
Through Members' Eyes: A Survey of the Membership of the International Association of School Librarianship

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Fifty percent of the members of the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) responded to a survey designed to collect quantitative and qualitative information on IASL's meaning to members and their perceptions as to organizational functioning and the personal, professional, international, and national impact of IASL's programs and activities. Statistically significant responses indicate that IASL members from Third World countries have a more intense commitment to the IASL, rate its impact higher, and value some of its activities more. Members agree that IASL's value lies in its synthesis of professional focus on school librarianship and orientation toward internationalism.

Introduction

The International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) is a small, voluntary, professional association whose mission is the worldwide promotion of school libraries. A 1995 dissertation scrutinized the organization in four main areas: IASL's fulfillment of its mission, IASL's meaning to its members, IASL's function as a special kind of professional and international association, and IASL's role in the worldwide spread of school librarianship (Knuth, 1995). The case study incorporated historical methods, document analysis, observation, interviews, and a survey.

This article reports the results of the survey, which collected both quantitative and qualitative information. The survey was returned by half of the individual membership (number of possible respondents = 457). Members were asked to record their perceptions of IASL's impact on school librarianship internationally and locally, of the quality of its activities, and of its overall organizational functioning. Members were asked to comment on the level of change within IASL over time and whether they perceived the composition of IASL as relatively homogeneous or factional. Members were also asked to rate the importance of IASL's activities on a personal and professional level. Through the ratings and accompanying comments, a picture of the IASL as perceived by responding members has been drawn.

Results of the Survey of the IASL Membership

Profile of Respondents

Representation

A questionnaire, "Survey of the IASL Membership," was included in the October 1994 mailing of the *IASL Newsletter*; this elicited approximately 100 replies (of a possible 457). A second mailing raised the number of questionnaires returned to 230, which is 50% of the individual membership of IASL. Members from 31 countries replied. The breakdown between respondents from industrialized nations and respondents from developing nations is roughly representative of IASL's total membership.

Where this study's sampling is not representative of IASL's membership is in its representation of members from the United States. Although they comprise 52% of IASL's membership, their responses comprised 62% of the study's final sampling. Both the overrepresentation of the US and the slight underrepresentation of developing nations could be attributed to the efficiency or inefficiency of the respective postal systems in those countries.

Sex, Marital Status, and Age

Eighty-two percent of the respondents were female and 18% were male. Fifty-three percent were married and 43% were not. IASL members represented in the survey tended to be an older group: only three respondents (1%) were below the age of 30; 87 (38%) were between 31 and 50; 107 (47%) were between 51 and 64; and 30 (13%) were over 65. In other words, 60% or almost two thirds of the sample were over 50.

Primary Role

When asked to specify their primary role, 39% indicated that they were practitioners, librarians in elementary and/or secondary schools. Included in the category *other* were a library salesperson, an association employee, education department employees, a teacher, a consultant, a public librarian, and a leader in staff development or training. In other words, almost four out of

Table 1
Description of Sample for the Survey of the IASL Membership (N=230)

	<i>Members from Industrialized Countries % (n)</i>	<i>USA Members % (n)</i>	<i>Third World Members % (n)</i>
Percentage of IASL Membership (N=457)	84% (384)	52% (238)	16% (73)
Percentage of Response Rate (Overall rate = 50%)	52% (198)	62% (147)	44% (32)
Percentage of Final Sample (N=230)	86% (198)	64% (147)	14% (32)

Table 2
Primary Role of Responding IASL Members

Percent	Number of Members (N=228)*	Primary Role
10%	22	Librarian/elementary school
25%	58	Librarian/secondary school
4%	10	Librarian/combined library
13%	29	Coordinator/administrator
20%	45	Retired
14%	31	Professor
0(.4)%	1	Student
14%	32	Other

*2 respondents did not answer the question.

five of the respondents appear to be currently working in librarianship, education, or in a related area. Despite a stereotype of IASL as a retired group, only 20% of the respondents indicated that they were retired.

Length of Membership

Twenty percent of the respondents are relatively new to IASL having been members 0-2 years; 48% have been members 3-10 years; 26% have been members 11-24 years; and 5% are charter members. In other words, approximately one third of the respondents have been members over 11 years, one half from 3-10 years, and one fifth are new or relatively new members.

Reasons for Joining

Members were asked to indicate two major reasons for joining IASL. The most popular reason was interest in international school librarianship; more than half the respondents checked this reason. Thirty-two percent joined because a friend recommended that they do so. Twenty-seven percent joined after having attended an IASL conference. Other reasons for joining were various, as indicated in Table 3. The 15% who checked the *other* category listed a wide range of reasons for joining, but two common themes emerged: (a) some indicated that they joined as a result of involvement and duties in other organizations; (b) some indicated that they joined because of the travel opportunities offered through membership.

One conclusion that could be reached based on the results of this question is that few respondents joined IASL because they saw an IASL brochure, publication, or display at a conference or because they were encouraged by the IASL membership committee. In other words, one might have reason to

Table 3
Major Reasons for Joining IASL (N=230)

<i>% (n) Checking Reason*</i>	<i>Reason for Joining</i>
55% (126)	Interested in international school librarianship and thought IASL could fulfil information needs
32% (73)	Recommendations from a friend/colleague
27% (63)	Attended an IASL conference
19% (44)	Program of IASL appealed to me
15% (34)	Other
11% (25)	Saw an article about IASL in journal, newsletter
9% (20)	Curiosity
9% (20)	Saw display at conference
6% (13)	Encouragement from the Membership Committee
5% (11)	Saw IASL's publicity brochure
1% (2)	Saw an IASL publication

*Because more than 1 response was included, percentages do not sum to 100.

question the effectiveness of these approaches that IASL has specifically designed to attract new members.

Participation in IASL Activities

Respondents were asked to indicate which IASL activities they had participated in during their membership. Results showed that the majority (67%) had attended a conference. Almost one third of the respondents had donated to Association programs; one fourth had presented at a conference and one fourth had contributed to the *Newsletter*; one fifth (49) had served as an officer or committee member. Approximately one out of six respondents had written an article and /or given a presentation about IASL.

Conference Attendance

The mean number of conference attendances per person was 2.7. One third of those responding had never attended a conference; one fourth had attended once; one third had attended 2-6 times; and one eighth 7-23 times. Therefore, one eighth or 13% of the respondents could be typified as frequent attenders, one third as occasional attenders, and over half as nonattenders or infrequent attenders.

Members' Professional Affiliations

Respondents tend to be involved in professional library or education-related activities. The average number of organizations that respondents belonged to—not counting IASL—was 3.5. Several respondents belonged to no other

organizations; on the other hand, one belonged to 15 and another to 30. Respondents listed 268 associations to which they were affiliated. Some of these included national, state, regional, and local library and school library associations, media and information societies, computer groups, councils, and reading and literature associations.

Member Commitment

Respondents were asked to use a 10-point scale to rate their degree of commitment to IASL (with 10=the highest commitment). Overall responses fall into a normal curve pattern with a mean of 5.6 (see Table 4). The chi-square test shows a significant relationship ($p \leq .05$) in the difference in commitment to IASL demonstrated by members from Third World countries and that demonstrated by members from industrialized countries. Although in each group roughly the same percentage indicates a high commitment to IASL, the percentage indicating a medium commitment is substantially higher in developing nations. In other words, more members from industrialized countries demonstrate a low commitment level compared with members from Third World countries.

Respondents were also asked to rate their commitment to the concept that each child should have access to a school library. In this area, results from developed and developing countries show a high level of agreement. In fact, 97.3% rated their commitment to this concept in the high range (8-10). In general, IASL members tend to have a medium commitment to IASL (mean 5.6) and a high commitment (mean 9.7) to children's access to school libraries.

Difference in Participation

Members were asked to write a short comment as to what makes participation in IASL different from participation in other library-related professional

Table 4
Commitment to IASL

<i>Commitment to IASL*</i>	<i>Third World Respondents % (n)</i>	<i>Industrialized Countries Respondents % (n)</i>	<i>Total Overall N=224 % (n)</i>
Low (1-3)	7% (2)	29% (56)	26% (58)
Medium (4-7)	65% (20)	47% (86)	47% (107)
High (8-10)	29% (9)	26% (51)	27% (61)
Column Total	14% (31)	86% (193)	100% (224)

*Chi-square = .02274, $p \leq .05$.

organizations to which they have belonged. A synthesis of comments from 202 members indicates that they find participation different because of IASL's focus. On the one hand, there is a specific focus on school librarianship; on the other hand, the organizations's scope is wide and concerned with the profession's international development. It appears that many members belong because they want to take their understanding of the profession and their participation in it to a deeper level while expanding their sense of internationalism and appreciation for cultural diversity.

Comments about participation in IASL characterize the organization as a professional arena in which members promote school librarianship, participate in a professional organization, and interact with colleagues. Responding members demonstrate a strong interest in librarianship in other countries and in sharing ideas, problems, and solutions. They seem to find the interchange of knowledge helpful in the development of personal skills and in the improvement of programs and services resulting from exposure to new ideas. International perspectives appear to affirm one's own local school library services or create bonds based on the knowledge that certain school library problems appear to be universal.

For members from countries in the early stages of school library development, participation in a professional group with a concentrated focus on school librarianship offers a chance to develop skills and acquire professional information. For those with widespread access to local school library groups, the juxtaposition of the school library focus with the international scope is the telling factor in participation. Member after member writes about the importance of IASL's "international" emphasis, scope, perspective, orientation, dimension, flavor, and commitment.

For some respondents, the international aspect means the chance to make friends and build personal or professional networks and relationships with people from different countries. For others, it means an exposure to different cultures and countries through learning about various approaches to a common profession. The international emphasis of IASL represents an escape from parochialism through exploring a wide range of ideas and practices and a chance to see the directions the profession is taking in other countries. For some, IASL offers the opportunity to extend one's commitment to libraries for children to a worldwide platform.

One in 10 of the replies specifically addresses the issue of the development of libraries in Third World countries. These respondents are attracted to IASL's "outward reach," its "global perspective," its vision of libraries for all and librarians helping librarians. They seek to transcend national boundaries. One librarian wrote:

I am committed.... California is 50th of 50 states in school libraries so it is difficult to see past local concerns but ... I would like to learn, serve, impact Pacific Rim [countries] and beyond.

Members think of their interaction with IASL colleagues in terms of verbs such as *discuss, experience, meet, interact, exchange, share, listen, learn, network, help, serve, grow, and expand*. They are interested in one another's programs, ideas, problems, perspectives, and cultures. Some enjoy the professional and personal exchanges with like-minded individuals who share a common set of goals. Others value warm friendships that have developed over the years. Overall, IASL's attraction seems to lie in its focus, the juxtaposition of school librarianship with an international perspective, and in its ability to provide an atmosphere where people develop and communicate.

IASL's Impact Internationally

Members were asked to rate the impact of IASL on school librarianship internationally using a four-point scale: 1. no impact; 2. marginal impact; 3. some impact; 4. great impact. The mean score is 2.8. Chi-square results show a significant ($p \leq .05$) difference in the responses of members from Third World and industrialized countries. The former rate the impact higher: 69% rated it as having *some impact* and 24% as having *great impact*. Of members from industrialized countries, 65% rated IASL as having *some impact* and only 7% rated it as having *great impact*. Overall, three quarters of all respondents rated the impact as *some* or *great*. One quarter rated it at *no impact* or *marginal impact*.

Members' comments on their rating of IASL's impact internationally demonstrate a wide range of answers. Many acknowledged the forces that fight against impact such as problems with smallness of membership, lack of funds, invisibility, negative stereotypes, and the overall difficulty of introducing and encouraging school library development. One respondent writes:

In developed countries it is hard to change systems which do not value school libraries. In undeveloped countries, it is incredibly more difficult because of lack of funds, literacy, and so on.

However, in the view of another librarian, IASL is the only available vehicle for change:

While IASL's actions are dwarfed by the size of the problem—it is the one place where the importance of school libraries worldwide is the center.

It appears that IASL has a different impact in different countries. IASL's impact is perceived as greater in developing countries where it may constitute the major source of organizational support for school librarianship. In these countries, IASL "encouragement" activities such as the funds spent to subsidize membership or bring leaders to a conference help sustain school librarianship efforts, especially in the support of continuing education and development of library professionals. As one member points out, IASL has been a

Table 5
IASL's Impact on School Librarianship Internationally

<i>Rated Impact*</i>	<i>Respondents from Third World Countries</i>	<i>Respondents from Industrialized Countries</i>	<i>Total N=230 (30 cases missing data)</i>
1 no impact	0% (n=0)	1% (n=2)	1% (n=2)
2 marginal	7% (n=2)	27% (n=45)	24% (n=47)
3 some impact	69% (n=20)	65% (n=110)	66% (n=130)
4 great impact	24% (n=7)	7% (n=12)	10% (n=19)

*Chi-square = .00757, significant at $p \leq .05$.

source of contact between those who work with children and books in many countries of the world. The inspiration and information which we receive from each other has been an instrument for development for all participants.

Other respondents claim that IASL has impact in that it provides materials, ideas, networks, and a helping hand to Third World librarianship while "concerned members who maintain contacts with developing nations may be providing them with their only 'window' to modern information management and dissemination." IASL provides input for policy statements on education and libraries and has raised awareness levels concerning the role and importance of school librarians internationally.

Respondents point out, however, that in order for IASL to have appreciable impact, a minimum number of members and some degree of school library development must exist. There can be little impact in developing countries functioning at a subsistence level or under conditions of severe deprivation.

Responding members acknowledge that IASL's impact is less evident in countries with a higher degree of school library development. They point to a plethora of professional groups for school librarians in countries such as the US, Canada, and Australia.

Respondents from both developed and developing countries commented on IASL's impact on their personal and professional growth. This impact has been through exposure to IASL publications, idea exchanges, and IASL-sponsored opportunities to visit libraries in other countries, to share, and to improve skills. Impact came through participation in networking and promotion of the profession.

IASL offers a larger forum in which to function as a professional and an opportunity to operate within an international dimension and as a citizen of the world. Survey comments included references to communicating and

sharing across boundaries, speaking with a more united voice, learning from each other, and networking.

While supporting the growth of the individual librarian, IASL's most potent impact in developing countries may come from the support of the individual librarian as a conduit for institutional change. However, in more developed countries, IASL's impact appears to be on the individual per se. Respondents from industrialized countries listed increased personal and professional growth, the satisfaction of serving in a support function, and an enhanced awareness "of the problems and struggles of their colleagues in developing/Third World situations" as important factors.

According to some respondents, impact appears to be tied to the existence of a cadre of active members rather than to location. One commented, "I'm sure it has great impact in places like Iceland where we have a very active member and no impact in countries where we have no or very few members." Another respondent described IASL as "an association of individuals" with impact stemming from the actions of active and purposeful members. Respondents mentioned specific members, such as Jean Lowrie, as creating impact through their efforts, their high profile, and their influence.

IASL's Impact on School Librarianship Nationally

Members were asked to rate the impact of IASL on their own countries using the same four-point scale (with 4 = high impact). The scores were lower than those recorded for international impact. Overall, roughly two thirds of the respondents rated IASL as having *no impact* or *marginal impact* and one third rated it as having *some impact* or *high impact* on their particular country. The mean was 2.2. Again, a significant pattern emerged ($p \leq .05$); 44% of members from Third World countries gave IASL the rating *some impact* or *great impact* compared with 30% of members from industrialized countries.

Respondents were also asked to provide comments on IASL's impact in their country. These comments offer some explanation as to why scores were

Table 6
IASL'S Impact at a National Level

Rated Impact*	Respondents from Third World Countries n=32	Respondents from Industrialized Countries n=178	Total N=228 (18 cases missing data)
1 no impact	22% (n=7)	16% (n=28)	17% (n=35)
2 marginal	34% (n=11)	57% (n=102)	54% (n=113)
3 some impact	38% (n=12)	26% (n=46)	28% (n=58)
4 great impact	6% (n=2)	1% (n=2)	2% (n=4)

*Chi-square = 0.3946 ($p \leq .05$).

lower when members rated IASL's influence in their own country as opposed to internationally. About 40 members indicated that other organizations (local, state, national, and regional) were more influential in their countries than IASL. One member wrote that IASL is

virtually invisible when compared to AASL [American Association of School Librarians]—which struggles itself to have an impact. Thus IASL competes with other organizational "players."

Others cited relative "invisibility" as a reason for the lack of local impact. Comments include: "Hardly anyone in the UK seems to have heard of it," "No one knows about it," and "I think that very few people in the US are even aware of the existence of IASL, let alone impacted by it." In addition to the problem of invisibility, IASL in some areas suffers from low membership and a consequent lack of clout.

Those respondents who did rate IASL higher in local impact tended to comment in terms of its effect on the individual. IASL provides the individual with materials, information, publications, techniques, contacts, and a basis for comparison and sharing ideas. Several respondents referred to this personal growth impact:

IASL has given "ME" the opportunity to incorporate a wealth of travel knowledge, innovative ideas and procedures to improve my library media center. I cannot speak for librarianship *per se*.

While heightening the members' professional skills, IASL also broadens perspectives through encouragement of an expanded world view and through exposure to international trends and conditions. Thus IASL not only helps to improve the practice of individual librarians, but also helps to "spread the word" on the importance of school libraries worldwide.

Respondents commenting on ways in which IASL influences school librarianship in their countries referred to its ability to stimulate global awareness and internationalism. A "vehicle for international communications," IASL emphasizes internationalism in children's literature and insight into the ways other countries operate their school libraries. Thus it has "broadened our concept of how to serve children with books and other materials." Impact occurs when the IASL conveys "the international scope for the needs of children throughout the world to have access to reading materials and information."

Further, impact comes from its ability to serve as a "unifying source" for bringing various school librarians and organizations together. It has helped to set an agenda for school libraries in many developing countries, and overall has served as a "very vocal body for international school librarianship." In its role as the advocate for school librarianship worldwide, "it can only do a certain amount of pushing—but it can do that!"

The Personal Importance of IASL Opportunities to Members

The comments on impact resonate with ratings given to the personal importance of IASL in various areas. Using the following scale, members were asked to rate aspects of IASL participation in terms of personal importance: 1. little value; 2. some value; 3. valuable; 4. highly valuable. Aspects to be rated included opportunities to develop a sense of internationalism, to travel, to access ideas and materials, to interact socially, to network, and to develop professionally. Among these categories, respondents valued development of a sense of internationalism highest with a mean score of 3.2. In the other categories, scores fall between 2.5 and 2.8, which is the mid to high *some value* level. Results appear in Table 7.

Because the question attempts to determine what areas or opportunities are rated as valuable to members, percentages of the respondents' rating of activities with either 3 (valuable) or 4 (highly valuable) were compiled. Thus it is possible to determine the statistical significance of comparison between Third World and industrialized countries and to translate the data into easily understandable units. Results appear in Table 8.

Eighty percent of the respondents rate the development of a sense of internationalism as *valuable* or *highly valuable*. Fifty-four to 62% rate the other areas as *valuable* or *highly valuable*. Superficially, it appears that members from Third World countries gave a higher value to almost all activities. A chi-square test reveals that a significant ($p \leq .05$) pattern of difference in responses by members in Third World and industrialized countries exists in two areas. Third World members place a higher personal value on "source

Table 7
Means of Respondents' Ratings of IASL's Personal Importance (N=230)

<i>Areas in which IASL Contributes Personally*</i>	<i>Mean (n) of all Responding Members</i>	<i>Members from a Third World Country Mean (n)</i>	<i>Members from an Industrialized Country Mean (n)</i>
Development of a sense of internationalism	3.2 (194)	3.3 (26)	3.2 (166)
Opportunity to travel	2.8 (185)	2.5 (23)	2.9 (160)
Source for ideas, materials	2.7 (179)	3.3 (25)	2.6 (152)
Social aspects (fun, friendships, fellowship)	2.7 (188)	2.9 (27)	2.7 (159)
Opportunity to network	2.7 (273)	3.0 (21)	2.6 (150)
Professional development/ Continuing education	2.5 (183)	3.0 (26)	2.5 (155)

*Measured using a 4-point scale where 4=highly valuable.

Table 8
Percentages of Members Giving a *Valuable* Rating to the Personal Importance of IASL in Three Categories (N=230)

Areas in Which IASL Contributes Personally*	% (n) of All Responding Members Giving a Rating of 3 or 4	% (n) of Members from Third World Countries Giving a Rating of 3 or 4	% (n) of Members from Industrialized Countries Giving a Rating of 3 or 4	Chi- Square Value
Development of a sense of internationalism	80% (154)	88% (23)	79% (131)	5.70
Opportunity to travel	62% (113)	57% (13)	63% (100)	3.92
Source for ideas, materials	60% (106)	84% (21)	56% (85)	12.55*
Social aspects (fun, friendships, fellowship)	60% (111)	70% (19)	58% (92)	2.02
Opportunity to network	58% (98)	76% (16)	55% (82)	3.51
Professional development/ Continuing education	54% (97)	81% (21)	49% (76)	9.44*

*Chi-square is significant at $p \leq .05$.

for ideas and materials" and on "professional development/continuing education" than do respondents from industrialized countries.

The Professional Importance of IASL Activities

Using the same scale, members were asked to rate the professional importance to them personally of various IASL activities. These include conferences, newsletters, publications, UNESCO program, Leadership Fund, and Support-a-Friend. Tabulations indicated that the mean rating for conferences was in the low end of the *valuable* range (3.1). The mean professional valuation for all other activities fell in the *some value* range (2.3-2.9); the *Newsletter* rating (2.9) fell at the top of the range. Therefore, conferences and the *Newsletter* were the two most highly rated activities. None of the means for the various activities fell into the *little value* range.

Both Third World and industrialized country members appear to value the conferences and the *Newsletter* similarly. However, the means for Third World members are higher for all other activities. To determine whether these higher values were significant, chi-square tests were run on the data. A significant ($p \leq .05$) relationship exists, with Third World members rating the professional value of the two activities (publications and the Leadership Fund) higher than respondents from industrialized countries.

Table 9
Means of Respondents' Ratings of the Professional Importance of
Six IASL Activities

<i>Activities in Which IASL Contributes Professionally*</i>	<i>Mean (n) of all Respondents</i>	<i>Third World Members Mean (n)</i>	<i>Members from Industrialized Countries Mean (n)</i>
Conferences	3.1 (198)	3.2 (26)	3.1 (171)
Newsletters	2.9 (208)	3.1 (29)	2.9 (177)
Publications	2.6 (192)	3.3 (27)	2.5 (163)
UNESCO Program	2.4 (172)	2.7 (24)	2.3 (146)
Leadership Fund	2.3 (178)	2.9 (28)	2.2 (148)
Support-a-Friend	2.3 (173)	2.7 (26)	2.3 (145)

*Measured using a 4-point scale where 4=highly valuable.

In order to better present the data, percentages were determined of those respondents who rated the activities as professionally valuable or highly valuable, as shown in Table 10. Thus ratings in the *valuable* category by Third World members of the importance of IASL publications can be compared with those given by industrialized country members. For example 70% of the former rated the publications as *valuable* or *highly valuable* compared with 50% of those from industrialized countries. Also significant is the 71% rating of the Leadership Fund in the *valuable* category by members from Third World countries as opposed to the 41% rating by respondents from industrialized countries.

Change Within IASL

Members were asked to rate the amount of change within IASL during the course of their membership. They could specify one of the following: Remained the same; Changed a little; or Changed dramatically. About half of the respondents (45%) believed that IASL had remained the same during the course of their membership. Another 50% believed it had changed a little, and 10 members (5%) believed that it had changed dramatically. A total of 199 members responded to the question; 31 either did not know or did not answer the question. Half of the respondents took the opportunity to explain their answer, and half did not.

Those who indicated that IASL had not changed can be broken down into several groups. The largest group, interestingly, acknowledged that they did not know if the organization had changed or not because of their own lack of ongoing involvement or because of the relative newness of their membership. A second group attributed the lack of change to a "fairly static hierar-

Table 10
Percentages of Members Giving a *Valuable* Rating to the Professional
Importance of IASL Activities

<i>Activities of IASL Which Contribute Professionally</i>	<i>% (n) of Third World Members Giving a Rating of 3 or 4</i>	<i>% (n) of Members from Industrialized Countries Giving a Rating of 3 or 4</i>	<i>% (n) of Members Giving a Rating of 3 or 4</i>	<i>Chi- Square Value</i>
Conference	73% (19)	78% (133)	77% (152) N=198	5.90
Newsletters	79% (23)	71% (125)	72% (148) N=208	2.88
Publications	78% (21)	50% (82)	54% (103) N=192	20.58*
UNESCO Program	67% (16)	45% (66)	48% (82) N=172	3.94
Leadership Fund	71% (20)	41% (60)	46% (80) N=178	15.49*
Support-a-Friend	58% (15)	44% (64)	46% (79) N=173	7.60

*Chi-square is significant at $p \leq .05$.

chy"; they noted that the "same officers [had been] in place for a long period of time." Some members of this group were quite critical; one wrote:

current leadership (President and Executive Secretary) do not seem to look for change, nor do they want anything that will alter their unfocused view of IASL. They have a smothering effect on the organization.

A third group viewed the lack of change as positive: "The dedication of Board members for their various tasks has been exceptional" and there has been "continuity in the vision of school librarianship." A fourth group noted that members of the IASL are aging and that there is not much interest among younger people.

Respondents checking that IASL has *changed a little* or *changed dramatically* were asked to explain how and to specify whether the change was for the better or for the worse. Positive comments far outweighed negative. Of the nine members who checked that there had been dramatic change and commented, all indicated that it was for the better, especially in terms of an expanded program. Of those who felt that IASL had changed a little and commented, about six felt that it was for the worse and 64 for the better.

Respondents also talked about the leadership. One perceived IASL's governance as having evolved and changed as is "characteristic of all as-

sociations. It is not useful to say something is good or bad." Another characterized IASL as always needing "mowing like every good plant." Members perceived positive change as occurring through: (a) increased awareness of goals, strategic planning, and a concern with organizational development; (b) better, more businesslike administration; (c) advancement in technology and information literacy; (d) expansion and broadening of membership; (e) expansion of activities, programs; and (f) expanded networking capabilities.

A significant portion of the replies focused on positive change brought on by development of IASL publications, especially a new journal. Thirteen respondents praised changes in the *Newsletter*, which they characterized as more readable, timely, informative, and attractive.

Members also perceived positive change occurring through an expansion of international programs and through an awareness and expansion of the international membership. In terms of IASL's orientation toward assisting Third World school librarianship, comments ranged from one extreme to the other. Whereas one respondent maintained that "the heavy concentration of the Third World ... receives TOO MUCH EMPHASIS," another found it positive that "IASL still recognizes that the challenge to promote IASL aims in underdeveloped countries is its main work."

However, respondents did not necessarily perceive change as for the better in terms of conferences. Several members protested a change of format in which there were too many sessions and no visits to school libraries in Pittsburgh. Also, one member commented:

Less and less practicing teacher librarians join in conferences and give presentations [while] more and more researchers and professors use the conferences as the means to make contributions for their academic advancement. Even I, a researcher, wish the IASL would be in the hands of and for practicing librarians as the IASL had been in the beginning.

Other respondents made similar comments. Some believed conferences have to become more research-oriented with an effort being made to "raise the level of conferences to a more intellectual plane." Another commented that the core membership and activities have remained the same, but change has occurred, and as members retire or move into administration, there is "too little presence among school librarians in the field."

In summary, the survey results indicate that over half the respondents believe that IASL has changed. Of those who commented on this change, the majority were positive, although a few cautioned that the change was not necessarily occurring fast enough. One member observed that IASL is currently "in a growth cycle of new and expanding programs" which is part of ongoing cycles of equilibrium and growth.

Homogeneity or Factions

Respondents were asked to check one of a series of statements indicating whether they were aware of factions within IASL and, if they were aware of them, whether they found these factions or groups bothersome or were comfortable with their existence. Questionnaire respondents were asked to check those statements as to the homogeneity (relative lack or presence of groups of factions) of IASL with which they agreed. The results are reported in percentages and numbers of members checking a given answer.

Although 70 members (30%) did not check any answers, it appears that 16% or approximately one in six of the responding members were uncomfortable with the dominance and/or influence of factions or groups within IASL. A larger group (24%) acknowledged the existence of factions but felt comfortable with their existence.

A second question asked respondents to describe perceived factions and discuss their negative or positive effects. This question provoked strong responses from the 80 members who perceived factions. The 16% of the respondents who were uncomfortable with the existence of factions tended to see factions in terms of national groups (such as the US or Canadian members), retired or older people, or the leadership. A significant body of these comments reveals a perception of dominance by English-speaking groups, especially Americans, which was seen as having a negative influence on both recruitment and activities. These groups were perceived as having control of the organization through control of the leadership. Some comments further deplored the dominance of IASL by retirees, often linking criticism of older members with criticism of Americans. A sample of comments:

Retirees dominate.

Older, retired, American women out-of-touch with 1995.

Dominated by retired/out-of-service North American librarians, who have little stake/impact on school libraries in the international context.

IASL—a travel experience and forum for long-retired folks.

As if foreseeing these negative comments, those in a larger group, who acknowledged factions but expressed acceptance of their influence, launched a spirited defense. They pointed out that the North American presence reflects the sheer numbers of American members as well as IASL's historic roots, the high level of development of school libraries in English-speaking countries, and the affluence and resources available to the US to support participation in such an organization. A particularly vociferous set of comments defended the IASL leadership as

a nucleus that keeps growing.

the backbone of the organization ... a necessity for survival. Let us not call them factions, but committed leaders.

a core group that does all the hard work. I think these people would let me help with the hard work if I wanted to work hard too.

Other members refused to be drawn into the issue. One commented:

I don't really let these factions bother me—some of the other members are annoyed with such things. If such factions bother you, then you must be prepared to work to change structures and situations. I am not that committed.

Another member refused to check any of the answers and stated that while IASL was not homogeneous with regard to race, color, or country, it was homogeneous in its commitment to school libraries. He further stated:

I am not aware of factions which may exist. American and Canadian librarians play a leading role, but this may be because they are more committed, or have more opportunity to participate. I have found conferences very friendly.

Despite the conflicting perceptions of how factions operate in IASL, respondents did not indicate that there are major schisms, warring factions, or factional infighting that could endanger the existence of the organization.

A side issue, which came up in another question, was mention of dominance by academics or scholars. One commented that this faction of the leadership has had positive effects on IASL because: "The hard, behind-the-scenes leadership has come primarily from those connected with library education." Another pointed out that in "scholars versus practitioners, university level tends to dominate regarding programs." The majority of those acknowledging a higher level of influence by academics indicated that they were comfortable with this.

IASL's Functioning

Members appear to be happy with IASL's functioning as 86% were either *satisfied* (74%) or *very satisfied* (12%). Only 14% (28 respondents) indicated that they were *not satisfied*. No statistically significant difference appeared between level of satisfaction reported by Third World respondents and those from industrialized countries.

What is IASL Doing Well?

Members perceive that IASL is bringing people together, both for professional networking and for friendship. These international connections promote understanding among colleagues and offer the opportunity for sharing and exchanging professional ideas, views, opinions, and experiences. In the eyes of responding members, IASL appears to be successfully performing a liaison or facilitator function in the promotion of school libraries worldwide; it provides a forum or meeting-place function.

Member after member commented on IASL's success in promoting international consciousness and international participation in the promotion of school librarianship. One wrote: "IASL grew up international school

librarianship." They perceived IASL as successfully maintaining its focus on school librarianship while promoting the professionalism of school librarianship at all levels, international, regional, and local. One member praised IASL for

"promoting" school libraries. Providing a "PROFESSIONALISM"—much needed when so very many of us work in less than professional atmospheres ... How wonderful "to touch" our professionalism through IASL.

Members commented favorably on IASL's leadership and advocacy role, especially in reaching out to Third World countries and to any nation or individual interested in the development of school libraries. Members indicated support of encouragement programs such as Support-a-Friend, the Leadership Development grant, and the IASL-UNESCO Cooperative Action Program. As one wrote, "outreach seems to be high on IASL's list of credits."

According to the majority of respondents, IASL seems to be communicating well both internally with members and externally in terms of dispensing international information. Members are being kept abreast of events in the international world of school librarianship, and information about school libraries is being disseminated all over the world. IASL is both "getting out information to use in the trenches" and "keeping interest in school librarianship alive [through] inspiration to practitioners who are frustrated by lack of progress or very slow progress in their country." The association provides an international perspective on school library concerns, serves as a clearing-house for information, and makes professionals aware of the achievement and needs of many countries.

Respondents' comments on IASL conferences and publications suggest that the organization successfully facilitates communication among its members. The conferences are highly acclaimed; over 50 respondents noted their effectiveness. Many members praised conferences as exciting, useful, cheap, well organized, and friendly. Conferences appear to be an effective means of providing a concrete forum for the intersection of school librarianship and internationalism, for bringing people together in an event that epitomizes the spirit and objectives of the organization. The professionalization of school librarianship appears to receive an annual boost or infusion of energy from the conferences.

For year-round communication and dissemination of information, the *Newsletter* received high praise. One respondent noted that it brings "the world a little closer to [her] isolated area." In addition, a subgroup of respondents found IASL's other publications to be valuable sources of information. Enthusiasm was expressed about the new journal; the respondents looked on it as "a VERY encouraging development." Several members indicated that they thought the publication program was on the right track.

Finally, while another question focused specifically on change, a few random comments on that topic appeared under this question. Some mem-

bers commented that they thought IASL was doing well at changing, and at searching for redefinition and new focus. The development plan attracted notice, as well as the increased emphasis on research.

What is IASL Doing Poorly?

Although answers showed less consistency on this question than on that concerned with what IASL was doing well, three areas of poor functioning received significant attention. First, respondents maintained that the organization is having trouble with its membership, especially with attracting new members and retaining existing members. They perceive a need for younger members, members with ideas, from more countries, and who will participate actively. A few suggested that IASL has not provided enough opportunity for cooperative action programs and/or service and broad participation.

Second, respondents identified public relations as a weak area. They called for increased visibility, perhaps through advertising and publicity efforts, through "letting allies know about us," and through improved communication with nonmembers. The organization must reach out, share its mission, and spread "the word about the values of the organization." One member suggested that IASL could become more visible through dissemination of its publications. A small group was concerned that IASL is projecting an image of a social or travel club for retirees.

Third, many respondents said that the organization needs to increase the involvement and representation of Third World members and provide more fellowships, donations, financial support, networking, and support for the solution of school library development problems. Several members said the organization should do more to influence policy and policy-makers and to convince governments of the importance of school libraries. One respondent suggested that IASL lobby ministry of education officials and work more closely with UNESCO and IFLA to "make our efforts go further."

One other group of criticisms deserves note in addition to the three mentioned above. These came from two groups within IASL who have been lobbying for more recognition and a larger share of the organizations's attention. The first group consists of those who feel the organization should put more emphasis on working members—current school librarians and practicing teacher-librarians. According to this group, IASL should "nurture the lower level, not always the hierarchy" and make itself relevant in terms of practical librarianship or education. These practitioners believe that there should be more hands-on workshops at conferences, fewer theory and formal papers that do not reflect what it is like in the field, and more presentations for working librarians.

The second group consists of those who feel the organization is not giving library technology enough weight. One respondent complained that IASL is

not "embracing the new library thrust of electronic information technologies which are impacting and changing nearly everything." This group would like to see an increased emphasis on technology-oriented presentations at conferences, expanded publication in that area, extensive use of e-mail for communication, and development of Internet groups.

Suggestions for the Improvement of IASL

Not surprisingly, the suggestions for improvement that respondents listed in this question grew out of the criticisms they offered. Respondents emphasized the importance of cultivating new members, supporting Third World librarianship, promoting new technology, changing conference programming, and improving public relations. Specific suggestions for increasing membership and expanding participation in programs included the following.

- opportunities for penpals (perhaps on e-mail);
- facilitation of short-term exchanges;
- local distribution of IASL brochures by members;
- match-a-library relationships across the world;
- attention to children in distressed situations—Bosnia, Somalia;
- funding for projects;
- international cooperative ventures;
- dissemination of employment opportunities.

Those espousing an increased emphasis on technology suggest that IASL should:

- sponsor research on the new technologies;
- use the Internet: for contacts and membership drives, for international connections, for listserve discussion on issues and provision of help, and for Board communication;
- use technology for the dissemination of information.

Some of the differing perspectives of members are revealed in the following comments. One respondent wants to separate "tourism from the conferences" while another wants expanded opportunities to observe the cultural and historical aspects of the host country. Another wants the *Newsletter* to be "more educational rather than newsy" while another wants it to have more pictures. Another member wants less

emphasis on literacy, literature, story-telling [and] more on real issues of school librarianship, e.g., instructional uses of technology, information literacy—How to achieve—library education for school library media specialists—worldwide—use of electronic based resources.

Another wants theoretical information with more research and fewer do-it manuals while others want workshops, information for "those in the trenches," and "more ideas, techniques, materials—for day-to-day use—to take back and try."

Conclusions

The large response to the survey (50%) and the wealth of comments indicates dedication to the organization by a substantial portion of the membership. Although perceptions differ as to the personal and professional value of various IASL programs and activities, the commitment of IASL members to the provision of libraries for all children elicits a high degree of consensus and provides a rallying point for unification.

IASL members from Third World countries have a more intense commitment to the IASL, rate its impact higher, and value some of its activities more. As in any organization, some members are content with the association as it is and some want to see changes. Analyses of IASL's impact internationally and locally vary, but members agree that its synthesis of professional focus on school librarianship and orientation toward internationalism allow the association to fill an essential role on a worldwide basis.

Reference

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