

# Ms Survey Average speaks

In the January-February issue of *inCite*, as part of an overall review of publishing within the Association, we asked readers a few questions about themselves, and to present their views and opinions about the content, advertising potential and overall preferences about the newsmagazine. The survey was not only printed in the January-February issue, but was made available as an online survey through ALIANet, at <http://alia.org.au/publishing/incite/2004/survey/survey.form.html>.

We received 150 responses to our survey (just over three per cent of the potential population), and here is what it tells us, in summary:

Ms Survey Average is a personal member of ALIA, female, aged between 45 and 54, is a librarian working in the government sector, earns between \$41 000 and \$60 000, lives in Victoria, has been reading *inCite* for more than eleven years, shares her copy of *inCite* with nearly one and a half others, and reads articles of interest rather than browsing the document.

She believes that the magazine is informative, up-to-date, important, interesting, useful and serious, as well as valuable. Ms Average is less likely to regard it as timely or entertaining. She believes that it is very relevant to members, slightly less so to the sector, and less so again for advertising.

Professional development, research, and features are things she wants to see much more of, whilst she would also be happy to see more (in order) of the following: Workwatch, Events, Making news, Energise >> Enthuse >> Inspire, Your voice (letters), Webb's web, Groups, Ivan Trundle's column, Copyright, Frontline and Who's where. Ms Average would like to see less Directline.

Her most favourite columns are (in order): feature articles (by a country mile), research articles, Webb's web, Workwatch, professional development articles, Ivan Trundle's column, Making news, and Events. Further down the list of favourites are Your Voice, Frontline, Who's where, Energise >> Enthuse >> Inspire, and copyright articles.

When it comes to format of delivery and presentation, Ms Average agrees with over ninety per cent of respondents: deliver in print. A small handful of her associates (less than nine per cent) would be happy to read *inCite* as a printed copy and PDF (if under 5 megabytes in size).

Along with a third of respondents, Ms Average had plenty of positive things to say in the question, 'If I were editor...', and whilst happy about content, would like to see more pictures and colour.

Like many others, she expressed the view that the survey (which was enjoyable, easy to answer, and applauded for both layout and

content) was an exceptional opportunity to have her say, and she hopes that the results are constructive.

## A more complete analysis

The ratio of male to female respondents was not surprising, and reflects the level of feminisation of the profession. The spread across age groups also reflects the maturity of the workforce (an ageing workforce), and an active representation in the middle-aged sector (18-24: 4%, 25-34: 20%, 35-44: 27%, 45-54: 30%, 55-64: 15%, 65-74: 4%). Income proved equally interesting, with a less-than-even spread across the groupings (>\$21k: 15%, \$21-40k: 20%, \$41-60k: 43%, \$61-80k: 15%, \$81-100k: 3%, >\$100k: 4%). Institutional members accounted for 11 per cent of subscribers who responded, whilst personal members accounted for 87 per cent. Nearly half have been reading *inCite* for more than eleven years, whilst nineteen per cent have been reading for only one to three years.

What polarised opinion was the PDF question. We asked firstly where *inCite* was read — in print or on the web — to gauge a general idea. As expected, since the print-based option offers far-greater content, 88 per cent responded with 'in print', yet a surprising 9 per cent declared 'both print and web'. Interestingly, two per cent declared that they read it on the web only, whilst just under one per cent declared that they did not read *inCite* at all. The second component of this question highlighted a misunderstanding of the technology required to deliver a PDF document, with some respondents claiming that they would be happy to read a PDF document online, but only if it involved no downloading of content. Alas, it is impossible to offer content without the bytes being transferred to the end-user's desktop. We deliberately avoided the technological issues here, in order to gain an appreciation of user expectations. As it turns out, expectations exceed technological capabilities: if we were to offer a PDF-version of *inCite*, all ISP's accountants would be rubbing their hands with glee: and end-users without fast broadband would become very frustrated in waiting for the file to download.

Interestingly, the question of PDF delivery provoked a fear that perhaps *inCite* might revert to PDF delivery alone. Rest assured that this will not happen for a very long time, if at all: at least, not until every single subscriber wishes it to be so!

The 'If I were editor...' question elicited plenty of interesting (and useful) comment — and we shall be publishing more on this and other aspects of the survey, and what impact it will have, in the next issue. ■



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