

AZAD Membership Survey

Compiled by the AZAD Long Range
Planning Committee

To determine how the AZAD membership felt about the objectives and services of the organization, the AZAD Board in 2001 charged the Long Range Planning Committee with the development and execution of a membership survey. From the responses, the Board would determine what offerings should be continued, what should be expanded and what potential changes might be made in the organizational structure of AZAD

AZAD Long Range Planning Committee

Diane Cooney, Cameron Park Zoo

Dave Heim, Brookfield Zoo

Jan Nash, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo

Val Olcott, Memphis Zoo

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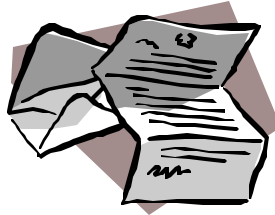
Tim Sutton, The Zoo-Gulf Breeze

Janis Weltzin, Woodland Park Zoo

There were two additional members of our committee who helped with the initial survey design; Mary Morton, Lincoln Park Zoo and Bob Shaff, Seneca Park Zoo. Mildred Keso of the Oklahoma City Zoo was our Board Liaison. We designed the questionnaire, collected the data and then divided up the questions to summarize the data and to put it into understandable numbers. Dave Heim was responsible for most of the graphic interpretations and the overall look of our final report.

Background

- 2,428 Surveys Mailed
- 577 Responses
- 23.8% Response Rate
- 89 Organizations



Since the Board wanted a broad membership response, a survey was mailed in early December 2001 to each of AZAD's 2,428 members. Most members received the survey by December 12th. The 577 surveys returned yielded a 23.8% response rate, and represented 89 different zoo and aquarium organizations. Previous surveys published in *Symbiosis* had resulted in return rates of only 2.5%.

General Questions & Demographics



Q1

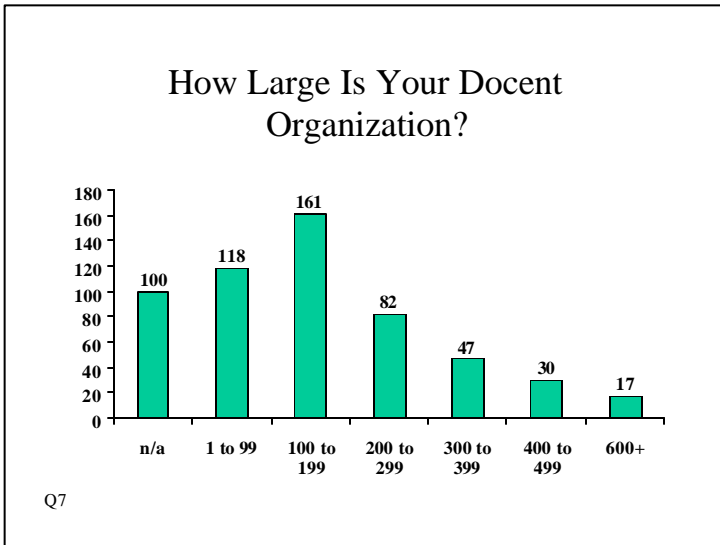
The results were collected over a period of seven months. Every comment was recorded in an Excel database. Each Board member was given a CD with the complete database and an initial overview of demographic results at the AZAD 2002 meeting in Houston. This material is available to members for further study.

Membership Experience

- Shortest docenting experience: 6 months
- Longest docenting experience: 32 years
- Average: 10 years

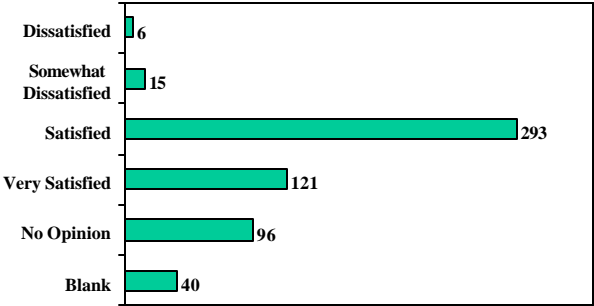


The average docent answering the survey had ten years of experience. The range was from six months to thirty-two years. It was a very experienced group. 34% had ten to 20 years of experience and 6% had over twenty years.



28% of the respondents came from organizations with 100-200 members. 20% were from zoos with under 100 docents. Fewer than 20 came from volunteer groups of 600 or more. Members from the smaller organizations were the most vocal and were more likely to return their forms.

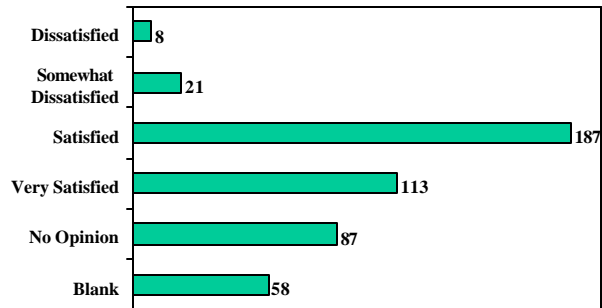
How Satisfied Are You With the Structure of the AZAD Organization?



Q1

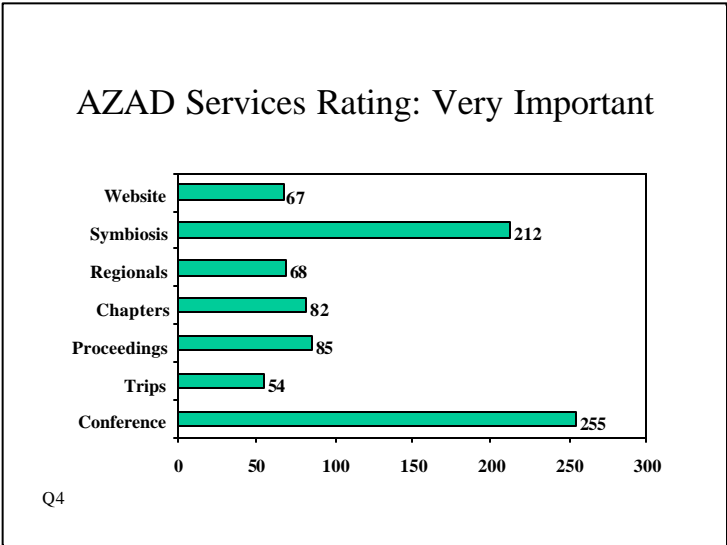
92% of those with opinions were satisfied or very satisfied, with the STRUCTURE of the AZAD Organization. Only 21 members were dissatisfied.

How Satisfied Are You With the Services of the AZAD Organization?



Q2

Only 29 people or approximately 5% were dissatisfied with the SERVICES of the AZAD organization.



We asked our members to rank specific AZAD services in order of importance to them. Among AZAD's offerings, the annual conference and *Symbiosis* were felt to be the most important. We have more than 577 responses because some people gave a high rank to more than one item.

If you could make one change in AZAD...

- Add regional conferences
- Improve communication at local level
- Increase sharing between members by
 - Seminars, handbooks, task groups
- Change Annual conference
 - Summer date
 - Lower costs
 - Increase or Decrease Length

Q3

There were 158 responses. In order of frequency these were the areas where change was suggested.

To add Regionals 20 responses

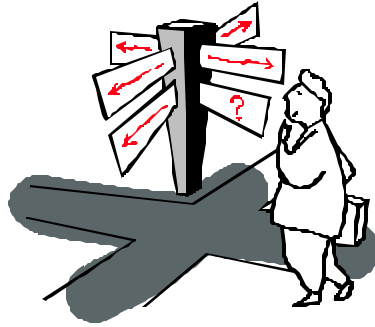
For Improved communication with the national organization 13 responses

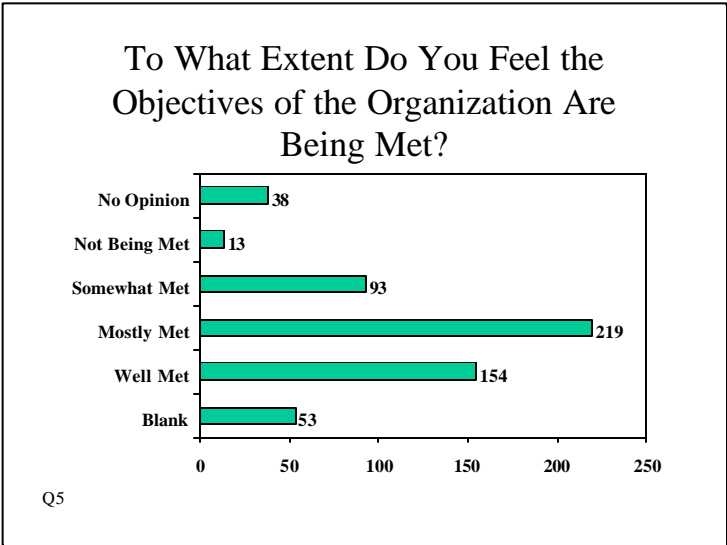
To Increase sharing of educational information 11 responses

and for changes to the annual conference:

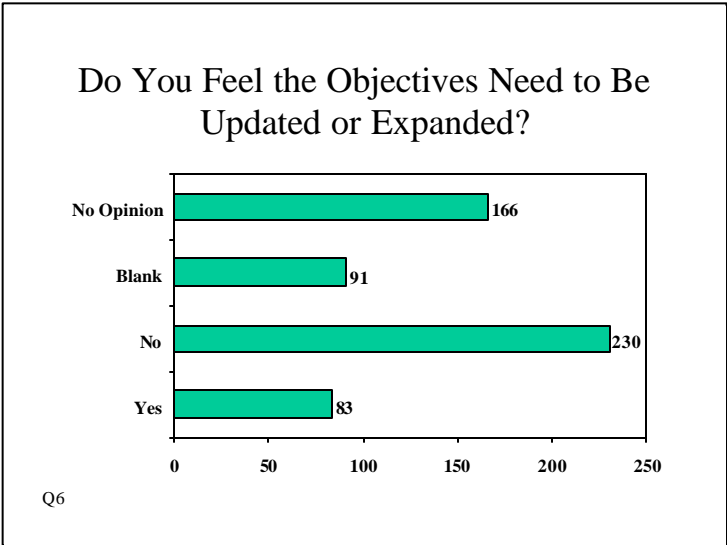
Teachers wanted summer dates, there were many requests for lower costs and suggestions were made to both increase and decrease the conference length. Comments ranged from a request to sell size 3XL T-shirts to restructure the Executive Board with traditional officers. But there was no specific area that had a significant number of responses for change.

AZAD Objectives





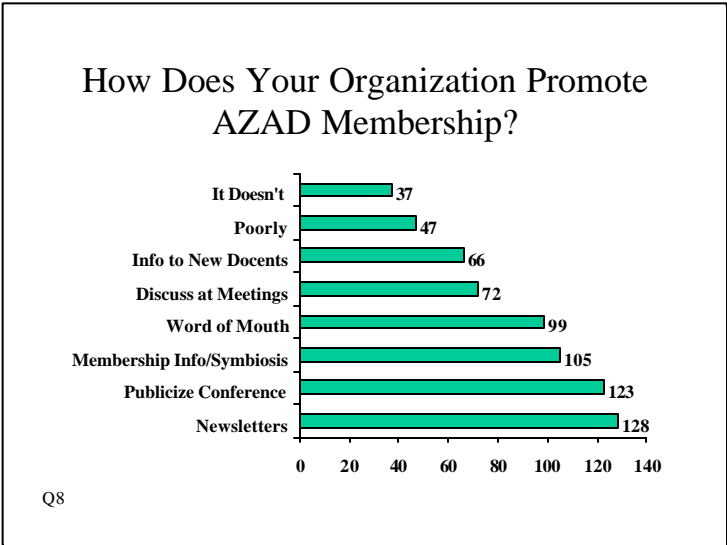
62% of the Respondents felt the objectives of the organization were being mostly, or well, met. Only 2% of the Docents felt that the objectives were not being met.



Only 15% of the respondents felt that the objectives needed to be updated or expanded and they suggested; formation of local chapters, speaking out on national and international issues, changing the name of the organization to include volunteers, and increased communication. Those members who had attended a national conference were more likely to feel that the objectives were being met.

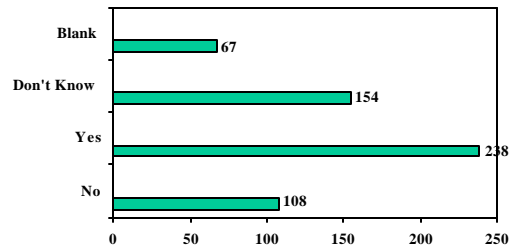
AZAD Membership





Newsletters and flyers were most commonly used to promote AZAD membership within the local organizations. Most of the information shared at the organizational level involved the AZAD conferences. Only 66 docents mentioned presenting AZAD membership information to their new docents.

Would Local Chapters Enhance the National Experience?

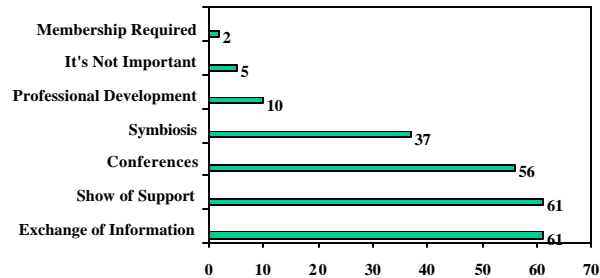


Q11

46% of the respondents thought local chapters might enhance the national organization

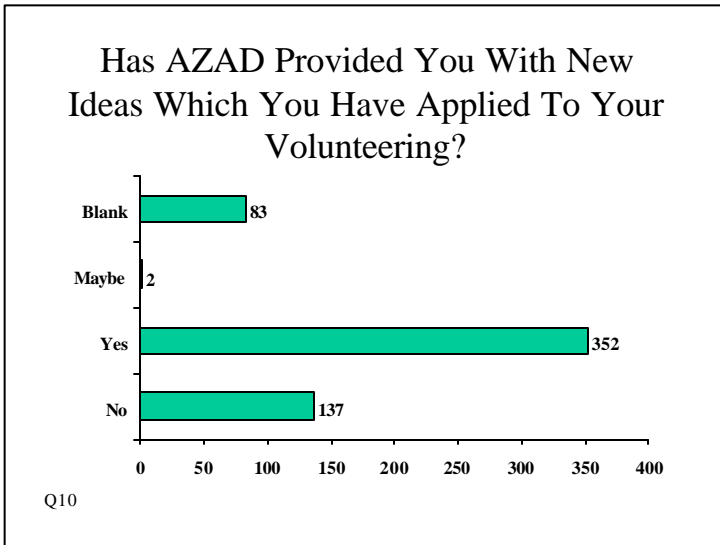
But many others felt that it might work against the cohesiveness of their local organizations.

If You Don't Attend the AZAD Conference, Why is Membership Important to You?

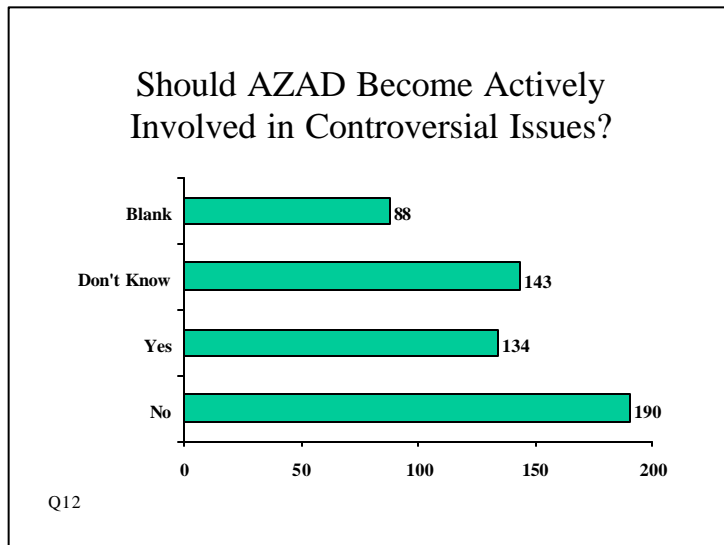


Q13

27% of respondents had never been to a National Conference. These Docents joined AZAD; to show support for the national organization and to exchange information with other docents. Many of these individuals said they joined because they hope that at some point they will be able to attend a conference, so that may be why fifty-six of them selected conferences as an important reason to join AZAD.



60% of Respondents felt that AZAD provided them with new ideas they could apply to volunteering, with Conference papers cited as the primary source of those ideas. When we looked at the responses from conference no n-attendees we found that although this group makes up 27% of those responding, they made up more than 50% of those who said no to this question. Only 30% of them said they had been provided with new ideas.



Almost a third of the respondents (32%) felt AZAD should **not** get involved in controversial issues. The 23% who felt that AZAD **should** get involved provided numerous and varied suggestions in their comments, 115 suggested involvement in national and global issues that ranged from bush meat to arctic oil production, to cloning. Twenty-four members suggested involvement by providing education only, and specified that there be no political positions taken, and seventeen were for supporting issues that relate just to zoos, including the correctness of using exhibit animal's house names and whether elephants should be free contact or protected contact animals. Aside from our love of zoos it seems we are a very diverse population when it comes to the issues we support. Concerns were also voiced that taking positions on issues might jeopardize our tax exempt status.

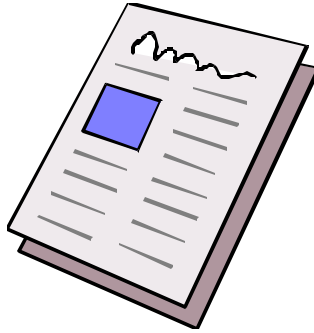
What Other Benefits Could AZAD Offer?

- **Continuing Education, Publications, Web Info (45)**
- **More information on Zoos & Docent Activities (37)**
- **Discounts on Zoo Admissions (13)**
- **Regional Meetings, Activities, Trips (13)**
- **Directory of Zoos (10)**
- **Connection to AZA (5)**
- **Advice to New Members (2)**
- **Scholarships, Grants (2)**

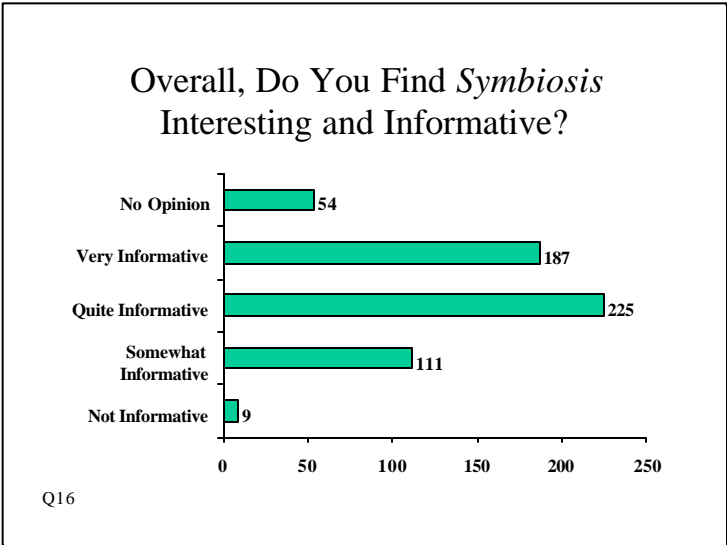
Q14

The benefits that most docents want to see are an increase in information and/or continuing education about animals and on zoo and docent activities. There were some other intriguing ideas about things we might consider doing. They included obtaining discounts on zoo admissions, providing directories of zoos and AZAD members and providing scholarships or grants for conference attendees.

Symbiosis



Symbiosis is the one benefit all of our members receive and it's obvious that it's seen as a very valuable one.



Only nine individuals felt that *Symbiosis* was not informative. Animal facts and zoo/aquarium information were cited as the most popular sections of *Symbiosis*. Articles on the business of AZAD were the least popular. There were however some individuals who did feel the administrative materials were the most important feature of the newsletter.

What Could Be Added to
Symbiosis to Make It More
Informative & Enjoyable?

- Training material, Docent information
- More information on Zoos
- Information on animals

Q19

Additional information on Docent training, education and activities; and more information on zoos and animal facts were requested.

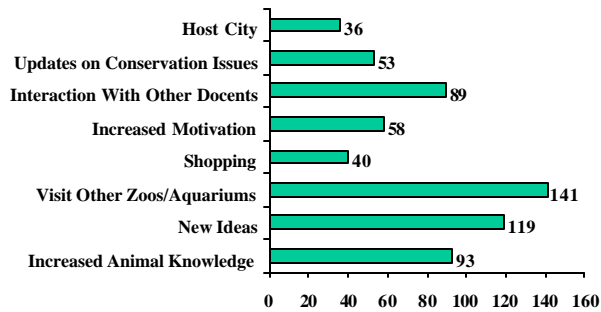
National Conference

- Attendance low: 0
- Attendance high: 17
- Average: 3



Attendance at National Conferences ranged from those who had never attended (154) to those who have been to seventeen. The average number of conferences attended by the respondents was three.

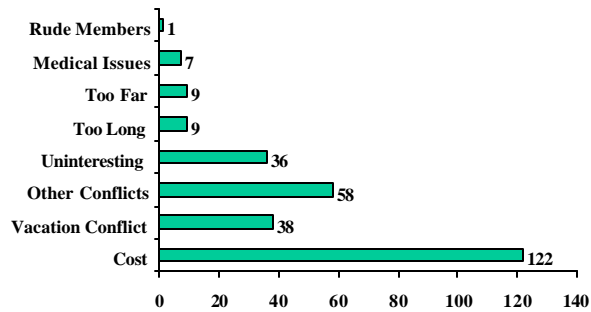
Why Do You Attend The Annual Conferences?



Q21

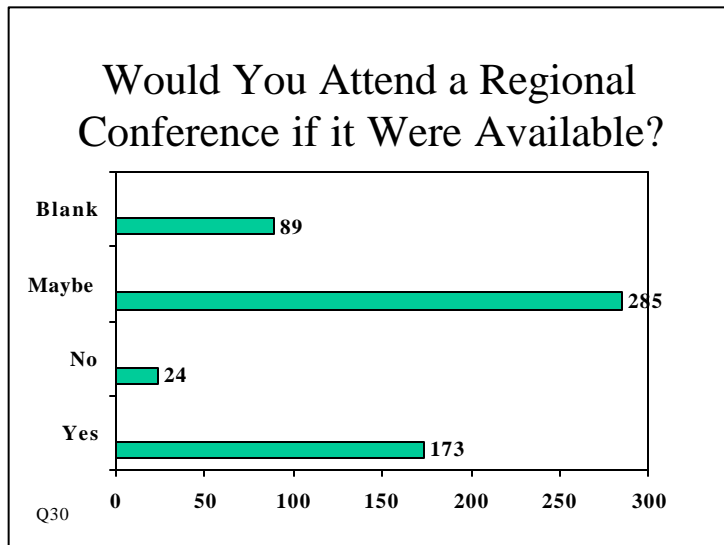
There were 205 respondents who left this question unanswered, (includes the 154 who never attended). This ranking therefore is based on the 372 who did respond. The most important reasons for attending an AZAD national conference were the chance to visit other zoos and aquariums, the acquisition of new ideas, increased animal knowledge and interactions with other docents/volunteers. Shopping and features of the host city rated among the least important.

If You Do Not Attend AZAD Conferences, What Is Your Reason?



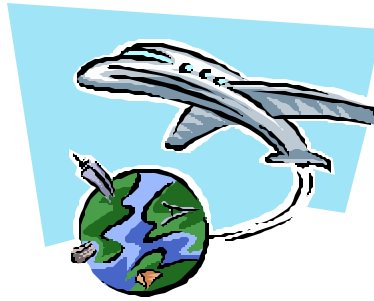
Q29

For that 27% of our respondents who indicated they do not attend conferences, cost was cited as the primary reason. Conflict with the dates of the conference was a secondary reason; vacations, work schedules and childcare were among the conflicts noted.

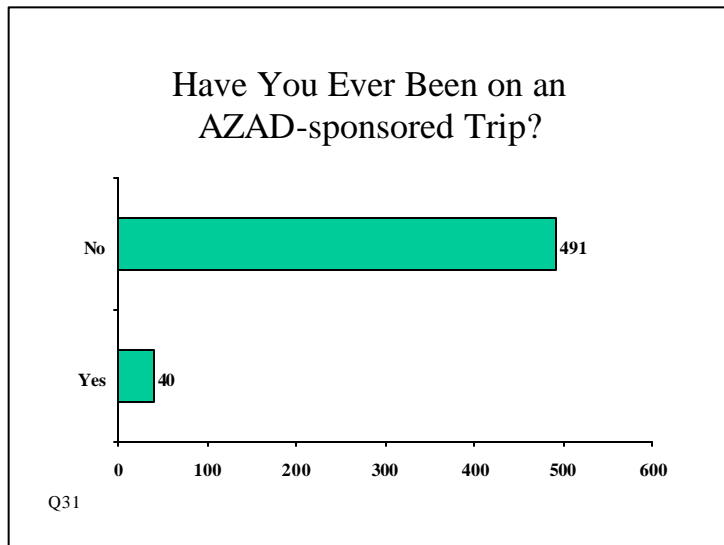


When we asked about willingness to attend a regional conference the major qualifiers were location and cost. Only twenty-four docents stated that they would **NOT** attend a regional conference if it were available.

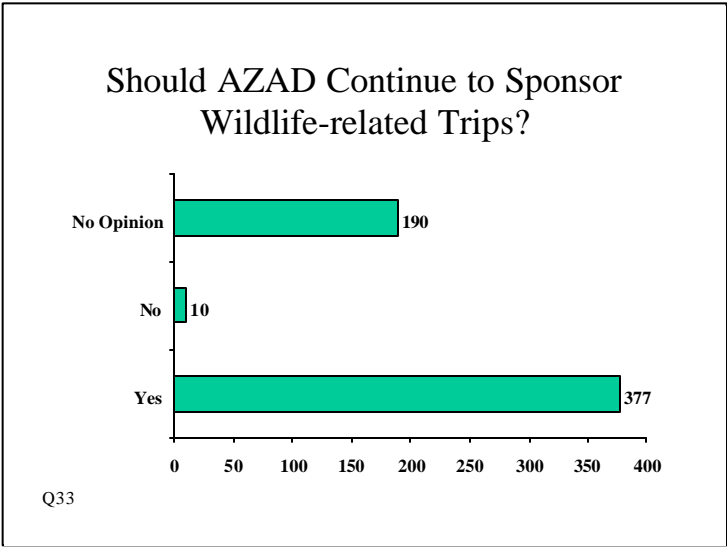
AZAD Trips



One benefit of AZAD membership is the opportunity to participate in AZAD sponsored trips.

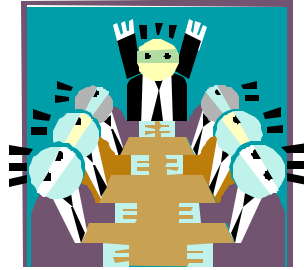


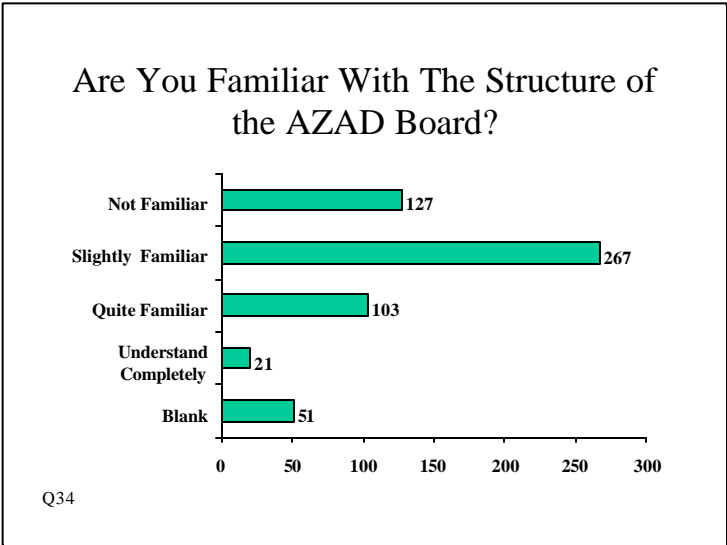
Most survey respondents, 85%, had not taken an AZAD sponsored trip; however, they indicated they might, or probably would consider, taking such a trip. Cost was the most common reason for **not** taking an AZAD trip, as was the fact that similar trips are offered elsewhere. Many zoological societies offer their own travel opportunities.



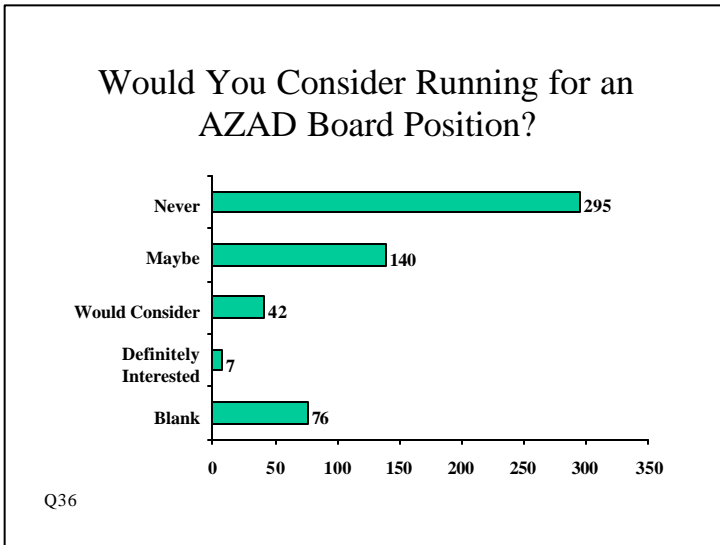
In spite of the low numbers of past trip participants, 65% felt that AZAD should continue to offer wildlife travel opportunities.

AZAD Executive Board





Although 69% said they were unfamiliar or only slightly familiar with the structure of the board most would ask their local AZAD conference delegate for information or would refer to *Symbiosis* to find who to ask, if they had a question or concern about the organization.

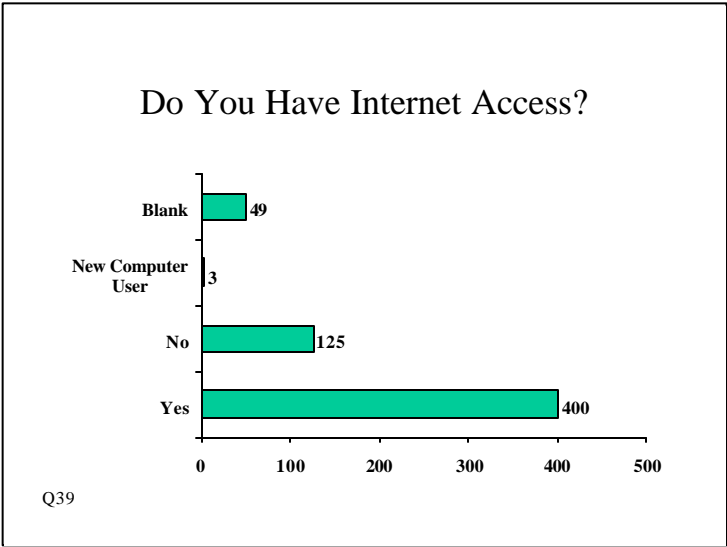


More than half, 51%, said they would never seek a Board position. When asked to suggest ways to interest members in running for a Board position the respondents commented that we might pay the Board members expenses, increase the understanding of what the Board members actually do and also increase the opportunities for member/ Board contact.

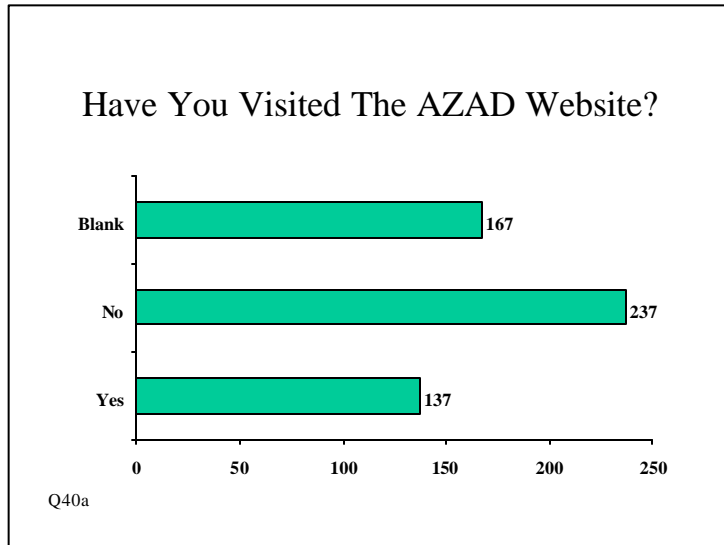
AZAD Website



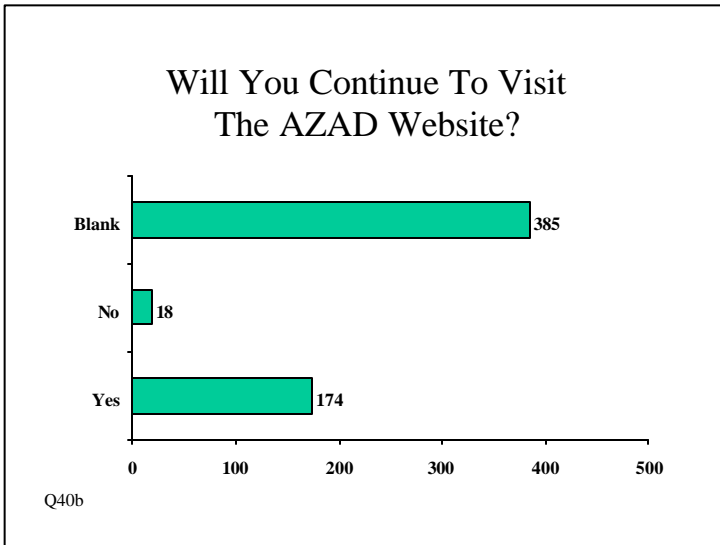
The AZAD website was a relatively new feature when we sent out the survey form and we hoped to stimulate interest in the site by asking about it on the survey form.



The majority of respondents, 69%, said they had access to the Internet



But only about a third of that group had visited the AZAD website at that time. Conference information was the most liked feature, followed by publication of the conference papers.



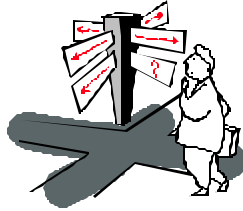
The number of respondents who said they would continue to visit the website was actually larger than the number who said they had already visited the site. This might indicate that the website would get more first time visitors. Very few, who had visited the site, said that they would not continue to visit.

Recommendations



The committee had been instructed to make recommendations to the board as a result of the survey responses and the following recommendations were presented to the Board prior to their interim meeting in March of 2003, along with a full report of the data.

OBJECTIVES



Do Not Need to be Updated or Expanded

According to AZAD Bylaws, “The object of the Association shall be to facilitate education, communication, and the exchange of information among Zoo and Aquarium Docents.” We Recommended that the Objective did not need to be updated or expanded.

MEMBERSHIP

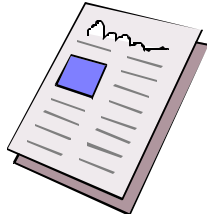


- Provide an Information Packet for Members
- Utilize the AZAD Delegates to promote membership
- Provide posters and flyers to organizational members
- Consider Local AZAD Chapters

We did feel that we should provide a “ Welcome to Azad ..Here’s what it’s all about” packet for members, to help them get the most out of their membership.

Since many of our members were already asking their delegates for information about concerns they might have, we felt we should find a way to utilize our AZAD Conference delegates to promote membership and to increase communication between their local organizations and AZAD. Since most organizations publicize AZAD conferences on their bulletin boards and newsletters, we thought we should provide posters and flyers to organizational members prior to the conference to be posted on those docent bulletin boards. It was also suggested that we look at the possibility of local AZAD chapters to increase the level of local involvement in AZAD and help non-conference attendees feel part of AZAD.

SYMBIOSIS



Expand to Include:

- Member Concerns
- Educational Information on Controversial Issues, pro & con
- Promote Member involvement at the Board level

Symbiosis is seen as a major benefit of membership. Our suggestions here were to expand *Symbiosis*. To use it to explain misconceptions and address member concerns. To provide information, pro and con, on controversial conservation issues so individuals can take their own actions. We suggested that we promote Board positions and along with nomination forms for these positions there should be space devoted to describing what expenses are covered and how much time is needed. We also shared the information about the areas on which our members felt they would like more of an emphasis...that of training, and zoo and docent activities.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

- Lower Costs
- Consider Regional Conferences



The major recommendation for the National Conference, was to find ways to lower the costs of attending. Suggestions included offering alternative housing, reduced registration fees for partial attendance, and targeting conference information to zoo boards. (In the hopes of stimulating some assistance for attendees). Regional conferences were suggested to offer an alternative experience for a shorter, closer, less expensive meeting venue.

AZAD TRIPS



Continue to Offer Trips With an
Emphasis on Lower Costs

Since the members were so supportive of this benefit we should continue to offer wildlife trips with an emphasis on keeping the costs as low as possible.

AZAD EXECUTIVE BOARD



Increase Interaction with Members

The main recommendation for the Executive Board was to find ways to increase member interactions with the Board. This would include the use of *Symbiosis* and the website to acknowledge members comments and to ask members to send the Board not only questions but also solutions for concerns that they might have. The structure and function of the Board also needed to be explained. At conferences, we need to provide opportunities for the Board members to mix with the members and to become more visible to the membership.

AZAD WEBSITE

Expand the Content and Usability of the Site



- Monthly Features to increase visits
- Practical Docent Tips
- Animal Information
- Board Information & Interaction
- Ideas for Special Events
- Topics for Brainstorming

We recommended expanding and making better use of the website. Enhancing the content, usability and design to make it more appealing so members will have a reason to visit it often. Including monthly special features that are promoted in *Symbiosis*; practical ideas, a monthly feature animal, ideas for special events, topics for brainstorming. We should include information about nominating committee and Board positions so members have an opportunity all year to know how they can become involved at the national level.