



EMWA Member Satisfaction Survey

by Helen Baldwin

From late-July until mid-September this year, EMWA's executive committee (EC) organised an anonymous online survey to find out how satisfied you, EMWA's members, are with your association and to seek new ideas for how to improve the organisation. This article gives an overall summary of the survey results which, I am happy to say, were mostly very positive. In addition, detailed articles about specific areas will be written by the Editor of *The Write Stuff* (TWS), the Education Officer and the Web Manager: These articles will appear in the March 2009 issue of TWS.

The survey was completed by 364 respondents, i.e. 42% of the total of 860 EMWA members at the end of August 2008. This was an excellent response rate compared with



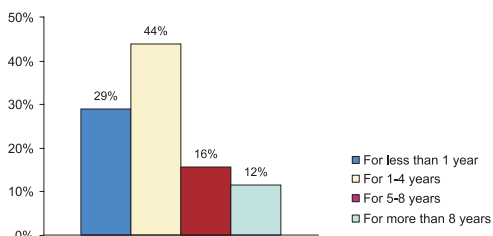
Julie Taylor won the EMWA survey prize draw. Her comment? "I'm delighted to win the prize draw, particularly as I only joined EMWA in the summer!"

those usually obtained for surveys of this type (around 25%). I believe this reflects the enthusiasm and personal investment that many of us feel for EMWA. Of course, motivation to win the prize draw may have played a small role too! Whilst we're on the subject, I am delighted to announce that a new freelance member from the UK, Julie Taylor, was the lucky prize draw winner and she received an Amazon voucher for £95 (equivalent to €120). Congratulations to Julie!

Membership profile

The first few survey questions were designed to learn more about our members, including where they work and which benefits of EMWA membership they find most useful.

How long have you been a member of EMWA?



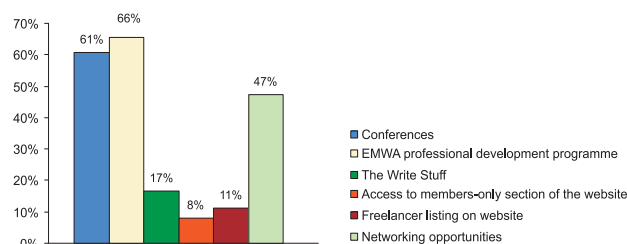
The greatest proportion of survey respondents had been members for 1-4 years (44%), followed by those who had joined in the last year (29%). This reflects the fact that EMWA is a rapidly expanding organisation: in the last year our membership has increased from 700 members to nearly

900! Nevertheless, many of the 'old faithfuls', who've been with EMWA since its modest beginnings, are still with us and also responded to the survey. Thus the results come from a representative cross-section of new and older members.

Who do you work for?

33% of respondents worked for pharmaceutical companies, 26% were self-employed freelancers, and 18% worked for contract research organisations (CROs). Other employers were medical writing companies (7%), communications agencies (6%), academic institutions (3%) and biomedical journals (0.3%). A few respondents had unusual jobs: for example one respondent worked for a criminal justice department—so I'd better make sure I write the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about these survey results!

What made you decide to join EMWA? (Tick up to 3 options)



The survey explored the respondents' original motivations for joining EMWA and their motivations for renewing their membership. The responses were very similar for both questions—which is reassuring as it suggests that the respondents' EMWA membership had fulfilled their original expectations. More than 60% of respondents cited the EMWA professional development programme and conferences as their main reasons for joining and for renewing their membership. Networking was also cited as a reason by approximately half of the respondents. Encouragingly, whilst only 17% of respondents cited TWS as a reason for joining EMWA, twice that number cited our journal as a reason for renewing their membership!

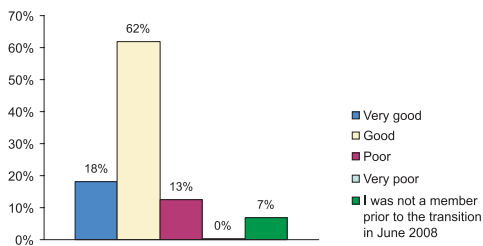
EMWA's head office

We asked three questions about satisfaction with EMWA's head office, focussing on quality of communication, frequency of communication, and on membership administration. As we had recently changed head office supplier at the time of the survey, and there had been insufficient time to make a fair assessment of the new head office, we specified that the questions related to the service provided before the transition to the new head office.

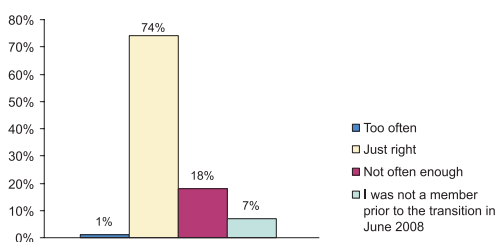


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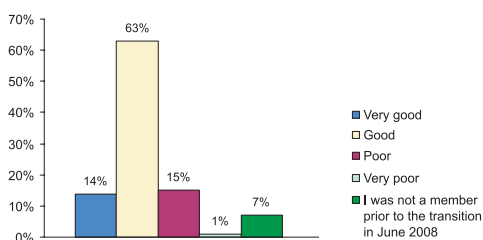
Before the transition to the new EMWA head office in June 2008, how did you rate the quality of the communication from EMWA head office to you?



Before the transition to the new EMWA head office in June 2008, how did you rate the frequency of the communication from EMWA head office to you?



Before the transition to the new EMWA head office in June 2008, how did you rate the quality of administration of your membership?



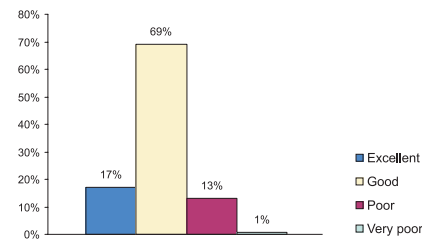
For all three questions, the majority of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with head office. However, 13% of respondents rated the quality of communication from head office as 'poor' or 'very poor', 18% rated the frequency of communication as 'not often enough', and 16% rated the quality of their membership administration as 'poor' or 'very poor'. We plan to perform another satisfaction survey next summer and hope to see an improvement in this area.

EMWA conferences

An important aspect of EMWA's activities is the conferences. We asked several questions about members' opinions of the value for money, conference administration, choice of cities, quality of hotels, and choice of themes at recent conferences.

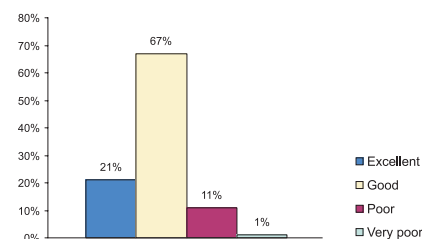
22% of respondents had not attended any conferences, 54% had attended 1-3 conferences, 19% had attended 4-8 conferences and 5% of respondents had attended more than 8 conferences (those 'old faithfuls' mentioned previously—of whom I am proud to be one!) When asked which conference they usually attended, 60% of respondents said the spring conference, 13% said the autumn conference, and 27% said they usually attended both conferences.

How would you rate the value for money of EMWA conferences?



Value for money of EMWA conferences was rated as 'excellent' or 'good' by the large majority of respondents (86%), while 14% of respondents rated value for money as 'poor' or 'very poor'. Conference registration and workshop fees have not increased for several years. The workshop leaders provide their services for free, which is a major factor allowing us to keep our fees substantially lower than other training organisations. Nevertheless, we do appreciate that attending a conference can be costly by the time you add together the registration fee, workshop fees, social events, and travel and accommodation expenses. As mentioned later in this article, the EC is working closely with head office to choose accessible and reasonably priced destinations as well as hotels that fall within a reasonable budget. Furthermore EMWA is very active in looking for sponsorship and other sources of revenue, such as advertising, to offset against the expenses of running the organisation.

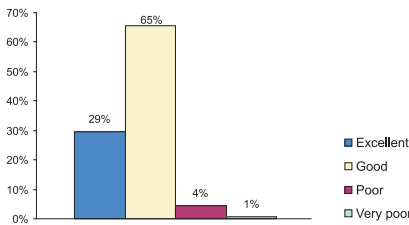
How would you rate the pre-conference registration procedure for the last conference you attended (including receipt of confirmation, invoices, and preworkshop assignments)?



It was encouraging to see that 88% of respondents considered their last pre-conference registration procedure to be 'excellent' or 'good'. However, 12% of respondents judged this procedure to be 'poor' or 'very poor'. The EC were aware of problems with invoicing and provision of pre-workshop assignments for previous conferences, and this was discussed in detail at the AGM in Vienna in 2007. Following that, our previous head office made great efforts to improve these procedures for the Barcelona conference in May 2008 and this was reflected by the fact that 88% of survey responses to this question were positive. Since performing the survey, further improvements have been made to the pre-conference procedures: An online conference registration system was successfully implemented for last month's conference in London. In addition, we are looking into ways to further improve the procedures for supplying preworkshop assignments to participants, which may be done via the website at some time in the future.

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Recent conference locations were Barcelona, Basel, Vienna, and Lyon. The next 2 conferences will be held in London and Ljubljana. Overall, what is your opinion of the cities chosen for EMWA conferences?



95% of respondents were very satisfied with the choices of locations of our previous and future conferences. Most of the comments were positive and can be summed up by this one: “Interesting cities, worth a visit, and great for spending free time”.

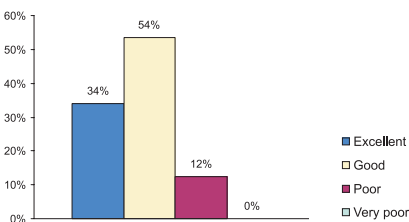
Are there other cities in which you would like the conference to be held?

Cities suggested by more than 10 respondents were: Berlin (33), Stockholm (20), Rome (17), Paris (17), Prague (15), Edinburgh (13), Hamburg (12), Amsterdam (12), and Munich (11).

The most popular countries and regions suggested were: Germany (74), Eastern Europe (53), Scandinavia (51), Italy (43), UK (30), France (27), Benelux (21), Spain and Portugal (20), Greece and Cyprus (9), Ireland (9), Switzerland (8), and Austria (3).

Those of you who suggested Germany will be pleased to know that we are planning to hold next year’s autumn conference in Frankfurt and we are seriously considering Berlin for the 2010 or 2011 spring conference. However, some of the suggestions are unlikely to be selected as future destinations as they are notoriously expensive for conference facilities.

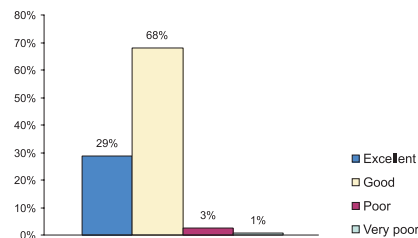
If you attended the recent conference in Barcelona, what was your opinion of the conference centre hotel?



The conference hotel in Barcelona was judged as ‘excellent’ by 34%, ‘good’ by 54%, and ‘poor’ by 12% of respondents. The main criticisms were that it was very expensive and rather a long way from the city centre. Of course it is wonderful to be in the city centre so that members can easily pop out for a spot of sightseeing between workshops. For example the conference hotel in Vienna in 2007 was ideally located from this point of view. The challenge we are faced with is that EMWA conferences have increased in size over the last few years, and finding centrally located,

reasonably priced hotels with adequate conference facilities is not an easy task. Nevertheless, our new head office suppliers, MCI, have a whole department dedicated to conference management and are very experienced at negotiating excellent hotel rates for their clients. So we are relying on them to come up with some great suggestions for future conferences. Also, the good news is that next year’s spring conference will be held in the Grand Hotel Union in Ljubljana which is substantially less expensive than the hotel in Barcelona.

The last 2 spring conferences have had special themes: ‘Medical communications’ and ‘medical translations’. The theme of the next spring conference in Ljubljana will be ‘regulatory writing’. What is your opinion of these choices of themes?

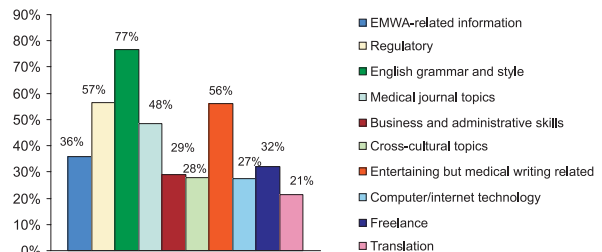


We were delighted to learn that the choices of conference themes were judged to be ‘excellent’ or ‘good’ by 97% of respondents. We also asked for ideas for future themes and were inundated with excellent suggestions—thank you! Some of the most popular suggestions were: ‘Transition to an electronic era’, ‘publications’, and ‘clinical research’.

The Write Stuff

The Editor, Elise Langdon-Neuner, is preparing a detailed article about the survey responses relating to *TWS*. Her article will be published in March 2009, so I will only give a brief summary here. It was nice to learn that 63% of respondents always read *TWS* and 35% sometimes read it. The majority (89%) prefer to read the printed version, whilst 9% read the emailed pdf version and only 2% read it on the website.

Which types of articles are of greatest interest to you?



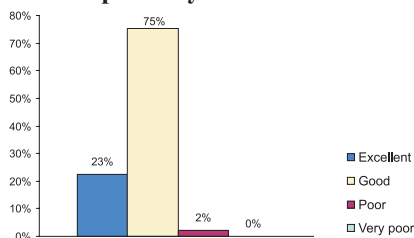
The most popular articles were ‘English grammar and style’ (77%), ‘regulatory’ (57%), and ‘entertaining but medical writing related’ (56%). Many interesting suggestions were given for future editions and almost one third of respondents said they would like to contribute to *TWS*. That’s great news—so get writing!



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EMWA Professional Development Programme (EPDP)

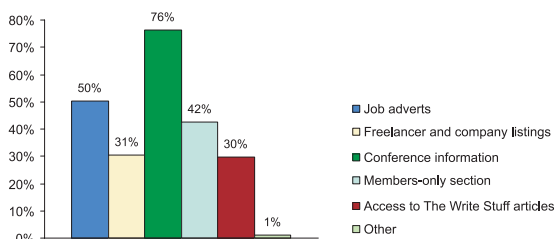
The Education Officer, Stephen de Looze, is writing a detailed article about the survey responses to questions about the EPDP. It was encouraging to see that 92% of respondents were satisfied with the choice of workshops in the EPDP and that 98% of respondents felt that the quality of the workshops was good or excellent. Respondents' comments were very helpful in guiding discussions on the future of the EPDP that were held during the meeting of the EMWA Professional Development Committee in London last month. The comments included some very interesting suggestions for new workshops, which Stephen will present in the next issue of *TWS*, together with a call for new workshop leaders.

Overall, how would you rate the quality of the EPDP workshops that you have attended?

Although we received many compliments about the EPDP, several respondents criticised EMWA's management of the EPDP credits and certificates. Again, the EC are aware of this problem and have been making improvements. Under the guidance of the Education Officer, our new head office has taken on the challenge of verifying that all existing credit records are correct and up to date, and of introducing new procedures to ensure that this essential aspect of EMWA's activities is managed professionally. Members have recently been able to access their credit records online and have been asked to check them and to contact head office if there are problems. Nevertheless, with almost 900 members, investigations into credit errors will take a few months and head office asks us to bear with them for a little longer.

The EMWA website

The Web Manager, Shanida Nataraja, is writing a detailed article about the survey responses to questions about the website and her article will be published in the March 2009 issue of *TWS*. I will only provide a brief summary here. EMWA's website was completely revised this year and we were very pleased to see that 92% of respondents judged the new website as 'excellent' or 'good'.

Which aspects of the website are of most interest to you?

The most popular features of the website were conference information (76%), job adverts (50%) and the members-only section (42.4%). We asked whether there is anything not currently included on the website that you would like to see in the future: Plenty of interesting ideas were provided and Shanida will review these in her article in the next issue.

Log in details for the members' area of the website are now personalised. If you have not already done so, please register on the website for your personalised log in details or contact head office for more information.

EMWA committees and subcommittees

Only 6% of survey respondents had ever served on a committee or subcommittee for EMWA. However, 24% of respondents said that they would be interested in participating in the future. This is excellent news as EMWA needs you!

One respondent said: "Sometimes EMWA can appear too much run by the 'old school', who all know each other, and so it can be intimidating for new people to join the committees". The EC are aware that some members see the committees in this way. However, the reality is that most of the EC officers would gladly step aside for someone new but we don't know who you are! We always try to encourage members to get involved and are very grateful for your ideas on how to do this. The idea of subcommittees—which was officially instigated in 2007—sprang from this desire to involve members without them having to necessarily take all the responsibility on their shoulders at the outset (as this seemed to be one of the main reasons why members didn't want to stand for election for official EC positions). Information about the subcommittees and how you can get involved can be found on the website. Also, thanks to an idea given by a survey respondent, we are planning to instigate 'meet the committee' lunchtime tables during the conference: one committee member will sit at each table and if members are interested in learning more about an EMWA function they can join that table for an informal chat. The following EC positions are coming up for election at the Ljubljana conference in May 2009: Public Relations Officer, Honorary Secretary, Treasurer, Education Officer, and Vice President. If you would like to nominate yourself or another member for any of these positions please contact me, head office, or another member of the EC. We will be delighted to hear from you!

Finally, thank you again to all of our members who took the time to complete this satisfaction survey. The results are extremely interesting and encouraging, and they are helping us to focus our efforts into making EMWA an even better and more professional association than it already is today.

Helen Baldwin

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On behalf of the EMWA Executive Committee*