Report on the 2006 ALA Member Communications Study

Executive Summary

The American Library Association (ALA) requested the Allegheny Marketing Group (AMG) to conduct an online survey with its members to identify areas where communication can be improved, and note any changes from the 2004 study.

- A total of 2,226 members completed the survey, representing a return rate of 14%. The 2,226 respondents represent a statistically reliable sample of the member population.
- Seventy-six percent (76%) of the respondents were regular members with an average tenure of 13 years with ALA. Twenty-two percent (22%) have been with ALA for over 20 years.
- Thirty-three percent (33%) of the members belong to more than one Division.
- Like most large associations, not all members are equally active in their association and many join to either support the industry or practice and/or obtain the industry publications. ALA is similar, with 22% of the respondents participating in or using ALA programs at least once a month.
- Members are using the website more than they did in 2004 and member satisfaction with the website has increased 28% from the 2004 survey. Despite this, there are still improvements that ALA can make. Members are having trouble with navigation on the website and this was the number one area where members would like to see improvements made.
- Members are sending fewer e-mail messages to ALA and are calling the 800 number less frequently than in 2004.

Frequency Accessing ALA Website	2004	2006
• At least weekly	24%	32%
• Monthly	45%	44%
• Several times per year	29%	23%
• Never use	2%	1%

Frequency of Using 800-Number	2004	2006
• At least monthly	4%	4%
• Quarterly	16%	8%
• Annually	38%	28%
• Never use	42%	60%

Frequency of Sending Emails	2004	2006
• At least monthly	11%	8%
• Quarterly	23%	18%
• Annually	44%	41%
• Never use	22%	33%

Purpose of Study

To assist the American Library Association (ALA) in identifying areas in their communications with members where improvements can be made (if any are needed) and to note any key changes since the 2004 study.

Objectives

- Determine the methods ALA uses to communicate with ALA members and the methods members use to communicate with ALA.
- Determine the frequency of communication with members relative to the method of communication.
- Access the response time it takes ALA to provide members with the information requested.
- Obtain members' satisfaction level with the overall speed and accuracy of communications.
- Determine the frequency of access to ALA's website.
- Obtain members' opinions regarding ALA's website.
- Obtain suggestions from members on ways to improve communications.
- To note any changes in the means of communication since the 2004 study.

Survey Methodology

A total of 15,420 email invitations were transmitted to ALA members. The table below shows the emails sent, the questionnaires returned, and the return rate by ALA Division.

Member Segment By Division	Emails Sent	Questionnaires Returned	% Returns
AASL	1,592	204	13%
ACRL	1,697	326	19%
ALCTS	832	157	19%
ALSC	919	153	17%
ALTA	470	54	11%
ASCLA	552	127	23%
LAMA	732	121	17%
LITA	863	109	13%
PLA	1,731	194	11%
RUSA	864	146	17%
YALSA	906	99	11%
Non-Divisional	4,262	536	13%
TOTAL:	15,420	2,226	14%

Survey Findings

1. The following chart indicates how members communicate with ALA. In the 2004 survey, the most frequently mentioned methods were e-mail, phone, regular mail and the website.
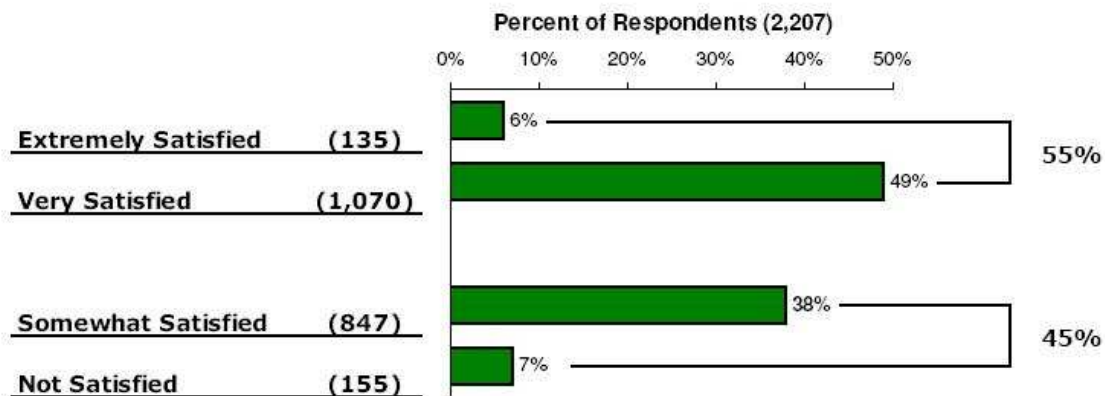

When you have questions or need information about ALA or ALA's services, how do you currently communicate with ALA?

Method of Communicating With ALA		Percent of Respondents (2,215)
Website	(1,810)	82%
Email	(1,083)	49%
Phone	(757)	34%
Regular Mail	(69)	3%
Fax	(47)	2%
Other*	(46)	2%
Don't Know/Refused	(11)	

Typical Member Communications With ALA 1.7 Different Ways

*Other includes:

Colleagues	(5)	<1%
The Library	(3)	<1%
Listserves	(2)	<1%
Paper handbooks	(2)	<1%
In person	(2)	<1%
Conferences	(1)	<1%
Google	(1)	<1%
Have never communicated	(30)	1%
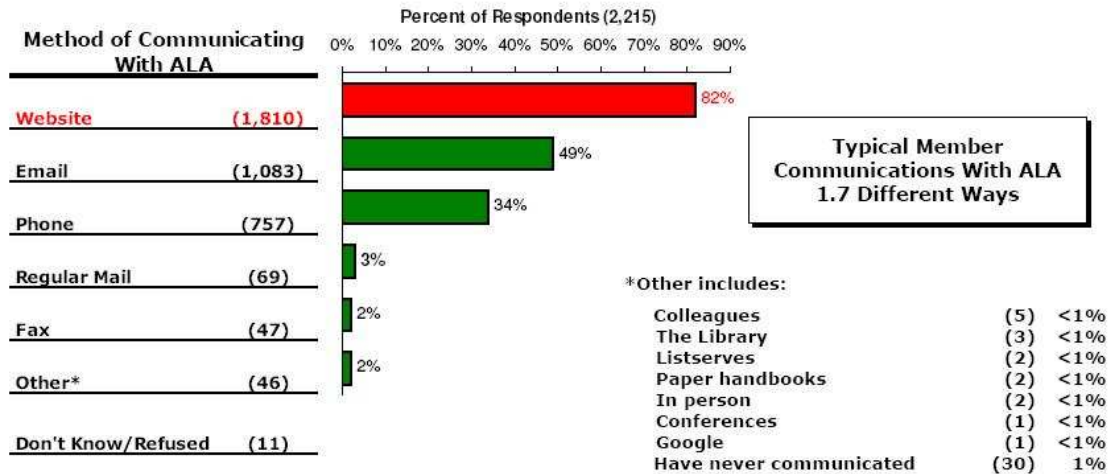
2. The following chart indicates member satisfaction with the ALA website. Satisfaction with the website has gone up 28% from the 2004 survey, but 45% of members are only somewhat or not satisfied.

Overall, how satisfied are you with ALA's website?

Percent of Respondents (2,207)

Extremely Satisfied	(135)	6%
Very Satisfied	(1,070)	49%
		55%
Somewhat Satisfied	(847)	38%
Not Satisfied	(155)	7%
		45%

3. What members look for on the ALA website. In the 2004 survey, the top five web functions were conferences, products/publications, news, issues and advocacy and membership.

For which of the following functions do you use the ALA website?

Percent of Respondents (2,203)

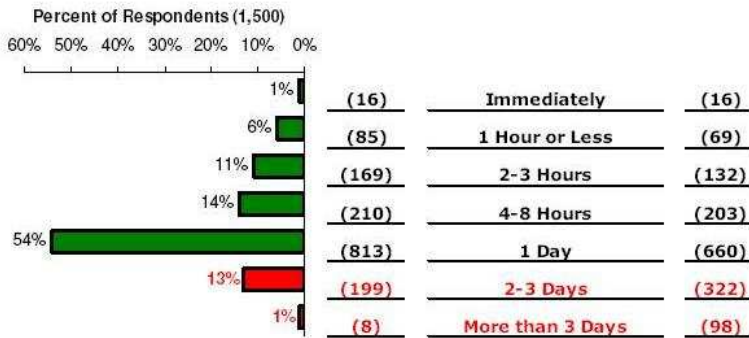| Website Functions		Percent
Conferences	(1,672)	76%
Membership	(1,121)	51%
News	(1,083)	49%
ALA Division Web Pages	(1,082)	49%
Products/Publications	(954)	43%
Issues & Advocacy	(813)	37%
Professional Tools	(723)	33%
American Libraries Online	(653)	30%
Continuing Education for professional development	(641)	29%
Education/Careers	(638)	29%
Job search/Job list	(595)	27%
Awards/Scholarships	(543)	25%
Links included in American Libraries	(448)	20%
Blogs, Wiki's & RSS Feeds	(209)	10%
ALA Office Web Pages	(142)	6%
Fundraising	(39)	2%
Others	(67)	3%
Not Answered	(4)	

Typical Member Uses ALA Website for 5.2 Different Functions
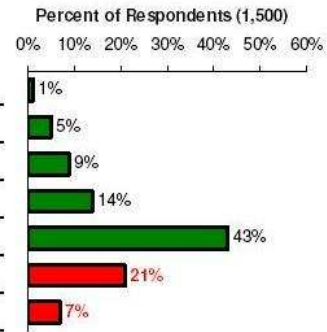
4. Response time to members' e-mail messages. 86% of respondents expect a response within one day. ALA responds to e-mail messages in one day 72% of the time. This is 4% improvement over the 2004 survey.

When you email someone at ALA, how long should it take to receive a response back?

Percent of Respondents (1,500)

How long does it take ALA to respond to your emails and answer your questions?

Percent of Respondents (1,500)

Should %			Does %
1%	(16)	Immediately	(16)	1%
6%	(85)	1 Hour or Less	(69)	5%
11%	(169)	2-3 Hours	(132)	9%
14%	(210)	4-8 Hours	(203)	14%
54%	(813)	1 Day	(660)	43%
13%	(199)	2-3 Days	(322)	21%
1%	(8)	More than 3 Days	(98)	7%

5. Response time to members' voice mail messages. 94% of respondents feel it should take one day or less to receive a response. ALA responds to voice mail messages in one day or less –83% of the time. This is the same as the 2004 performance.
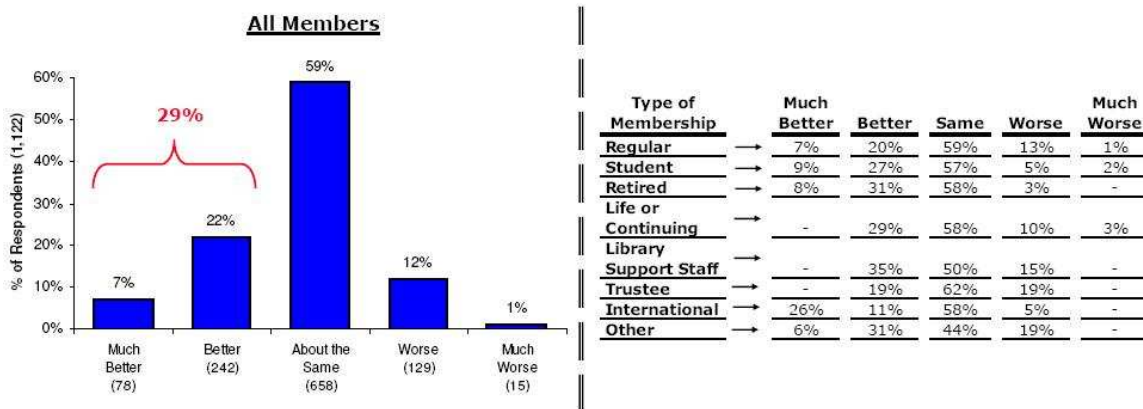
When you leave a voice mail message for someone at ALA, how long _should_ it take ALA to return your call with an answer to a typical, not complex question?

How long _does_ it typically take ALA to return your call with answers to your typical, not complex questions?

Percent of Respondents (864)

Should	(count)	Category	(count)	Does
10%	(90)	One Hour or Less	(99)	11%
21%	(180)	2-3 Hours	(159)	18%
17%	(148)	4-8 Hours	(122)	14%
46%	(394)	1 Day	(343)	40%
5%	(41)	2-3 Days	(110)	13%
1%	(11)	More than 3 Days	(31)	4%

6. How ALA compares to other organizations in terms of communications. Almost 30% of respondents feel ALA's communication is better than the other organization they belong to. In the 2004 survey, 23% of respondents rated ALA higher than other organizations.

In terms of communications, how does ALA compare to the other associations you belong to?

All Members

Much Better (78)	Better (242)	About the Same (658)	Worse (129)	Much Worse (15)
7%	22%	59%	12%	1%

29%

Type of Membership	Much Better	Better	Same	Worse	Much Worse
Regular	7%	20%	59%	13%	1%
Student	9%	27%	57%	5%	2%
Retired	8%	31%	58%	3%	-
Life or Continuing	-	29%	58%	10%	3%
Library Support Staff	-	35%	50%	15%	-
Trustee	-	19%	62%	19%	-
International	26%	11%	58%	5%	-
Other	6%	31%	44%	19%	-

Next Steps
ALA will use the results of this survey to develop a member communication services improvement plan. The plan will be shared with the ALA Executive Board at their spring 2007 meeting.