWST journal, as the most desirable service offered. Coincidentally, a bank of fourteen statements probed respondent opinions about the journal. The scale used for these statements was: 1 = do not agree at all, 2 = moderately agree, 3 = very much agree. Table 2 shows the ranked responses to these statements. Overall, respondents find journal content to be informative and of interest. Seventy-four percent of respondents very much agreed that the journal is professionally helpful to them.

TABLE 1. *Ranking of services. Scale: 1 = not useful at all; 2 = somewhat useful; 3 = very useful.*

Service	Mean
(1) <i>Wood and Fiber Science</i>	2.78
(2) SWST accreditation of university	2.53
(3) SWST newsletter	2.44
(4) SWST membership directory	2.42
(5) SWST publications on issues	2.40
(6) Student poster competition	2.39
(7) Visiting scientist program	2.34
(8) George Marra Award	2.32
(9) Distinguished Service Award	2.23
(10) SWST webpage	2.19
(11) SWST annual awards	2.18
(12) International visiting scientist award	2.13
(13) SWST teaching units for high school students	2.11
(14) Annual SWST meeting	2.10

SWST WEBSITE

As the world moves into the electronic age, many associations are transitioning their information offering to the World Wide Web

TABLE 2. *Wood and Fiber Science. Scale: 1 = do not agree at all; 2 = moderately agree; 3 = very much agree.*

Statement	Mean
(1) <i>W&FS</i> is professionally helpful.	2.72
(2) <i>W&FS</i> is informative.	2.70
(3) Papers from outside the U.S. are informative.	2.66
(4) On average, the topics of <i>W&FS</i> are of interest to me.	2.57
(5) The number of papers from sources outside U.S. increasing; good thing.	2.49
(6) It would be useful to include the table of contents latest issue on web page.	2.48
(7) It would be useful to include abstracts of journal on web page.	2.47
(8) It would be useful to include entire papers on web site.	2.14
(9) I think <i>W&FS</i> should publish only wood science articles.	2.10
(10) I think that marketing articles are inappropriate.	1.87
(11) I read only wood technology-related articles.	1.78
(12) My institution or myself would wish to get CD in addition to <i>W&FS</i> hardcopy.	1.62
(13) I read all the articles in each issue.	1.42
(14) My institution or myself would wish to get CD instead of <i>W&FS</i> hardcopy.	1.29

TABLE 3. *Ranked website content items. Same scale as in Table 1.*

Rank	Website content	Mean
1	Directory of Schools	2.60
2	Announcements	2.55
3	Meetings	2.53
4	Newsletter	2.48
5	Accreditation	2.46
6	2001–2002 Officers	2.44
7	Issue Brief 1-“SWST” Position	2.42
8	Proceedings	2.42
9	Purpose	2.38
10	History 1958–1998	2.34
11	Membership Application Form	2.33
12	List of Educational Materials	2.32
13	Related Links	2.32
14	<i>Wood and Fiber Science</i> Journal Publication Order Form	2.31
15	Exploring a Profession in Forest Products	2.29
16	Visiting Scientist Program	2.26
16	Code of Ethics	2.26
17	Membership Handbook	2.25
19	Membership and Benefits	2.21
20	Awards	2.21
21	Guidelines—Policy/Position Statements	2.20
22	Teaching Unit 1	2.16
23	Letter to Students	2.15
24	Constitution and By-Laws	2.13
25	Request for Student Poster	2.12
26	A Letter to Students	2.12
27	2001–2002 Committee Handbook	2.10
28	Summary of 1998 Survey	2.01
29	Fund Donations	2.01
30	1998 Full Survey	1.98

(the Web). SWST has had a website since 1997. Respondents in this study were asked to evaluate the utility of SWST website content and to suggest changes that would increase this utility.

Fourteen percent of respondents were not aware that SWST had a website. Of those that were aware of the site’s existence, 29 percent had never visited the site, 50 percent visited the site 1–5 times over the past year (from when the study was conducted), 14 percent visited 6–10 times, and 7 percent visited more than 10 times. On a scale of 1 = very unattractive, to 5 = very attractive, respondents rated the overall attractiveness of the website as follows:

