



SIA Membership Survey Summary

— Dec. 1, 2018 —

Steven A. Walton and Kyle Parker-McGlynn

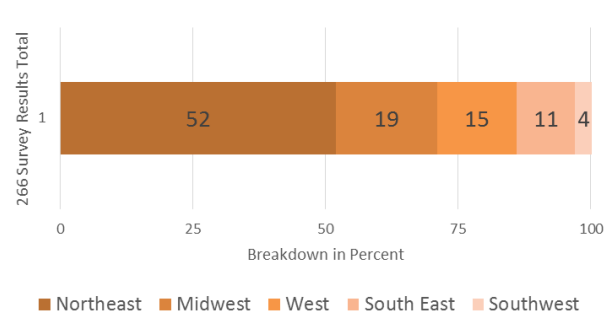
Herewith is presented the summarized findings of the SIA 2018 Membership Survey in four sections:

- I. Who We Are
- II. State of the Society
- III. Change Options Identified
- IV. The Road From Here

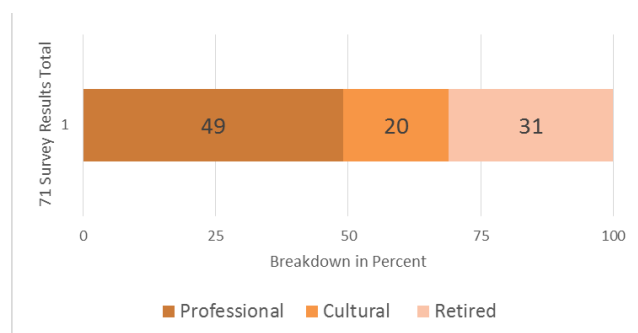
Further discussion of all these results will be taking place in upcoming SIA Board meetings and further information will be available at the SIA Annual Conference in Chicago in June 2019.

I. Who We Are

The first section of the survey looked at exactly where people who took the survey are from. Of the 280 people who took the survey 261 were from the US, 16 from Canada, 2 from the United Kingdom, and 1 from Australia. Of the 261 people from the US, 51% were from the Northeast, 19% from the Midwest, 15% from the West, 11% from the Southeast, and 4% from the Southwest.



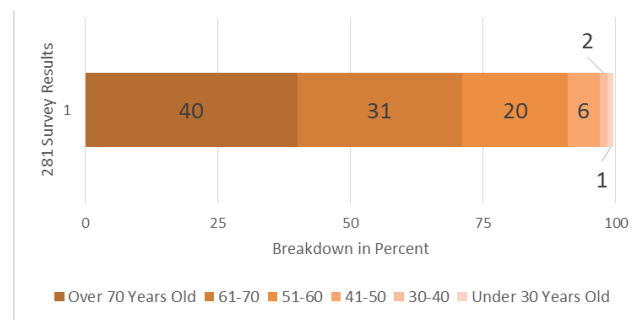
Survey respondents also come from a wide range of occupational backgrounds. We divided responses of all of the different occupations into three different categories: The largest category was *professional* with 49% of the total responses, a category that included engineer, contractor, and investor. 31% of respondents indicated that they were *retired*, but only some indicated their former profession (*e.g.*, mechanical engineer, professor, and hazardous waste manager), but this suggests that the professional category of SIA members is larger than responses would indicate. Clearly in any future survey, we need to capture the career field of those who are now in the retired category in this type of question. The remaining category



(20%) consisted of job backgrounds of those working in the *cultural* sector, such as historical curators, teachers, and authors.

One question that we asked in hopes of getting a view on the relative vocational vs. avocational nature of members—that is, those who do industrial archaeology as related to their employment, vs. those who see it as a passion or hobby outside their paid profession—produced interesting results. Of the 292 people who responded to the question which asked them to indicate the relative proportion of these two approaches to i.a. by dividing 100 points between the two using a slider, the results gave a mean of 70 for avocational and 30 for vocational. Thus, we could conclude that SIA membership is a bit over 2-to-1 avocational to vocational. But, that said, the other notable result is that the range for both vocational and avocational was 0-100. That is, we have members who see themselves as 100% one or the other, which we did not expect; we had assumed that most would identify with some mix of both. At any rate, this result, when combined with other attitudes towards the various activities and publications of SIA bears further consideration and investigation.

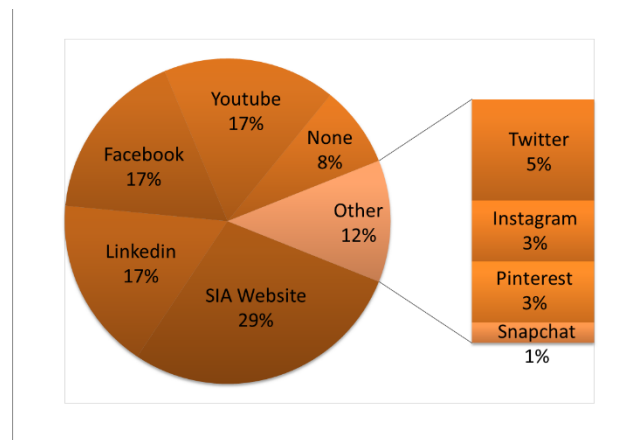
The age range of the respondents was not nearly as diverse as the occupation portion of the survey. 71% of the respondents report being older than 60, and *over 90%* are over 51. This issue of age will be brought up to a further degree later on.



The survey examined how often people participate in the annual meetings and fall tours, by asking how often they have gone to either in the last ten years. The survey results reflect that half of the respondents have participated in at least one of these events in the last 10 years. Of the total 292 respondents participating 38% have been to zero meetings or tours, 13% have been to only one, 23% have been to two or three, 20% have been to four to ten, and 7% have been to ten or more. These results show that 50% of the respondents are coming to at least 2 events in a decade.

Local chapter participation rates show similar results to annual meeting and fall tour participation. Here, 286 survey responses revealed that 40% are not active in a local chapter at all, 5% state have been part of a local chapter for less than a year, 14% have been active for 1–5 years, 13% for 6–10 years, and a full 28% have been participating as local chapter member for more than ten years. Thus, 55% of the respondents participating as a member of a local chapter for at least a year. On a related note, we learn from another question that 50% of members semi-regularly attend annual meetings, so it would appear that overall, about half of SIA members are active in the sense of participating with other members.

Because the world lives digital now, SIA needed to know what channels it should be active on to engage with the membership, so we asked what types of social media members are engaged with. The responses showed that they are evenly using the most common forms of social media, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn, all at a rate of 17% each. Perhaps more surprisingly, only 29% of respondents stated that they use the SIA website. It does, however, suggest that at least our efforts at Facebook are in the right direction, and perhaps an expanded presence on LinkedIn could be of use. Additionally, perhaps SIA-branded videos on an SIA channel on YouTube might be of some interest to pursue.

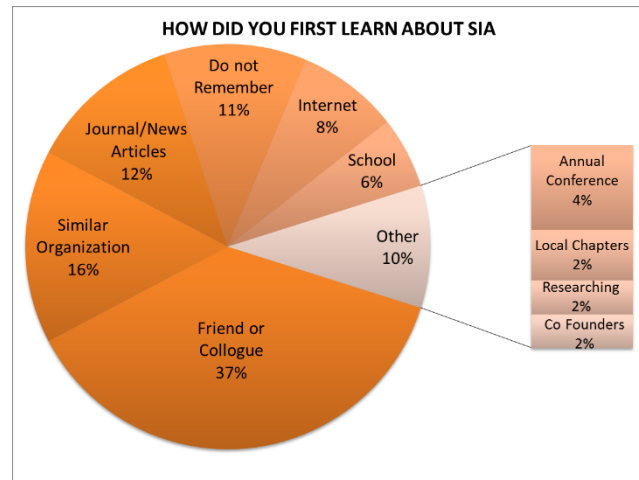


II. State of the Society

A large section of the survey asked questions on the current state of the society to determine how members feel that things are currently running in the SIA, and to determine what could be improved upon. The survey examines many different aspects of the SIA, such as the annual meetings, fall tours, the newsletters and journal, all to gain an overall understanding of how members view the SIA.

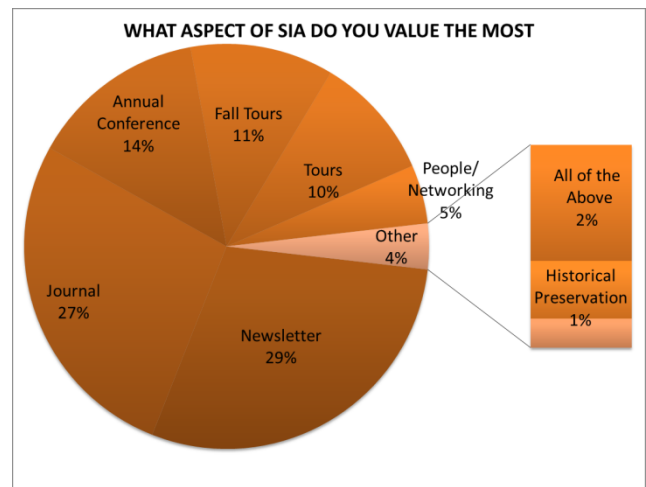
Overall, satisfaction with the society is high, though we should not merely rest upon our laurels in this regard (even if it is encouraging). Out of the 285 responses to the general satisfaction question, 88% (251 people), of the responses are satisfied with how SIA is currently run, 6% (18), are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with SIA, and 6% (18), are unsatisfied with SIA. Since this survey was anonymized, we can't know exactly what those people are unsatisfied with, though some of the other open-ended questions may begin to get at that question. A second overall question asked is would you recommend SIA to others, and here again, the results (n=287) were encouraging: 91% (261 people) said they would likely recommend SIA to others, 3% (10) would neither be likely or unlikely to recommend SIA to others, and 6% (16) report being unlikely to recommend SIA to others.

The overall high satisfaction of SIA members bodes well for recruiting new members. The reason why contented members are so important can be seen in the results of the question that asked, "How did you first learn about the SIA?" Of the 117 people who responded to this question, 37% (46 people) responded that it was from a friend or colleague who was either a member of SIA or had previous experience with SIA. The other ways people first became aware of SIA came from expected avenues such as being in a similar organization (16%, 19 people), from their

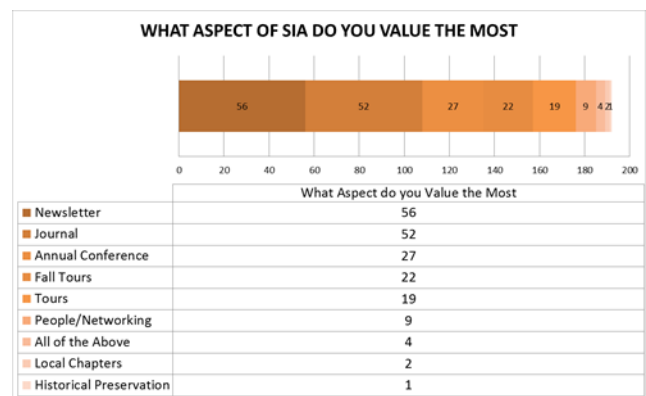


school (6%, 7 people), and via the Internet (8%, 10 people). This question demonstrates that currently the SIA's largest recruitment platform is by word of mouth.

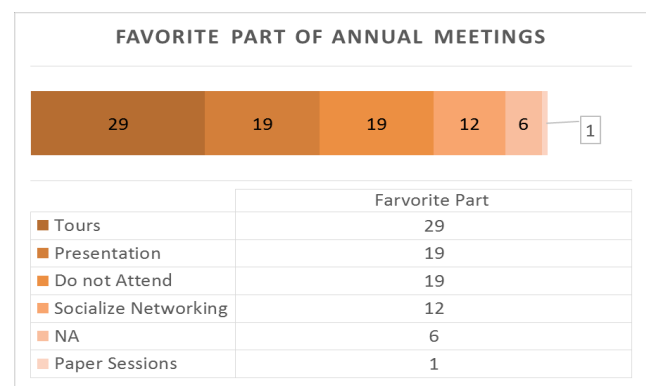
In asking "What is your favorite aspect of the SIA?", we find that of the 137 respondents, 29% (56 people) said their favorite part was the *SIA Newsletter*, 27% (52) said the *IA* journal, 14% (27) said the annual conference, 11% (21) said it was the fall tours, 10% (20 people) said it was the tours in general (meaning either tours at the conference or fall tours), and 5% (9) said it was the socializing and networking. This relatively even distribution does not strongly favor one particular area over the others, suggesting that the distribution reflects more about people's preferences, or at least that there is no specific aspect of SIA that is particularly lacking compared to the others.



Some questions had very low response rates, and we assume it was because if respondents did not participate in the feature being asked about (e.g., the fall tour or the conference), they mostly passed over the question without entering a response. We asked what feature of the annual meeting people most liked and a total of 86 people responded: 34% (29 people) indicated they most liked the tours, 24% (20) said presentations [one person singled out the paper sessions, but we assume that this refers to the presentations], and 14% (12) said it was socializing and networking (7% [6 people] said "Not Applicable" and 22% (19) indicated they do not attend].



A similar question was also asked about fall tours, and only 33 people responded to this question. 45% (15 people) indicated that they most liked being able to experience firsthand how industries work, 40% (13) value getting to go places that they would otherwise never get to see, and 15% (5) most like the ability to experience the past.

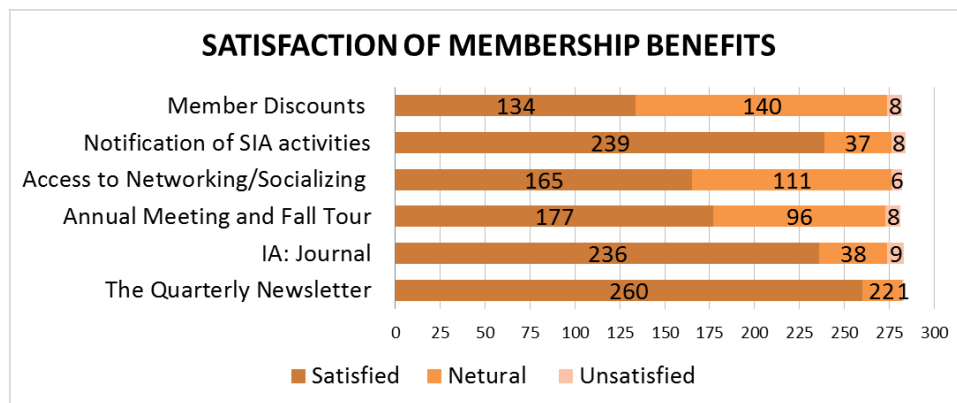
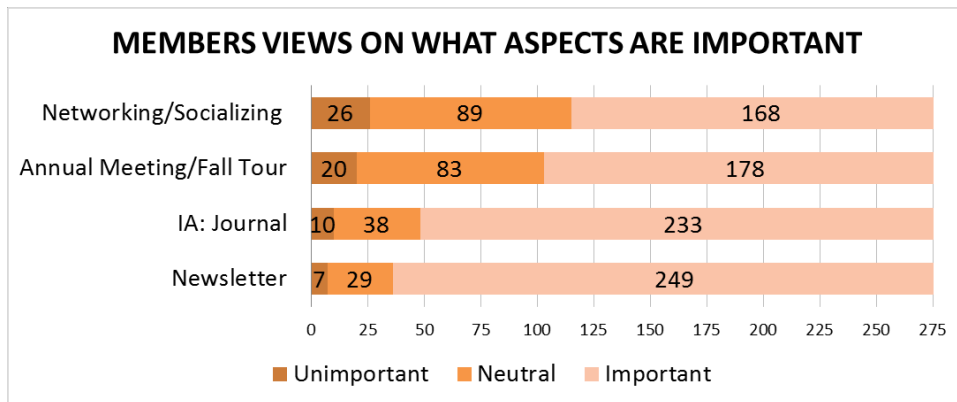


Respondents were asked to rate the 5 stated SIA membership benefits:

1. The quarterly *SIA Newsletter*, containing current news and announcements, listings of recent publications of interest, and a calendar of activities.
2. *IA*, *The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archeology*, as published. *IA* is the principal forum for the publication of current research in industrial archeology. Each issue of this peer reviewed journal contains scholarly articles, essays and book reviews.
3. Notification by mail of upcoming conferences and tours.

4. Discounts on conference and tour registration fees and SIA publications.
5. Access to a network of informed colleagues and the opportunity to share your interests with others from around the world.

The results are as follows. In grouping the responses into three groups, with “important” and “very important” on one, “neutral” by itself, and “unimportant” and “very unimportant” as a third. The *SIA Newsletter* had the highest importance percentage with 87% (249 people) stating that it was important, 82% (233) said the *IA* journal was important, 63% (178) said that the annual meeting/fall tour was important, and 59% (168), said that network and socializing was considered important. These results show that the newsletter and journal are in a category by themselves as important features of the society.



As a related question, we asked whether people are satisfied with their current membership benefits. The *SIA Newsletter* has the highest important vs unimportant ratio with 92% (260 people) saying they were satisfied with it and 83% (236) said they were satisfied with the *IA* journal. 84% (239) said they were satisfied with the notifications of SIA activities, but then the satisfaction rates dropped to middling proportions: 63% (177) said they were satisfied with the annual meeting and fall tour, 59% (165) said they were satisfied with access to networking/socializing, and 48% (134) said they were satisfied with the member discounts.

The overall satisfaction with SIA does seem to be high, though it is clear that there’re areas where some dissatisfaction exists. No specific area of the society stands out as immediately needing attention, the weather next section will indicate, members to have suggestions on what could be changed for the better.

III. Change Options Identified

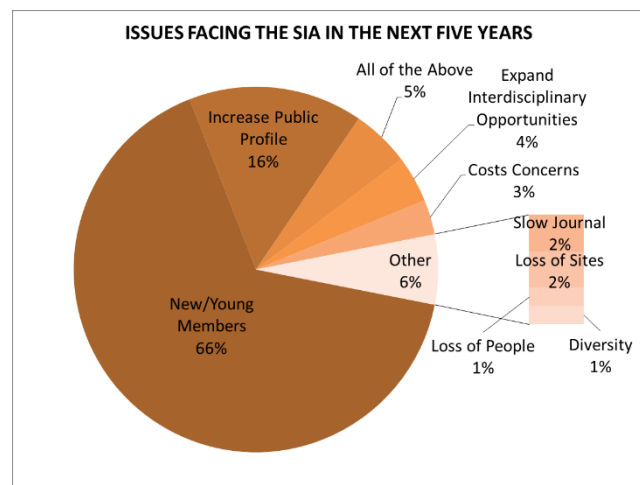
Because we are interested in serving the membership's needs, we needed to know their perceptions of, and suggestions of what needed to change. The most direct question in this section simply asked "What is the most important thing SIA needs to change?" As this was an open-ended response, the response rate was lower (only 104 responses, and of these, 33 responses said that nothing needed changing), so we can perhaps take that as a good sign that there are no glaring problems if very nearly 75% of respondents did not take the opportunity to identify changes. But that also means that just over 25% of people felt that there was room for change.

Of the 71 responses that suggested change, the largest area of concern was the perennial anxiety that SIA needed younger/new member (28%, 20 people). A dozen people (17%) said that regional representation needs to be included in the decision making, 11 people (16%) said that better visibility and outreach programs/projects were needed to make people aware of SIA, 9 people (13%) said that new ideas were needed, 8 people (11%) that the journal needed improvement, and 5 people (7%) said that the SIA needed to reduce costs. The remaining 8% (7 people), said that we need to "stay relevant", have better meetings, and improve tours. These are of course all legitimate concerns, though in some cases it is difficult to know how we would actually affect change to address them.

Near-term issues

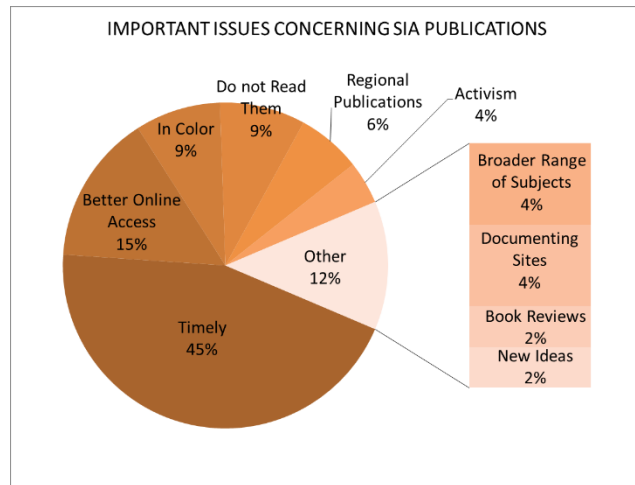
When asked about the next five years, responses largely reflect most of the same concerns that were brought up in the general question. Of the 97 responses, 66% (64 people) said that they considered the ageing membership with no new members coming in to be an issue—an issue very clearly and repeatedly identified throughout this survey—and 16% (15 people) said that we need to be increasing our public appearance (we take that to mean the overall visibility of SIA). Of the remaining responses, small groups of people lit on similar themes:

aging membership (5% n=5), needing to increase public awareness (5%, n=5), expanding interdisciplinary opportunities between similar interests between academic organizations (4%, n=4), cost concerns (3%, n=3; though unclear whether referring to the membership dues of tour/conference costs). The remaining 6% (6 people), listed concerns such as slow journal updates, loss of sites, loss of people, and diversity.



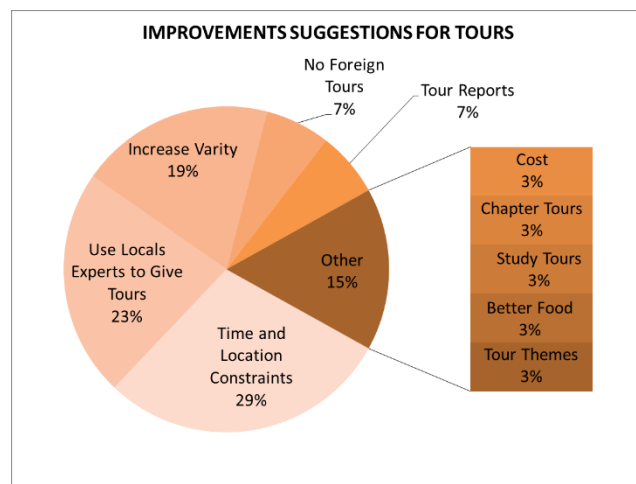
Publications

One question asked what the most important thing is that needs to be addressed with respect to our publications, and of the 75 responses, 37% (28 people) said there were no issues or concerns. The remaining 63% (47) responses were broken down into a pie graph at the right: 45% (21), said timely release of the publications was an issue they would like addressed, 15% (7) said that better online access of the articles and journals was an issue, 9% (4) said that they would like to see the journal in color, 9% (4) said that they do not read them (we are not sure how that is an issue that we can address in the publications), 6% (3) said that they would like better regional representation, and 4% (2) that activism or engaging in the preservation of sites was an issue. The remaining 12% (6 people) had concerns on such things as broader range of subjects, allowing archaeological documenting of site reports to be published, shorter book reviews, and new ideas that will attract younger people. So in this question we have a clear mandate to ensure timely release of our publications (definitely noted) and expanding access to them online (currently under investigation).



Tours

Another question specifically asked for some ways that tours could be improved. Out of the 39 responses, 21% (8 people) said they were fine as is, the remaining 61% (31) was broken down into a graph as follows: 29% (9) said that scheduling and location constraints could be improved (though without indicating what that necessarily entailed), 23% (7) said that the tours could be improved by using local experts to help give the tours, 19% (6) said that increasing the *types* of tours given would improve them, and 7% (2) each said that they would like to see foreign tours and that they would like to see tour descriptions created for the tours they cannot go on so they can at least get an essence of what people went and saw (It is unclear how the *SIA Newsletters* which have tour reviews are not



Example Suggestions for Tours

Change Date	4
Cost	3
Less Museums	3
Chairs	3
Local Representation in Decision Making	3
Increase Tour Flexibility	2
Attracting New Members	2
Improve Access Tours	1
Bridge Topics	1
Better Networking abilities online Directory	1
Dinner with Guest Speaker	1
Dump Modern Technology tours	1
Good Quality tours	1
Relevant Papers	1
Up Grade Printed Introduction	1

fulfilling this last suggestion, but we will consider other ways to disseminate information about the tours after they happen). The last 15% of these response were all single suggestions on such things as reducing cost of tours, regional chapter tours, bringing back study tours, better food after the tours, and general themes for all of the tours in one area (which we presume means to minimize travel time between sites).

We also asked for suggestions on how annual meetings can be improved, and 28 people provided some ideas: 4 people said that they would like to change the date, and a number suggested that it should be the weekend *before* Memorial Day to reduce cost and summer competition, 3 people would like to see reduced costs for the annual meeting (with one suggestion to find less expensive hotel alternatives for attendees), 2 people suggested increasing the scheduling flexibility for the tours (presumably so one could see more things), and 3 people requested that regional representation should be more included in the decision making process for annual meetings. With regard to the on-the-ground aspects of the meetings, 3 people requested more tours and fewer museums (that they could go to anytime), 3 people simply responded 'chairs', which we take to be a comment on the session chairs on Saturday, and 2 people suggested findings ways to bring in new people with the annual meetings. There were also 8 single response worth enumerating: have tours at places that public access would be otherwise difficult, "bridge topic" (presumably meaning, have bridge tours), create a better online directory of SIA members and their affiliations for networking purposes, have a guest speaker during dinner, focus more on archaeology and stop having modern technology tours, give better quality tours in general, more relevant papers, and "upgrade" the tour guides and introductions.

The responses in this section asking for suggestions on change were, as you can see, quite diverse yet all understandable, so in many cases certainly already on the radar of the conference and tour planners, but also perennial and somewhat intractable problems. Respondents will be presumably pleased to know that many of these concerns are regularly voiced in planning sessions, but also disappointed to know that in general we've been unable to crack some of the longer standing ones (for example, access to desirable sites and the realities of cost when conferences/tours are in a major city). But armed with the suggestions, the board of the conference planners will endeavor to improve future events.

IV. The Road From Here

This membership survey has both confirmed a number of suppositions, based upon anecdotal observations and stray comments made here and there, that the SIA Board has had over the years but it also brought to light some features of the society that we were not fully aware of. In addition, a number of respondents made some interesting and valuable suggestions that we will try to act upon for the long-term health of the society.

From a very simple pragmatic point of view, the economics of the society are stable, and the annual conferences and fall tours typically break even or return a very small surplus to the society. Given the potential of a shrinking membership and the reality of increased publication and especially postage costs, it is possible that the society might need to raise dues at some time in the future (we are not there yet), but our membership is aware of the issue and willing to consider dues increases to make the books

balance. 86.2% of respondents said that they consider the SIA annual membership dues “value for money” and another 12% answered “maybe” to this question. This leaves only 1.77% (5 respondents) who felt that the dues were not value for money. Just under 20% of the membership indicated that they would not be willing to pay more for an annual membership (currently at \$50 for a regular, \$55 for a joint, or \$25 for a student membership), 11% would be willing to pay \$55, 33% willing to pay \$60, another 10% \$65, and a total of 28.5% would be willing to pay \$70 or more. So, while this is clearly not a mandate for a due increase, 80% of respondents are open to the possibility that it may need to happen.¹

With regard to our publications, we received some good feedback on both the *SIAN* and *IA*, though answers were “uniformly uniform” in that there are those who say change, those who say don’t change, and those who are not concerned with it either way. The proposition of taking the *SIAN* to digital only was a slightly losing proposition, with 45% saying “no” please do not, 32% saying “yes” that would be OK, and 29% saying “maybe”. With regard to the question of whether we should move toward color photographs in *IA*, there was a much stronger positive response (nearly 5-to-1 “yes”: 43% vs. 9%), but still 48% saying “maybe” (which suggests to us that we worded the question poorly, and people were not sure whether it was an all-or-nothing proposition). We will look into the possibility, which will likely hinge on whether the increased printing costs would be considered worth the addition of color. Others have expressed that while color may be useful in some cases (maps and diagrams), black and white photography is both an aesthetic and a HAER standard, and so should be retained.

In the survey we asked a question about what could be changed for the annual conference, and the range of answers there were quite diverse. No one theme stood out, which we take as a reasonably good sign, in that there is no single sticking point. Some of the requests we are well aware of and wholeheartedly agree with, such as the request for fewer museum visits. Unfortunately, access to working process tours or to closed facilities get harder and harder without a personal connection on the ground. Public relations officials find it just simpler to say no, citing safety and insurance, even if, if we did know someone in the plant, we might easily gain access. Every contact in the city when a tour/conference is announced could help the local organizing committee secure more of these types of sites.

Requests to shift the date of the conference were not specific as to when to shift it to, though a few mentioned before Memorial Day. The annual conference has traditionally been the weekend after Memorial Day. Obviously Memorial Day weekend is not a viable option (not least for member travel conflicts and increased hotel costs, but also because many plants may be on reduced shifts or closed on that weekend), and in most cases we need to find a weekend where the host city is not already booked with some other large conference(s), which drive up the cost and limit hotel availability. But if the host city or a delegation of the membership has an alternate time of year to have the conference, please let the SIA Board know.

On the matter of cost, we do acknowledge that 10% of respondents noted that conference costs were too high, and on that all we can say is that this is perennially on our mind. SIA rarely makes any profit

¹ Note that we do not know what membership level the respondents to this question are paying now, so some who are OK with higher dues may already be contributing at higher-than-required rates, and those opposed to any increase may be in the student or retired category.

on these conferences, and we set the cost so that with the realistic minimum number of attendees, we will at least not lose money. But the reality is that hotel fees, food costs, and especially transportation costs continue to increase.

Nearly a third of responses to this question were unclassifiable with the others and offer dozens of individual suggestions, many of which were interesting and will trigger some discussion of how to do things better. Some we admit are great ideas, but not within SIA's capabilities ("Have a location in each state, where industrial artifacts can be preserved"), though some are always the goal and we are sorry that the respondents did not feel that it was the case ("stay relevant!!"). Some unfortunately highlight but also contribute to known problems, as in the case of one respondent who said that the most important thing for SIA to change was "The backlog in the journal issues. It's keeping me from submitting manuscripts to the journal"—But it is exactly the low submission rate of articles that is not letting us produce more issues per year to catch up! Or one respondent who put it quite succinctly:

The model of membership-based organizations has been placed under strain. Avocational members, in particular, can satisfy their curiosity and need to affiliate for free simply by surfing the Web. SIA's membership model is becoming an anachronism. I don't have an answer as almost every cultural/historical organization to which I belong is seeing the same decline. I don't think we've hit on the answer yet.

Going forward we do hope to reach out to members, whether or not they attend annual conferences or fall tours, to assist with various tasks of the society. Just under 15% of respondents said that they would be willing to serve, and another 43% said "maybe", presumably if the task was aligned with their interest and the burden not too great. We will likely reach out for volunteers as tasks arise.

Appendix: Survey Methodology

The online survey was conducted in May–July 2018 using the Qualtrics software system, administered by Junhong Min, Associate Professor of Marketing at Michigan Tech. All SIA members were sent an email link to the survey and were informed of it in the spring 2018 SIA Newsletter. A follow-up reminder was sent mid-May 2018. In all, 285 members responded, out of a current membership of approximately 985, for a roughly 29% yield rate.

Initial results of the first c.160 respondents were presented at the SIA annual conference in Richmond VA in an informal manner (posted on one of the display tables on Saturday), and feedback was muted, which we interpret as a "wait-and-see" attitude. Once the survey closed in July, the raw data was sent from the Qualtrics in early August, but as the SIA Exec. Sec. was on leave in the UK, it took until November for Walton and Parker-McGlynn to begin to consolidate and code the data into a digestible form.

Parker-McGlynn classified the open-ended responses and generated the graphs from the numerical counts. He also did the initial draft of the text in sections I-III. Walton then synthesized and completed the summary.

Questions, concerns, and inquiries to
Steven A. Walton, SIA Exec. Secretary
Dept. of Social Sciences, Michigan Tech

sawalton@mtu.edu