EAHIL Survey of European Health Information Professionals

The EAHIL Survey of European Health Information Professionals has now been completed and the response has been overwhelming. A total of 346 health information professionals completed the survey. It is very encouraging that we reached both EAHIL members (111) and non-EAHIL members (168). 67 respondents skipped the question and did not state if they are a member or not.

Some of the questions covered many points and to respond to these took some time and thought. One of these multiple questions was question no 1: “Please indicate the primary areas in which you and/or your staff need continuing education”. Only three respondents skipped this question. The five most requested continuing education courses were:

- Evidence-based librarianship 40.2 % (138)
- Evidence-base health care 39.9 % (137)
- User education 37% (127)
- Licensing electronic information resources 35.6 % (122)
- Copyright 32.1 % (110)

It is evident that we wish to have a more scientific approach to librarianship. User education (information literacy) and access to electronic resources (the electronic library) are also important professional issues.

During the EAHIL council focus group session at the EAHIL workshop in Oslo 2003, 25 important issues facing health science librarianship were identified. The respondents were requested to rank these issues from 1-5 where 1 was “Unimportant” and 5 “Most Important”. We received 296 replies to these points. Only 50 respondents skipped this question. The most important issues which the respondents ranked as a 5 (“Most important”) were:

- Continuing professional development 46 % (134)
- Electronic resources – licensing/negotiation issues 44 % (127)
- Instruction – teaching adult end-users 39 % (113)
- Electronic resources document delivery 38 % (109)
- Evidence base health care – support of 37 % (107)

The most important issues which the respondents ranked as a 4 (“Quite important”) or a 5 (“Most important”) were:

- Continuing professional development 87 % (254)
- Electronic resources – licensing/negotiation issues 83 % (240)
• Electronic resources document delivery 83 % (237)
• Instruction – teaching adult end-users 79 % (230)
• Library users’ expectations – changing and increasing demand 79 % (227)

Unimportant issues which very few ranked as 4 (“Quite important”) or a 5 (“Most important”) were:

• Isolation – geographic 16 % (44)
• Alternative health – providing information and services 19 % (52)
• Language barriers – national and international information delivery 22 % (61)
• Consumer health information – providing information and services 37 % (104)
• Information technology departments communication and liaison issues 47 % (160)

A total of 219 respondents identified the three top issues on which EAHIL, as an association, should concentrate its attention and as many as 164 respondents had suggestions as to what EAHIL should do on these three issues. This is very valuable information for EAHIL in forming the future strategy for the Association.

EAHIL newsletter

Only 50.5 % (147) of the respondents see issues of EAHIL newsletter and 49.5 % (144) do not see issues of EAHIL newsletter.

Of the 147 respondents who read the newsletter 70.1 % (101) supported ending the print version of EAHIL newsletter if it were available electronically in an easily printable format. 18.1 % (26) disagreed, 8.3 % (12) had no opinion and 8 skipped the question. Of the 144 respondents who today do not read the newsletter 62.9 % (90) supported ending the print version of EAHIL newsletter if it were available electronically in an easily printable format. 9.8 % (14) disagreed, 25.9 % (37) had no opinion and 3 skipped the question.

Of the 147 respondents who read the newsletter 57.2 % (83) thought that EAHIL newsletter should be more oriented towards scientific aspects of medical librarianship and information sciences. 22.8 % (33) disagreed, 16.6 % (18) had no opinion and 13 skipped the question. Of the 144 respondents who today do not read the newsletter 31.9 % (46) thought that EAHIL newsletter should be more oriented towards scientific aspects of medical librarianship and information sciences. 22.2 % (32) disagreed, 41.7 % (60) had no opinion and 6 skipped the question.

EAHIL web

21.7 % (63) visit EAHIL website at least once a month and 53.8 % (156) visit EAHIL website seldom. Those who visited EAHIL website look for Conference/workshop information 62.4 % (156), EAHIL newsletter 31.2 % (78) or information about EAHIL 30.4 % (76)
Virtual EAHIL
63 EAHIL members had comments on the possibility of EAHIL’s becoming an entirely web-based organization with no annual subscription fee, publishing the Newsletter online and offering a range of web-based services. 48 EAHIL members skipped this question. Comments varied from “This would be excellent” to “Do not agree with this at all”. 33 EAHIL members had comments that were in favour of the proposal of a virtual EAHIL and 29 EAHIL members had comments that were not in favour of this proposal.

78 non-EAHIL members had comments on the virtual EAHIL. Comments varied from “This is an excellent idea” to “It’s a horrific idea…”. 68 non-EAHIL members agreed with the proposal and 10 non-EAHIL members disagreed.

91.7 % (99) of the EAHIL members said that they would still continue to be a member even if EAHIL abolished the membership fee. 8.3 % (9) answered “don’t know” and 0 % answered “no”.

69 % (107) of the non-EAHIL members said they would become a member if EAHIL abolished the annual membership fee, 27.1 % (42) said they did not know and 2.6 % (4) said they would not become members.

Accreditation system
64.5 % (178) would find it useful if EAHIL developed an effective and credible system of accrediting members’ experience and qualifications in health information. 24.3 % (67) do not know and 8.3 % (23) replied that they would not find it useful.

Countries
The number of respondents from different countries in alphabetical order:
Austria 2, Australia 1, Bangladesh 1, Belgium 3, Croatia 1, Czech Republic 2, Denmark 10, Estonia 1, Germany 9, Greece 1, Finland 12, France 5, Hungary 13, Iceland 2, Ireland 20, Italy 24, the Netherlands 25, Norway 21, Peru 1, Poland 7, Slovenia 3, Spain 12, Sweden 13, Switzerland 6, United Kingdom 72, U.S.A 5.

The results of the EAHIL survey and the Canadian survey will be presented at a parallel scientific session in Santander. The EAHIL survey will also be presented in an abbreviated version during the general assembly.

When you judge the result of the survey you must keep in mind that the result only reflects the opinions of those who actually answered. In spite of that the survey has given EAHIL valuable input for forming the future of EAHIL and a starting point for further discussion. The survey will not decide the future of EAHIL. The general assembly will decide the future of EAHIL. Please attend the general assembly on Friday 24 September, 17.00-18.30 in Santander.

I would like to thank all EAHIL members and non-EAHIL members who took the time to respond to the survey.