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Summary of OBS Survey Results



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I want to sincerely thank those OBS-SIS members who took the time to complete this year's survey and return it to me. You know who you are and OBS is appreciative of your willingness to share your thoughts! The bad news is, many more OBS members neglected to return their survey. I mailed out 304 surveys, but only 47 were completed and returned—a mere 15% return rate!

I realize that not making the survey available on the Web may have contributed to this poor response. I felt it was more important to get the survey out on time, so that the results could be used in a timely manner. Hopefully, the 2000/2001 OBS survey will be on the Web. All elected OBS officers and committee chairs are always happy to hear your comments about the Section. But once a year, you have a valuable opportunity to be reminded to speak up when you receive your membership survey. So please take advantage of it!

Just the facts ...

The results of the survey (as always) were quite interesting, even to some of the seemingly mundane, factual questions. For example, following the name and address lines, there was a space for "areas of responsibility" and these were the responses:

- Technical services
- Administration
- Database management/maintenance/administration
- Cataloging
- Acquisitions
- Serials
- Accounts payable
- Reference
- Loose-leaf filing
- Collection development
- Selection
- Records management
- Materials processing

- Systems
- Coverage of circulation desk
- Preservation
- Classification
- Reclassification
- Shelfreading
- GPO processing
- Government documents
- Middle management
- Managing
- Editing
- Binding
- Authority work/control
- Planning
- Coordinating
- Personnel
- Project management
- IS liaison
- Webmaster
- Consortial
- Director/associate dean
- Liaison to faculty
- Reserve
- Correspondence
- Writing documentation
- Attending meetings
- Training
- Supervision
- Problem management

I was amazed at all the duties listed! I personally don't do all of these, but I do probably about half of them at least some of the time. When I included this category, I was thinking more traditionally in terms of cataloging,

acquisitions, serials, reference, etc. But I was pleased to see the laundry list of answers. It helps illustrate that OBS attracts a wide variety of members and that its members are extremely versatile!

On a less wide-ranging note, 41 use OCLC as their bibliographic utility, while 4 use RLIN, and one, AG Canada. Local system usage is more varied, as a result of the greater number of choices: Innovative Interfaces (23), NOTIS (6), Sirsi (4), Voyager (2), DRA (2), Horizon (1), CARL (1), Best Seller (1), Dynix (1), EOS (2), Other (1), don't have (or left blank) (4). Four responded that they are in the process of migrating to another system.

In terms of the type of library, we work in: Academic (40), Firm (4), County (1), Corporate (1), Federal/Military (1), Law society (1). And we are quite the experienced bunch! Years spent in service in law libraries: 1-3 (3), 4-6 (4), 7-9 (4), 10-13 (5), 13-19 (19), 20+ (11). Seventy-four percent of those who responded have 10 or more years of experience in law libraries! I suspect this reflects the fact that many of us who have been around a while tend to be more involved and thus more likely to respond to the survey. I hope it doesn't mean most of us are on the verge of burnout!



What kind of OBS services do you need now?

In answer to this question, the responses ranged from the very general ("Everything") to the very specific (encouraging OCLC to simplify its search strategy). Some were very honest and said they were not sure what OBS services they needed or that they had just joined OBS, so didn't know yet. Others reemphasized the importance of this newsletter (*Technical Services Law Librarian*), educational programs (both at AALL annual and locally), committee meetings, roundtables, and discussion lists. Current information about local systems, the bibliographic utilities, and technology were requested by a number of people. One person mentioned mentoring as a needed service.

What is your most pressing continuing need from OBS?

There were a lot of good responses to this question, so I'll list them as is, just removing some of the duplication:

- State of the art technology reviews; strategic direction/evolution in the profession and in technical services
- Assisting in program selection for AALL
- What we should be doing to be proactive with electronic resources
- Merger issue
- Comparison of local integrated systems
- Information received at the committee meetings during annual meeting
- Collegial support and training information
- Keeping up to date
- Continuing education—library automation, contacts with colleagues
- Information on OCLC and its future direction

OBS programs and projects

Some rather specific program topics were listed and respondents were asked to rank them on a scale from 1 (no interest, remove from list) to 5 (hot topic, definitely should be done). In order of interest level, the results are:

Topic: Integrating the electronic library (department coordination, workflow issues, collection development, choosing electronic resources to catalog, who maintains URL links, etc.)

- 17 respondents felt this was a hot topic and a program should be done. Those who volunteered to coordinate or assist with such a program will most likely be contacted by Ismael Gullon, OBS Education Chair, sometime soon! One respondent mentioned e-books and netLibrary.com as aspects of this topic.

Topic: Maintenance and quality control of the local database while facing constant change, cutbacks, shortages of staff and growing demands on our time away from those duties and responsibilities

- 14 respondents were very interested in this topic. Volunteers are also likely to be contacted.

Topic: Automated cataloging tools (e.g., Catalogers Desktop, Classification Plus)

- 17 expressed average interest in this topic and there were volunteers to assist in planning this program, though none to coordinate it. This topic might lend itself to an article in *TSLL* instead.

Topic: Multiple versions in the online catalog. Update and options; what are others doing?

- 12 expressed average interest in this topic. One said that she had submitted a program proposal on this topic in the past, but it had not been chosen. This could also be a good *TSLL* article or program. It would be important with either approach that both the technical and public services perspectives be covered. One of the problems with this topic is that there has been no real resolution on this on the national front, though some CONSER guidelines on electronic resources

now exist. Nevertheless, a description of how other libraries are dealing with multiple versions could be very helpful. Aggregator titles were mentioned as an aspect of this topic by one respondent. Another suggested a list of which libraries use a multiple versions approach and which do not would be helpful. It might be possible to incorporate this question into the next version of the *Law Library Systems Directory*.

Topic: Client-server issues and Z39.50

- 12 expressed average interest in this topic. A few people commented that there is a Z39.50 program scheduled for this 2000 annual meeting, so another may not be necessary in 2001. A report in *TSLL* on this year's program could be helpful to those who will not be in Philadelphia.

Topic: Adding call numbers from the newer LCC law schedules to OCLC and/or RLIN bibliographic records:

- 13 expressed minimal interest in this topic. Two respondents said that they do this on a regular basis, so perhaps either or both could contribute a piece to *TSLL* on this topic. One respondent mentioned that this should be approached as an OCLC Enhance project. Perhaps a *TSLL* article about which law libraries are Enhance libraries and what it takes to become one would also be useful.

New program ideas

OBS members offered some excellent suggestions for program planning:

- Status of OCLC CORC project
- Technical services staff involvement in creating and maintaining the law library's Web page
- ILL (local systems and OCLC)
- Staff training issues in system upgrades or migrations
- Controlling the online system's indexing (What changes can you make? What do you need to know in order to make changes? Can you add a new index?)

- The philosophy of technology (What are we supposed to be thinking about regarding more computers, fewer bodies in the technical services world? What about alternative formats? What's the place of print in the 21st century library?)
- Technical services librarian's role as database administrator
- Professional Networking for Technical Professionals (Might be a good program for newbies. Let the leaders of technical services describe their war stories—how they got help for their challenges from their more experienced colleagues.)
- IFLA recommendations for OPAC display
- International authority control
- ANSI/NISO Z39.71-1999 serial holdings standards
- Internet cataloging and its impact on reference services.
- How computers/technology and the blurring of job functions impact technical services
- Management of the technical services function (applying management principles)
- Continuing education opportunities and how to train non-professional technical services staff
- Technical services role in building the virtual library
- Web site links validation in the WebPAC

TSLL

When asked about *TSLL*, people seemed very satisfied for the most part:

- It is a very informative newsletter that I read from cover to cover. Great job to the editors and columnists.
- Keep up the top-notch work.
- Fabulous newsletter!
- It's perfect.

There were a few specific suggestions for topics to be covered in the future in *TSLL*:

- How to hire good technical services librarians.
- Articles like "How we do it" covering new processes, functions. The editors

- could identify topics (e.g. table of contents, designing Web catalog interfaces) and solicit contributors.
- I'm always looking for better, faster shortcut ways to enhance, maintain online system—practical how to's as opposed to theoretical; simple tricks as opposed to complex solutions.

Final general member quotes

OBS members were helpful in delivering positive reinforcement, as well as ideas for further improvement:

- I am no longer directly responsible for technical services; however, I try to stay aware of what's going on. OBS helps me do that. Thank you.
- As someone whose access to OBS has been limited and at a distance (and may continue to be so), I have to say that OBS makes little impact in my life. Moving OBS down to the grass roots of the chapters in the form of programs made available to local chapters, on site or phone consulting help and the like would be stellar and valuable services. Would like to be more active but my time is limited. Opportunity would need to be more than fluff and something I could handle without going on the road (or significant enough to justify firm funding).
- Although I am relatively new to the profession ... I am still very willing to become involved and serve the SIS. Just let me know how I can help! (Don't worry, OBS has already taken this person up on this offer!)
- I think the people who have been running this Section have done a very fine job over all the years I can recall.



- The communication within OBS is continually improving. There is so much enthusiasm! One of the greatest needs is involving as many people as possible. Recruiting new members is also important.
- I would like to see OBS spend some of its money to support the expense of bringing in experts outside the law library world. Graphic design of information (making effective training manuals and OPAC tutorials), how to make good presentations (many of us have the occupational requirement to do so, but no training and many are expected to present at professional meetings as part of professional development).
- I enjoy being part of OBS. OBS sponsored programs are timely and informative. I am very pleased with this Section.
- Great leadership!
- I like OBS for the chance to be on the OCLC Committee and the contact it provides with OCLC and other OCLC member libraries.
- I appreciate the work of the Section and this survey.
- Keep visibility of TS librarians high.
- I have appreciated the ongoing efforts of OBS to provide interfaces with online utilities and think the work of the Local Systems Committee (i.e. their *Directory*) is very worthwhile.

Committee assignments

The membership survey also contained portions describing the structure of OBS and asking for volunteers to run for office and/or to serve on various committees. I have compiled lists of all those volunteers. You should be notified of your committee assignment sometime in June, hopefully by the time you are reading this. As a reminder, all OBS committee and roundtable meetings during the AALL annual meeting are open to all. OBS simply makes these committee assignments in order to give the chair of each committee a core of volunteers that can assist him/her during planning throughout the year. I was very pleased at the number of volunteers. Even

though our survey response was low, it is clear that those who did respond want to be very active in OBS!

2001 program planning

It is clear from the survey responses that members value OBS' efforts in providing quality education programs at the AALL annual meeting. Some were even willing to offer new ideas for programs and OBS will follow up on these. OBS is sponsoring or co-sponsoring seven programs this July in Philadelphia. OBS needs your help to

make sure that programs of interest to OBS members are offered in 2001 in Minneapolis. If you have an idea for a program proposal, please contact Ismael Gullon, OBS Education Chair, myself, or any member of the OBS Executive Board. Even if you don't have an idea, but you want to be involved with putting on a program, contact OBS. Sometimes ideas are available, but coordinators are needed. It's a great way to get involved and to make sure programs you want to attend are presented!

We hear you, but don't stop talking!

I just want to close by saying that OBS takes your survey responses very seriously. The annual survey is an opportunity for you to speak your piece as an OBS member. But OBS wants to hear what you have to say whenever it occurs to you and OBS recognizes that members' needs do change over time. Speak up on the OBS-SIS electronic list or call or e-mail any of the members of the OBS Executive Board. We want to know what's on your mind and how OBS can serve you better! 📧