



2012 Online member's survey: Brief report of findings

Olly Robinson

In June of this year we conducted an online survey of our members. 394 persons kindly responded to our request to participate. With this achieved sample size, we can be confident that the findings are representative of the Network membership. The key headlines from the study are presented here.

The first questions we asked were about the members themselves. The split of males to females in the sample was 49% to 51%. The age range of the sample included adults of all ages, with a clear central tendency in the 50 – 70 age range. It seems that interest in the activities of the Network peaks between these ages. With regard to the age profile of our members, we intend to maximise our appeal to all age groups in the future, while continuing to appeal to our core 'age constituency'.

Respondents showed a varied occupational profile: 25% of respondents were either medical doctors or university academics, 7% were engineers or applied scientists while a further 15% were working a branch of psychotherapy or coaching. 9% were freelance writers/thinkers, 8% were complementary therapists, and 10% worked in business in some capacity.

Respondents were asked which of three labels describes them best with regards to spirituality and religion. 76%, chose 'spiritual but not religious'. 21% responded 'spiritual and religious', and only 2% regarded themselves and neither. The ratio of responses to this question is shown in Figure 1.

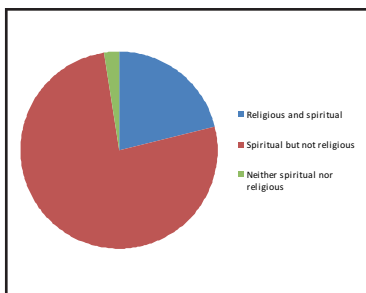


Figure 1: Proportion of respondents who rated themselves religious and/or spiritual

We also asked more specific questions about members' worldviews. We found out that 95% agree that there is a greater reality beyond the physical universe, 98% agree that there are ineffable forms of knowing that can't be captured in words or numbers, 68% believe that individual consciousness exists be-

yond physical death and 97% believe that humans have a calling or purpose that transcends natural selection and physical evolution.

Following these questions about personal details and worldview, we asked respondents to rate the Network Review, in terms of format/layout and content. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. For the format/layout, 60% described it as excellent or very good, 36% rated it as good, 4% rated it as quite good and less than 0.5% rated it as poor. For content, 68% rated it as excellent or very good, 29% as good, 1.2% as quite good and 1% as poor. The parts of the Network Review that were reported as most likely to be read every issue were the articles and book reviews, followed by the recent science update and the message from the chair. Meeting reports were the least likely to be read every issue, but 71% still stated that they read them either every issue or some issues.

With regards to the newsletter, 73% read it either every month or every other month. The different functions of the website are used to varying degrees. The majority of respondents had not used the online directory of members in the past year, which

shows that there is scope for increasing the attractiveness of this facility. 70% said that they would maybe or definitely be interested in developing the online directory so that it was more like a social networking site.

With regards to recordings of conferences that we hold online, 13% stated that they prefer audio, while 42% stated that they would prefer video. In regard to this, it is our express intention to develop the capacity of our website to be able to hold videos of past conference talks and to develop a video library in the near future. Furthermore, almost 90% described an interest in being able to view lectures live over the web in the future. We hope to be able to develop this 'webcast' capacity soon too.

Finally, we asked which topics you would be most interested in attending conferences on. The percentages of responses are shown in Figure 2. There is clearly a wide diversity of topic interests within the SMN – the top two scoring topics were near death experiences/survival of consciousness, and meditation/mysticism.

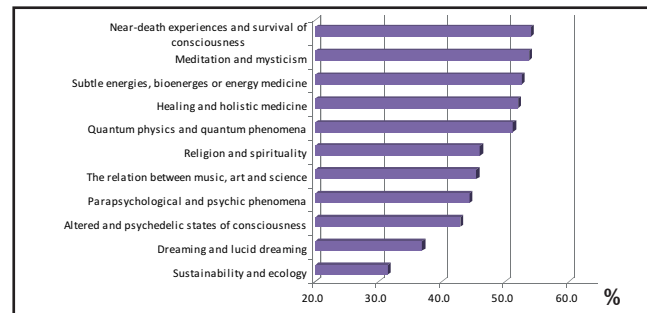


Figure 2. Frequencies of category responses to the question 'Which topics would you be most likely to attend a conference on?'

In summary, this was the first online survey we conducted of our members, and considering the good response rate, the ease of collating the data, and the utility of the findings in helping us to develop the Network in the future, such member surveys are likely to become a regular fixture. Thanks again to those who participated.

POSTSCRIPT FROM CHAIR

Understanding the interests and requirements of our members is crucial, so I am delighted at the large response to the recent online survey, the results of which are summarized above and given in more detail on our website. Nearly a third of the membership replied and this has provided a wealth of information which will help us in planning our future strategies. The Board needs to be aware of views (both positive and negative) on how the SMN is run and I want to assure members that we are listening. Although the invitation to complete the survey ostensibly came from me, Olly did nearly all the work and I would like to thank him for all his efforts in both preparing the questions and analysing the answers. I would also like to thank Marilyn Monk, who first urged us to carry out this exercise. The last survey was eight years ago and reported by John Clarke in the Winter 2005 Review but that was not online and took much longer.

Bernard Carr