

Report of the CSBS Ad Hoc Committee for Review of the Purpose and Functioning the Society

January 20, 2022.

Executive Summary:

The review of the functioning of the CSBS was an initiative of the 2020-2021 Executive of the Society, continued by the 2021-2022 Executive. It arose in part as a response to varied requests from the Society membership and to the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences EDID review. A committee was formed to advise the Executive. The committee undertook a survey in September 2020 and used the responses to prompt and guide its discussion and recommendations.

The findings of the committee verify that the Society does a lot of things well for many members. The committee recommends steps to expand what the Society does well to those members who are under-represented and/or under-served so that the Society does not self-replicate or cater to only a segment of potential members. The survey may not have fully captured the experiences of minoritized members because of sample size and the design of some questions.

The committee's recommendations can be summarized as:

- Fostering a culture of transparency through appropriate policies and practices
- Creating a Programme Committee to advise and assist the Programme Coordinator
- Creating a task group to follow up on the findings of the survey and develop ways to further integrate underrepresented scholars and scholarship in the Society

Introduction:

The review of the functioning of the CSBS was an initiative of the 2020-2021 Executive of the Society, continued by the 2021-2022 Executive. It arose as a response to varied requests from the Society membership. Around the same time, the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences was encouraging its member societies to undertake reviews of Equity Diversity Inclusion and Decolonization (EDID) in their membership and activities. In response to these two developments, the Executive appointed an ad hoc committee to consider related questions and to assess the current functioning of the Society. This plan was approved by the membership at the 2020 Annual Meeting of the CSBS.

The Executive appointed Ronald Charles (at outset St Francis Xavier University, currently University of Toronto), Mark Leuchter (Temple University), Christine Mitchell (independent scholar), Irene Quach Soquier (student representative), Erin Runions (Pomona College), and Colleen Shantz (University of St. Michael's College; chair) as members of the Committee. To inform its work, the Committee developed a survey, both to understand the profile of the membership and to solicit the views of members.

The survey was deployed in September 2021 and was available September 20 through October 4. Access was through an email link that was sent to the addresses on the CSBS email list (approximately 400); the survey was promoted on the CSBS Facebook and Twitter feeds and the link sent to additional interested persons who did not receive the original email.¹ The first invitation was sent September 20, with reminders on September 27 and 30. Response rate can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Responses Volume

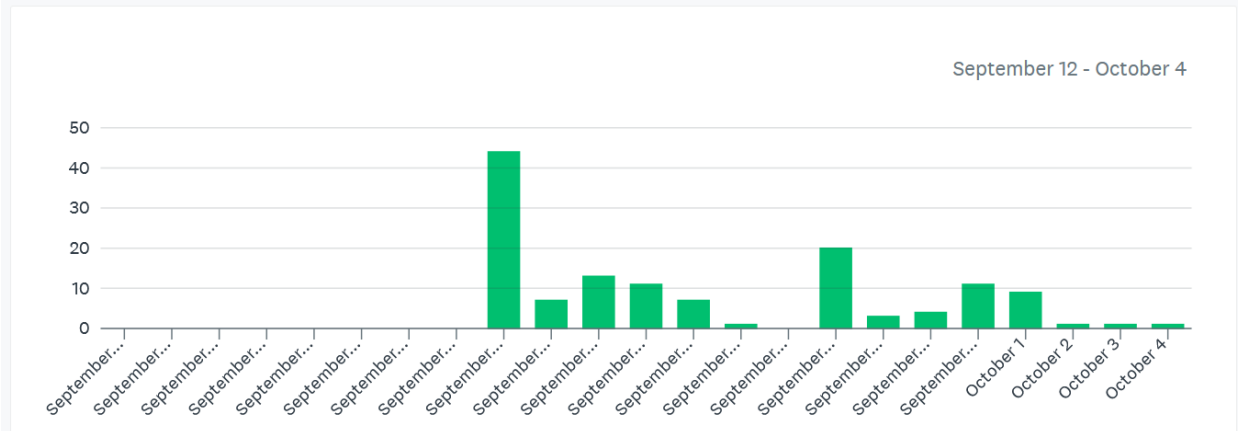


Figure 1: Responses September 20-October 4

In all, 133 responses were received, yielding a total of 123 complete survey responses. In the description and analysis below the survey results from the 131 respondents who began the survey are included. The average time spent on the survey was eight minutes.

Statistically, the results are reliable, with a margin of error of $\pm 7\%$, 19 times out of 20. In the descriptions below of comparisons between different groups of respondents, statistically significant results are emphasized, with some other trends noted even when statistical significance is not present.

¹ In the recent migration of the Society's mailing list to Mailchimp, an unknown number of email addresses were lost. The survey process itself brought the problem to light.

Respondents were given the option to indicate “I prefer not to answer” to a number of questions; these responses have been filtered out when appropriate.

The Committee found the level of participation and the engagement encouraging: for a participant to spend approximately ten minutes reading the email, navigating to the survey and completing it, given the many demands on members’ time, demonstrated commitment to the goals and work of the CSBS. Several participants used the final comment field to express gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to reflection on the functioning of the Society.

Survey part I: Professional Profile:

Description

This part of the survey focused on the professional & employment status as well as the academic specializations of the membership. Of the respondents, 39% described themselves as full-time tenured/tenure track professors. However, **various forms of contingent and/or part-time employment describes 25%** of the respondents, with retired persons and students each making up 14.5%. Administrators comprised 6%. See Figure 2. Of the students, 68% reported also working as a TA or instructor.

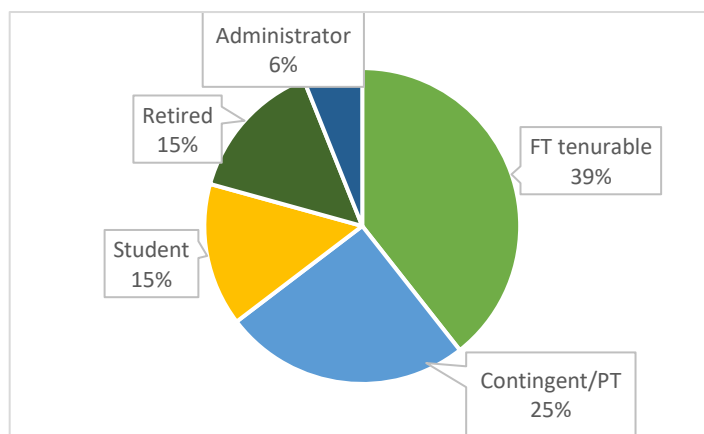


Figure 2: Professional status

Of the 121 respondents who indicated that they currently teach or recently taught, **close to 70% taught undergraduates, close to 60% taught Master's students, and close to 30% taught doctoral students.** Some taught all three; others taught one or two of these categories of students. Most don't teach doctoral students. The **average course load per year was 4.2**, with 15% of respondents teaching seven or more courses per year. Students teach on average 1.7 courses per year, almost entirely undergraduate-level. **Two-thirds of respondents (68%) teach at a university, and 30% at a theological school.** Departmental homes were fairly evenly split between religious studies (41%) and theology (36%) departments (colleges, etc.), with about 10% lodged in other humanities departments.

The survey asked about **assent to a faith and/or lifestyle statement** as a condition of employment. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents indicated that their employer requires such a statement. Respondents employed at such an institution were statistically **more likely to be in a full-time non-tenurable position** than those employed at an institution not requiring a faith statement, were statistically **less likely to teach doctoral students**, and were statistically **more likely to teach seven or more courses per year**. They were more likely to teach at a theological college, but 22% of those whose employers do not require a faith statement do teach at a theological college. Institutions requiring a faith statement are statistically **more likely to employ persons of East Asian heritage** than institutions that don't.

Twenty-six percent of respondents reported engaging in outside employment: three-quarters of students, and 18% of non-students. Although not statistically significant, about one-third of respondents whose employers require a faith statement reported engaging in outside employment. Women reported outside employment at a statistically-significant higher rate than men: **40% of women engaged in outside employment, compared to 20% of men.**

Turning to methodologies/approaches, virtually every option was selected by multiple respondents. The most popular were: historical-criticism (68%), literary criticism (56%), history of interpretation (49%), classical studies (47%), and social-scientific criticism (44%). Comparative approaches (34%), gender studies (30%), reception history (29%) and theological interpretation (28%) were also popular, alongside

source-, redaction-, rhetorical-, and text-criticism (31%, 37%, 34%, 41%). Approaches such as constructions of ethnicity, disability studies, empire studies, intersectional criticism, and other similar de-centering approaches garnered responses of up to 25%. Perhaps unsurprisingly, women were more likely to work within gender studies and intersectional analyses, as well as pedagogy, than men. Men were more likely to work within form- and rhetorical-criticism than women. Respondents 66 years old and up were more likely to work within liberation approaches, while those under the age of 50 were more likely to work within postcolonial studies. Respondents employed at an institution with a required faith statement were more likely to work with literary criticism, and unsurprisingly, theological interpretation, than those whose institutions don't require a faith statement.

There were some trends in the comparison between students and non-students in terms of methods, although not statistically valid. Students are less likely to be using comparative or theological approaches, or engaging in ideological criticism, empire studies, or postmodern/poststructuralist criticism. They are also less likely to be working in reception history, history of interpretation, or reader-response criticism. **Students are considerably less likely to be engaging in historical criticism (50% vs 70% of non-students), redaction criticism (17% vs 41% of non-students), or rhetorical criticism (17% vs 36% of non-students).** Students are more likely to be working in genre criticism, intersectional analysis, orality studies, or ritual.

Figure 3 shows the range of literatures that respondents chose as their areas of expertise, while Figure 4 shows the languages respondents work with most often. Gender did not have a significant impact, but age did: the 51-60 age cohort was significantly less likely to be working in HB/OT than other age cohorts, and the 41-45 and 66-70 cohorts were significantly more likely. **Younger scholars were more likely to be working with LXX and Christian Apocrypha than their older counterparts.** Respondents whose employers require a faith statement are more likely to work with LXX, and less likely to work with "Early Christian other" and Greek & Roman literature; they are also more likely to work with Hebrew language.

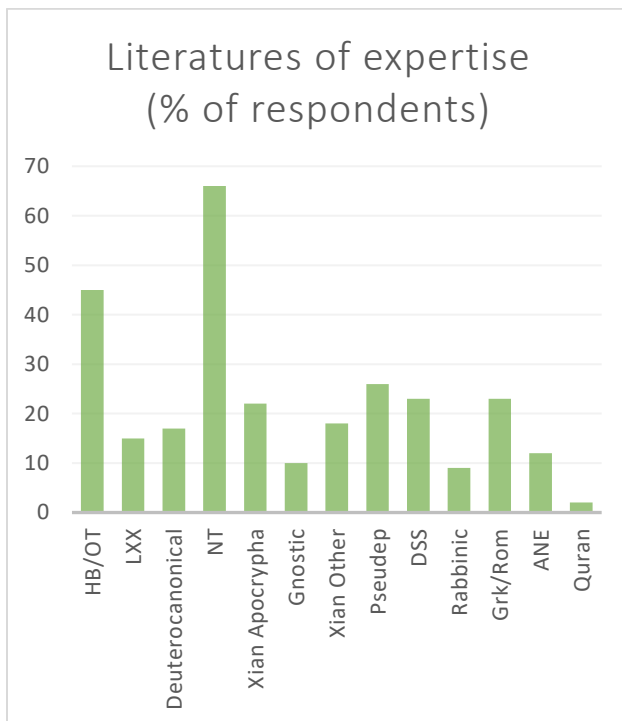


Figure 3: Literatures of expertise

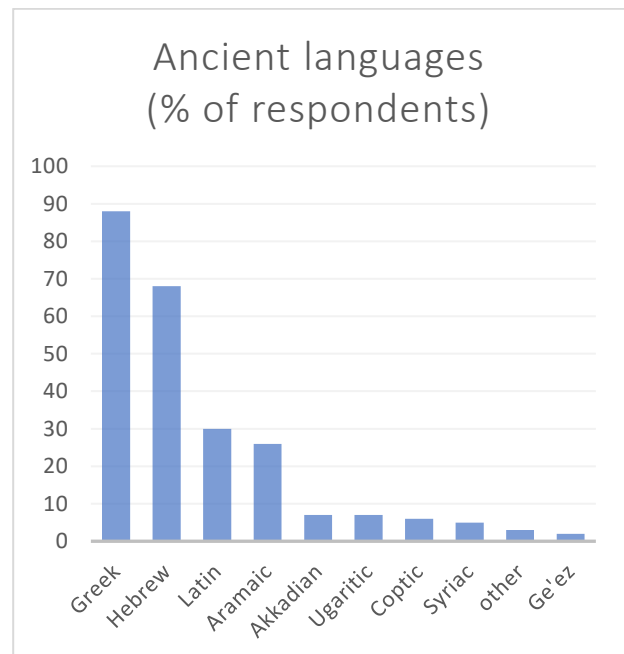


Figure 4: Ancient languages used regularly. "Other" includes various Northwest Semitic languages and Old Persian.

Discussion

The Committee noted the increased precarity and/or complexity of employment conditions among our members relative to previous generations. In fact, a few respondents suggested that the employment questions needed to be refined to properly capture the complexities of their situation. In some cases, these new patterns may be desired, but the Committee assumed that is not dominant view. Women members see a higher rate of complex or under-employment than men. A second area of distinction inheres in a significant cluster of employment characteristics – precarity (full-time non-tenured, term employment), higher teaching load, fewer graduate students, need for outside employment – that are associated with respondents employed at institutions requiring a faith/lifestyle statement. While the Society has traditionally not concerned itself with labour practices, this cluster has the potential to impede members’ research activities. The committee wondered what role the Society might have in advocating for or otherwise supporting the research capacity of either of these groups.

The Committee also noted the range of interests held by respondents and wondered about the capacity of Canadian institutions to support interested graduate students and early career researchers to develop research in gender, postcolonialism, ethnic studies, and other decentering approaches. For students, are there possibilities for supervision within Canada, and for early career researchers (postdocs, new faculty) are there places of employment where such work will be supported and encouraged?

Although not expressed in more than a handful of responses, the Committee observed some hints of ideological tension in the comments. Two or three respondents expressed concern that the survey and review process signalled a turn to “woke” ideology in the Society. Two or three respondents expressed perception of an evangelical dominance of the Society or a perceived outdated academic culture.

Recommendations

A question for further study might attend to the academic freedom of members whose work is contractual or who teach at theological schools (both those that require a faith statement and those that don’t). Biblical studies faculty are more likely to face repercussions from their research than other faculty. The Executive might explore whether the membership would encourage a role in advocating for such faculty or against instability in faculty working conditions more generally.

To continue addressing a range of topics raised in the survey and to promote excellence in our profession, the committee recommends the Executive consider hosting a session on **the state of the profession** each year at the annual meeting or in other fora. Topics could include labour issues, academic freedom in biblical studies, employment situations, methods & areas of study, changes in publishing culture, public-facing scholarship.

The richness of the scholarship carried out by the membership should be described and promoted while acknowledging that the Society (and the field) still has work to do in encouraging diversity in scholarship (both topics and methods, as well as researchers). The Society should find ways to encourage sessions that work with non-dominant methods within the field while acknowledging that small numbers of interested participants and/or people working in the area may require creative solutions (inside and outside the meeting). Given the already significant workload of the Programme Coordinator the committee recommends establishment of a Programme Committee, to be chaired by the Programme Coordinator, to assist with both the creative and logistical aspects this change would entail.

Survey part II: Self-Identification:

Description

This section of the survey focussed on the personal profile of Society members. All of the self-identification questions had as an option “I prefer not to answer.” The results here are based on those who did respond. Every question had at least one respondent who preferred not to give an answer.

The **age distribution** of the membership can be plotted in two ways – one that seems to show variations across age ranges; another that shows **fairly even distribution across decades** (Figures 5a-b).

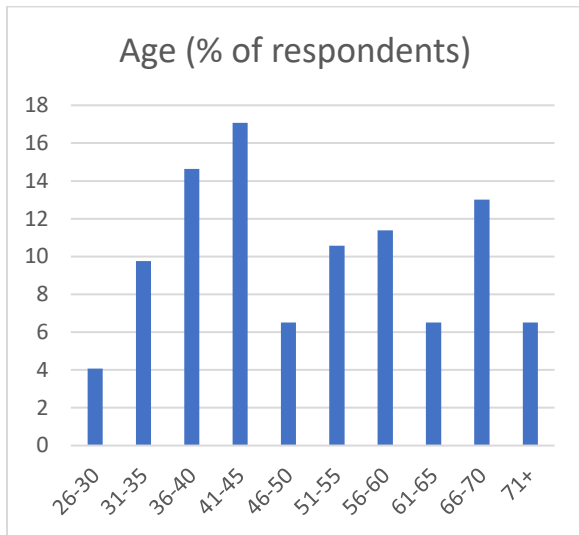


Figure 5a: Age in 5-year increments

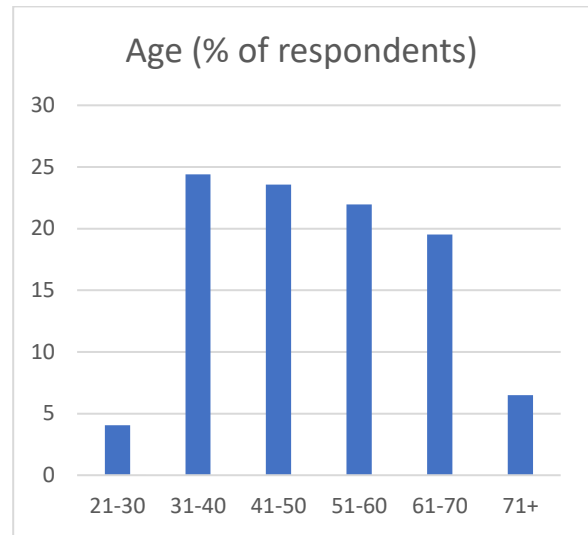


Figure 5b: Age in 10-year increments

Ninety-three percent (93%) of respondents selected English as a language they first learned in childhood and still understand. Respondents could select as many as applied, and there were eight other languages identified by more than one respondent. A similar number selected English as a language currently spoken at home (Figure 6).

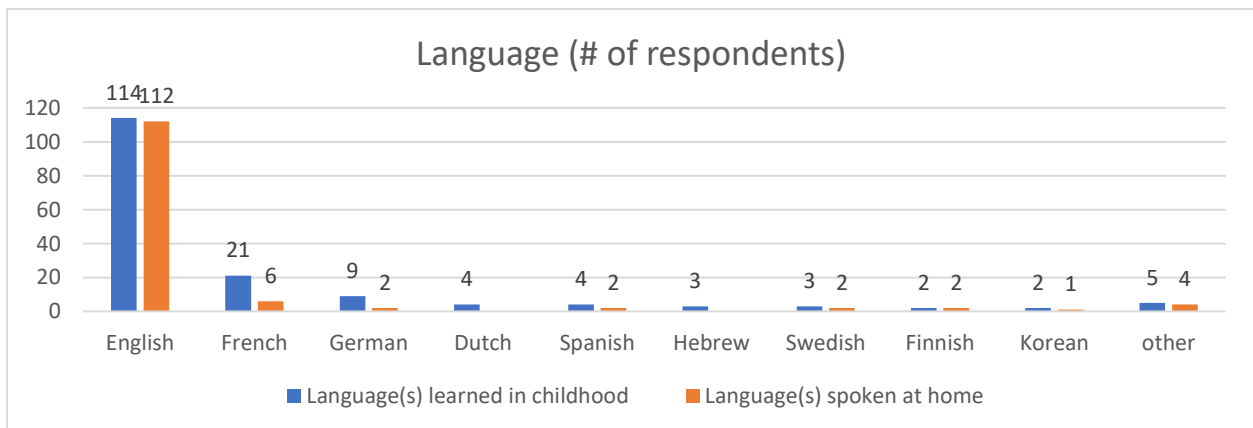


Figure 6: Languages learned in childhood; languages spoken at home

According to Statistics Canada’s 2016 Census, 57% of Canada’s population had English as their “mother tongue,” with 21% French and 22% another language; 68% spoke English at home, 21% French, and 16% another language, with the possibility of speaking more than one language at home. **English speakers are greatly over-represented** in the Society (90% speak English at home, sometimes along with another language(s)).

Gender identity and sexual orientation responses are given in Figures 7 and 8. Given there were only two respondents who answered other than man or woman, when gender as a category was used for comparison purposes only woman and man were used. This was done in order to protect the confidentiality of the two respondents. No comparisons were conducted using sexual orientation as a category for the same reason.

Men were statistically more likely to identify as heterosexual than women were. **There was no significant difference between respondents employed at institutions requiring a faith/lifestyle statement and those employed elsewhere regarding either gender identity or sexual orientation.**

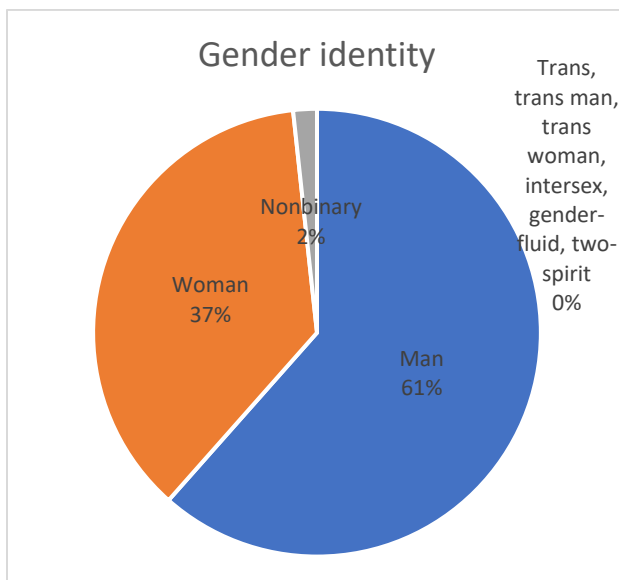


Figure 7: Gender identity, as percentage of responses that answered the question

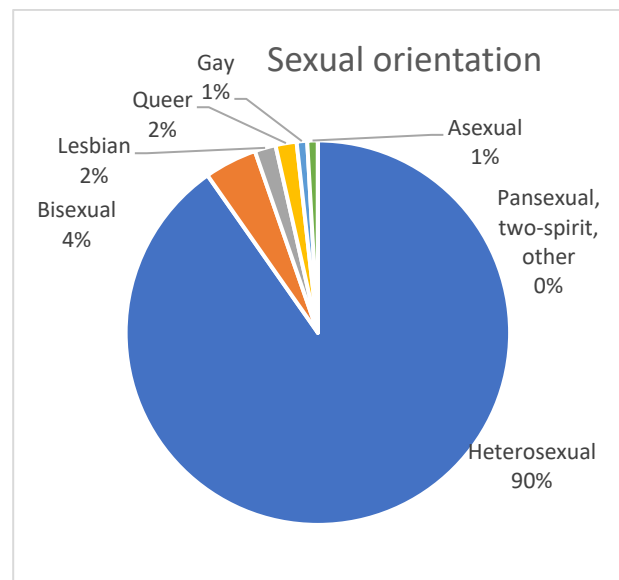


Figure 8: Sexual orientation, as a percentage of responses that answered the question

According to Statistics Canada, in 2021, 50.6% of the adult population of Canada was female, and 49.4% was male, with no other options available. Also according to Statistics Canada, as of 2018, 3.3% of the Canadian population aged 15 and older identifies as lesbian, gay or bisexual (sexual minority), with the LGB population being younger than the heterosexual population. When considering the gender breakdown of the professoriate, in 2018-2019 Statistics Canada reports that 41% of full-time academic teaching staff were women. The most recent analysis of gender by discipline dates to 2009, when rates of women in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) professoriate was higher by 7% than the average of the professoriate.² If the trend holds, then we might expect to see 45-48% of the HSS in 2019 being

² Reports consulted for this paragraph: *Socioeconomic profile of the lesbian, gay and bisexual population, 2015-2018*, www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210326/dq210326a-eng.htm; *Number and salaries of full-time teaching staff at Canadian universities (final), 2018/2019*, www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-

women. Relative to that context, **women are underrepresented in the Society**, while non-heterosexuals may be slightly over-represented (although the Statistics Canada report notes the difficulties of survey work in this area, and the margin of error in our own survey is $\pm 7\%$).

The Committee considered many different options for asking about citizenship, nationality, immigration status and related identifications. The question as decided upon asked respondents to indicate their nationality, with the ability to name more than one. One hundred nineteen (119) individuals responded, with several indicating more than one nationality. Since only “Canadian” was given as a ready-made answer, those wishing to indicate another nationality had to write it in. A few of those respondents noted that they had permanent residency or other status in Canada, although the survey didn’t ask about where respondents currently live or their immigration status in their current location. Of the 119 individual responses, **86% indicated Canadian as at least one of their nationalities**. Although not statistically significant, a higher proportion of women had non-Canadian nationality.

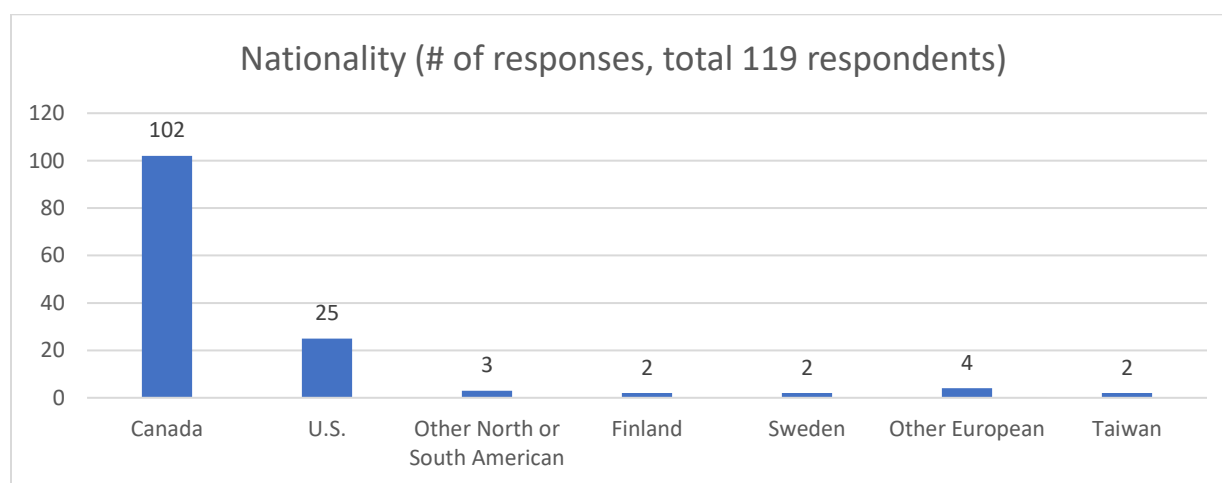


Figure 9: Nationality, from those who answered the question

Because the Committee used the SSHRC self-identification questions, which are designed to link with Canadian census questions, the survey asked about visible minority status and racial-ethnic origins. There were 117 individual responses to the visible minority question, with an additional seven individuals preferring not to respond. See Figure 10. The Committee modified the racial-ethnic question by adding a few categories and redesignating it as a racial/ethnic/cultural/geographic group question. The data from this question was not strongly reliable, with respondents choosing “White European” and “White North American” fairly evenly. There were 115 responses with an additional nine individuals preferring not to respond. The data has been cleaned up for Figure 11. Because respondents could choose more than one answer, perhaps the best way to look at the two questions is to note that **93% of respondents do not identify as a member of a visible minority and 91% identify as White**. The survey results revealed a statistically significant correlation between respondents whose employer requires a faith/lifestyle statement and East Asian identity.

quotidien/191125/dq191125b-eng.htm; *Strengthening Canada’s research capacity: The gender dimension* [2012], cca-reports.ca/reports/strengthening-canadas-research-capacity-the-gender-dimension/.

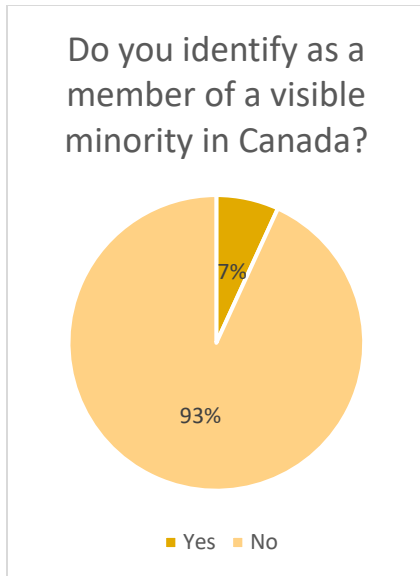


Figure 10: Visible minority

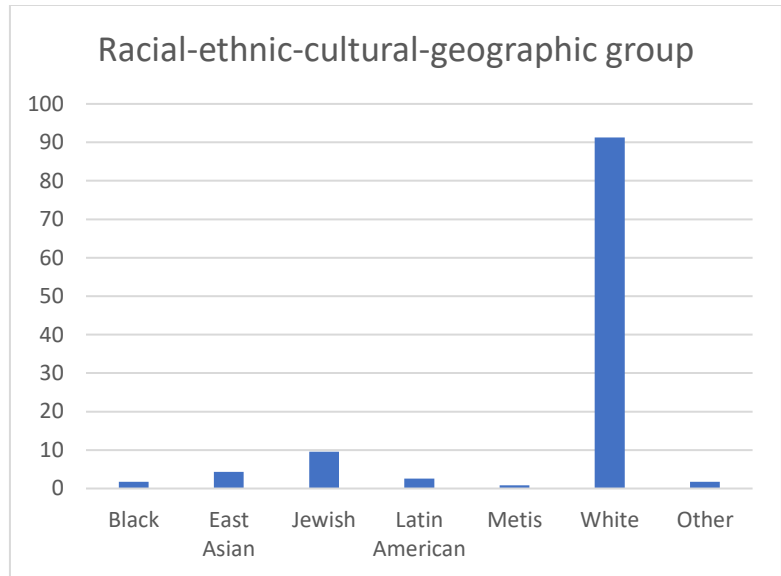


Figure 11: Race & ethnicity, percent of responses (respondents could choose more than one)

According to Statistics Canada’s 2016 Census, 21% of the population of Canada aged 15 years and over identifies a member of a visible minority group. **Visible minority individuals are under-represented in the Society** and likely in the Canadian professoriate a whole, though we do not have data on this point.

The final set of questions in this part began by asking if respondents identify as a person with **disability** as defined by the Accessibility Canada Act. Of the 122 respondents, **nine (7.4%) answered “yes.”** These respondents were invited to indicate their disability/ies on the subsequent page of the survey. Communications, Hearing, Learning, Memory, Mental-health related, Mobility, Pain-related, and Seeing were all chosen by at least one respondent, with Mental-health related being chosen by five. Although “I prefer not to answer” was given as an option for this follow-up question, none of the nine respondents declined to answer.

This part of the survey concluded with an open-ended question in which respondents were invited to offer comments on the questions and the categories in the self-identification section. Several individuals commended the effort as a whole. A few were pleased with specific questions and/or answer options (e.g., including asexuality), while several others gave thoughtful feedback on some options (e.g., what about Jews of colour; including Taiwanese as an example of “East Asian”; the disability categories). There were three individuals who expressed discomfort or dismay over this section of the survey, wondering how it is relevant to the work of the Society.

Discussion

The Committee noted there were many comments throughout the survey about the need for vigilance with respect to identity but few outright reports of the experience of discrimination. The Committee recognized that discrimination is often manifested in micro-aggressions and small incidents that may not be recognized in the moment, so vigilance and continued education and monitoring is warranted.

The range of comments from “Thank you for asking these questions” to “Why are you asking these questions – what bearing do they have on our work?” was expected. The Committee noted that an

ethos of welcome and friendliness, especially to students and new members, has been an important experience for many members and a value they hold for the Society. Are there further steps the Society might take to extend that ethos beyond the welcoming behaviour of individual members, especially the removal of micro-barriers to members of minoritized identities or circumstances? Related deliberations might also include attention to the variety of employment conditions revealed in the preceding section.

There were expressions of gratitude from respondents about the diversity questions, suggesting that simply asking about identity is perceived as an act of hospitality by many members.

Recommendations

The committee recommends the Executive consider further practices that are consistent with the Society's expressed ethos of welcome and inclusion. The composition of Executive and annual meeting panels/chairs should reflect diversity of membership (including geographic). The Executive might consider forming a nominating advisory group to assist the Vice-President.

The committee recommends the Society sign on to the Federation's EDID charter; the Executive should identify areas of the charter that can be implemented within limits of resources available, and set action plans and timelines. The Society should encourage members to sign on as individuals.

The Executive should explore possibilities for collaboration within groups of members within the Society (e.g. French-speaking members, Asian-origin members), including the possibility of changes to the annual meeting. Members engaged in work specifically in Quebec or other French-speaking areas should be key participants in identifying solutions. The Committee recommends that the Executive consider the value of a regular survey of members as a potential tool to identify the Society's profile and needs.

Survey part III: Experience of CSBS:

Description

The questions in this part of the survey focussed on the annual meeting and activities of the Society. The survey asked if respondents were paid-up members: 70% answered yes, 18% answered no, and 12% answered “I really can’t recall.” One respondent noted in the comments at the end of the survey that if they weren’t paid up it was because a better reminder system is needed. **Membership status (yes, no, can’t recall) was not a significant factor to parts I and II of the survey;** that is, membership status did not correlate strongly with employment status, areas of interest, or any demographic categories.

The survey was open to anyone associated with the Society, whether or not they are currently a member. The first question in this part asked how long ago the respondents had first joined the Society, regardless of their current membership status. The responses were evenly distributed (Figure 12). As such, the **responses in the entire survey should be seen as representative of various lengths of membership or association experience.** Respondents employed at institutions requiring a faith/lifestyle statement were statistically more likely to have joined the Society 6-10 years ago than respondents at other institutions. Women were statistically more likely to have joined 0-5 years ago than men.

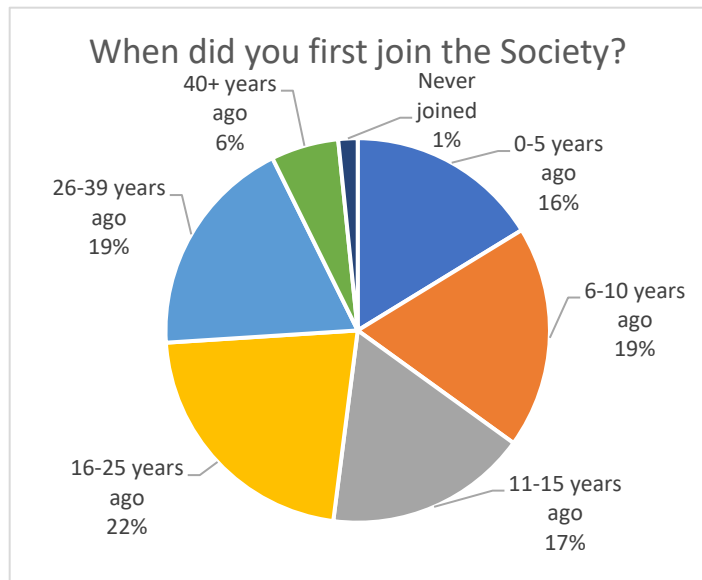


Figure 12: Length of experience with the Society

There was no dominant pattern of attendance at the annual meeting. See Figure 13. Those who answered “I stopped attending in [approximate year]” were asked to give the year. Some of the reported reasons are included in the comments in the Appendices. Those reasons included institutional or other timing conflicts, and moving out of the country. Women are more likely to attend half the time than men. Respondents employed at an institution with a faith/lifestyle statement are more likely to rarely attend, while those employed at other institutions are more likely to attend most years.

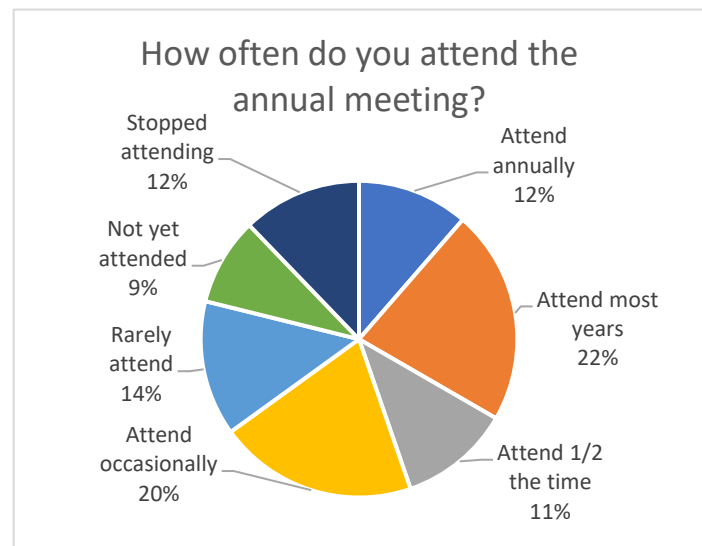


Figure 13: Pattern of attendance at the annual meeting

Many of the remaining questions in this section were presented with the responses in a randomized order to increase testing reliability.

Respondents were asked to identify up to four **aspects of the annual meeting that they value most**. Of those who responded “Other,” a few noted that they have not been able to attend due to the pandemic – presumably these are recent members; one respondent commented that they value the city chosen as meeting host. **Over three-quarters named maintaining friendships and/or networking** as an important value, while “fulfilling an institutional requirement” and “features of the Congress as a whole” ranked at the bottom. See Figure 14. However, **women were more likely to select “features of the Congress as a whole” than men, as were respondents in the 46-50 age range**. Perhaps unsurprisingly, professional development was more important for the 31-35 age range and less important for the 66-70 age range.

It is important to recognize that the survey asked respondents to identify aspects that they value most, rather than identify aspects they do not value. Thus, just because an aspect appears lower on the list of the results does not mean that members do not value that aspect, only that they value it less than other aspects. For example, pertaining to the item “strength of scholarship that is presented,” the low ranking in Figure 14 does not mean that members don’t value the scholarship that’s presented. The structure and wording of the question about the valued features of the annual meeting may not have been fine-grained enough to get at what social/relational aspects were at work for individual respondents (especially students).

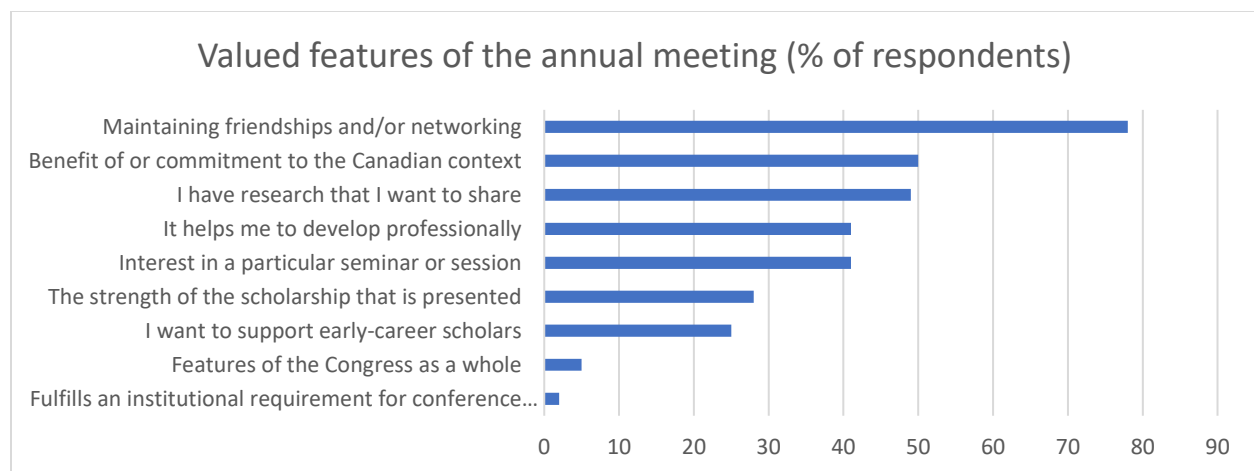


Figure 14: Features of the annual meeting most valued by respondents

Respondents were then asked to identify up to **four aspects of the annual meeting that have discouraged or would discourage attendance**. Over half identified the **cost of travel and accommodation**, while a third identified **lack of institutional support**. However, over 20% responded that they have never been significantly discouraged. Close to 20% indicated conflicts with childcare/family commitments; a similar number indicated not enough programming in areas of interest. The survey asked about discrimination and received three responses: “living in Europe,” “gender & religious affiliation,” “French-language presentations not attended.” It is important to note that **lack of relationships, lack of comfortable socializing, and lack of mentorship were not frequently selected as barriers to participation**. See Figure 15.

Interestingly, respondents with outside paid employment were not any more likely to indicate cost as a barrier, nor was age correlated with cost as a barrier. Respondents who aren’t currently members were

more likely to indicate not enough programming in areas of interest. **Men were more likely to indicate inadequate quality of the program than women.** Respondents at institutions with **faith/lifestyle requirements were more likely to indicate lack of institutional support**, whereas respondents at other institutions were more likely to indicate the environmental impact of travel.

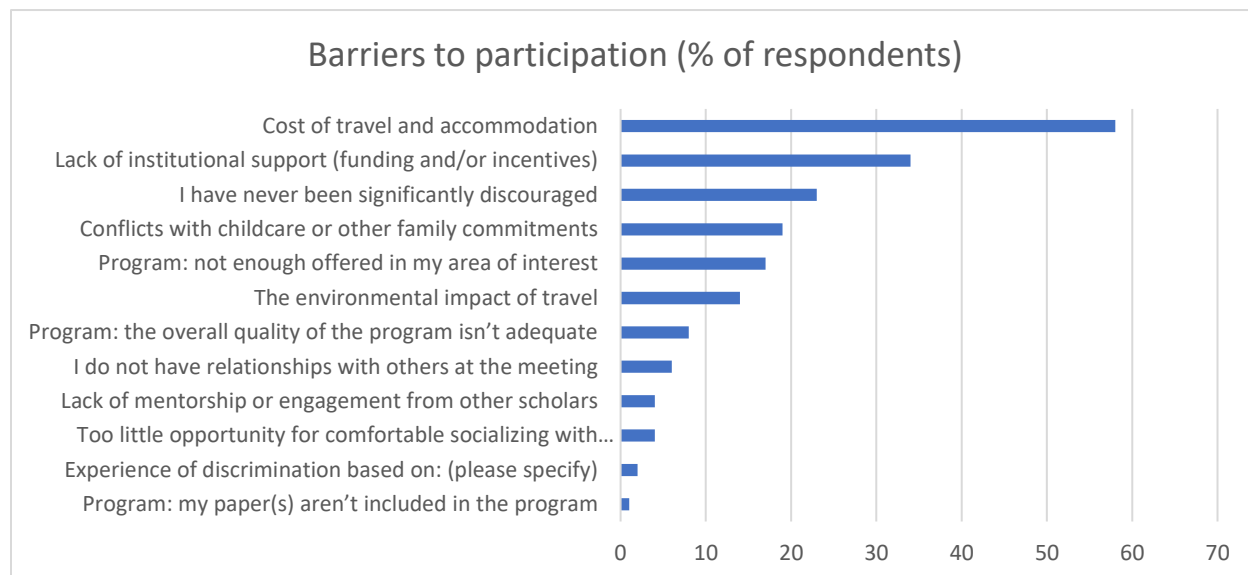


Figure 15: Aspects of the meeting that have discouraged or would discourage participation

Although the analysis of the survey results did not include a statistical comparison of student vs non-student responses to both the value and barrier questions, Figures 16a-b show the differences in responses. **Students were more likely to indicate professional development and interest in particular topics as values**, while close to 30% of **non-student respondents indicated a desire to support the work of early-career scholars.** **Students were more likely to indicate costs, lack of institutional support, childcare/family commitments and the environmental impact of travel as barriers**, while **non-student respondents were more likely to indicate not enough programming in areas of interest or insufficient quality of program.**

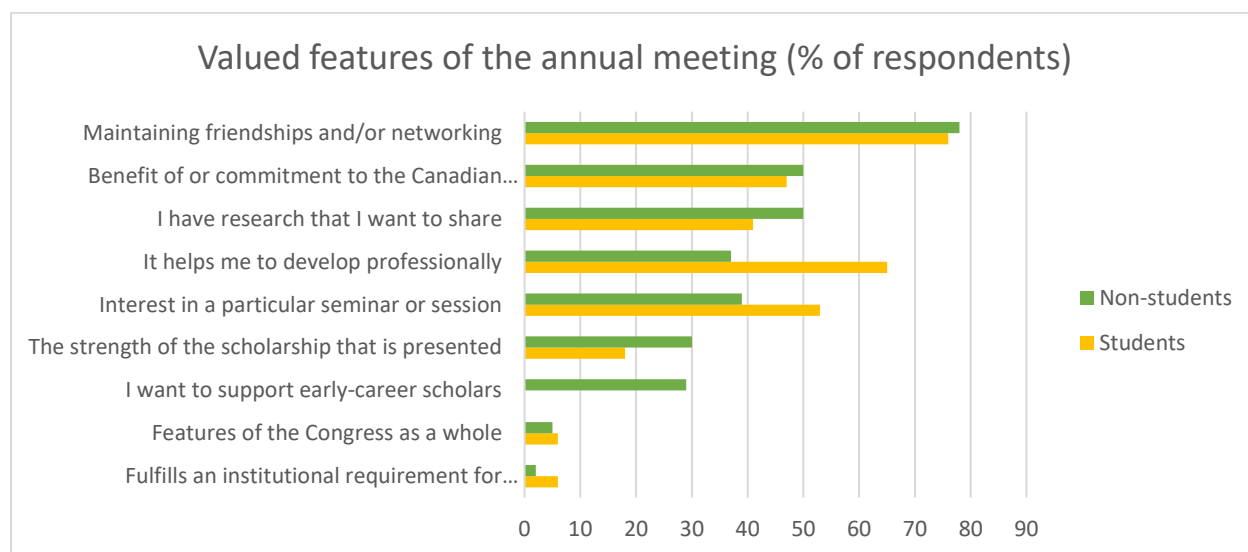


Figure 16a: Features of the annual meeting most valued by respondents; students vs non-students

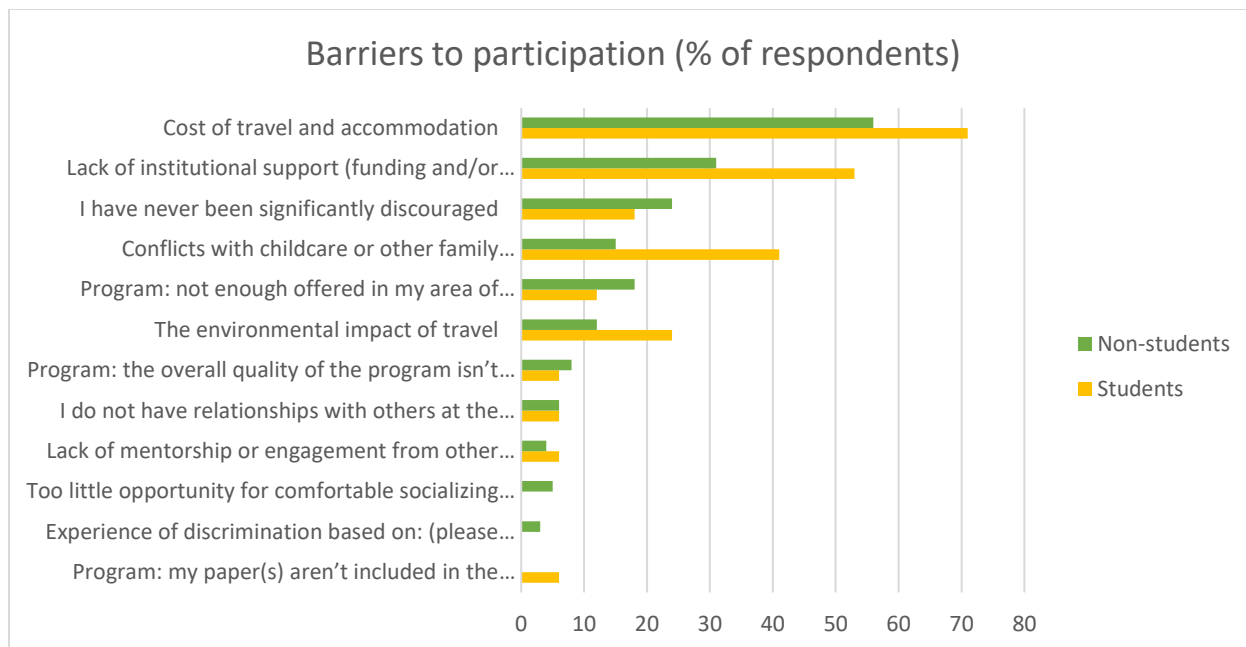


Figure 16b: Aspects of the meeting that have discouraged or would discourage participation; students vs non-students

Even though not statistically reliable, due to the sample size and number of respondents, results from breaking out the responses of minoritized groups are shown in Figures 17a-b. Again, note that this is not a ranking, only a frequency of response. There is overlap between responses from the minoritized groups (e.g. some non-white respondents also identify as women).³ **Non-white/visible minority respondents named maintaining friendships and/or networking more** than, and benefit of or commitment to the Canadian context less than the overall response; along with sexual minority respondents **they named “I have research I want to share” less frequently** as a value.

All minoritized groups (non-white, visible minority, sexual minority, women) named cost and lack of institutional support as barriers more frequently than the overall response. Visible minority respondents never selected “I have never been significantly discouraged.” The other minoritized groups also less frequently selected “I have never been significantly discouraged” than the overall response. This may suggest that minoritized groups are more likely to have been significantly discouraged, although the question was not framed in that way. Looking at the top four barriers for minoritized groups, and how they differed from the top four barriers in the overall response, there are some trends worth mentioning. Visible minorities named “not enough offered in area of interest” and “lack of mentorship or engagement” in their top four; non-white respondents also named “not enough offered in area of interest.” Overall, all minoritized groups tended to see more barriers than the overall response. This analysis and the figures are included in order to assist in identifying next steps for getting more reliable information.

³ “Non-white” was generated by removing those who selected “White North American” and/or “White European.”

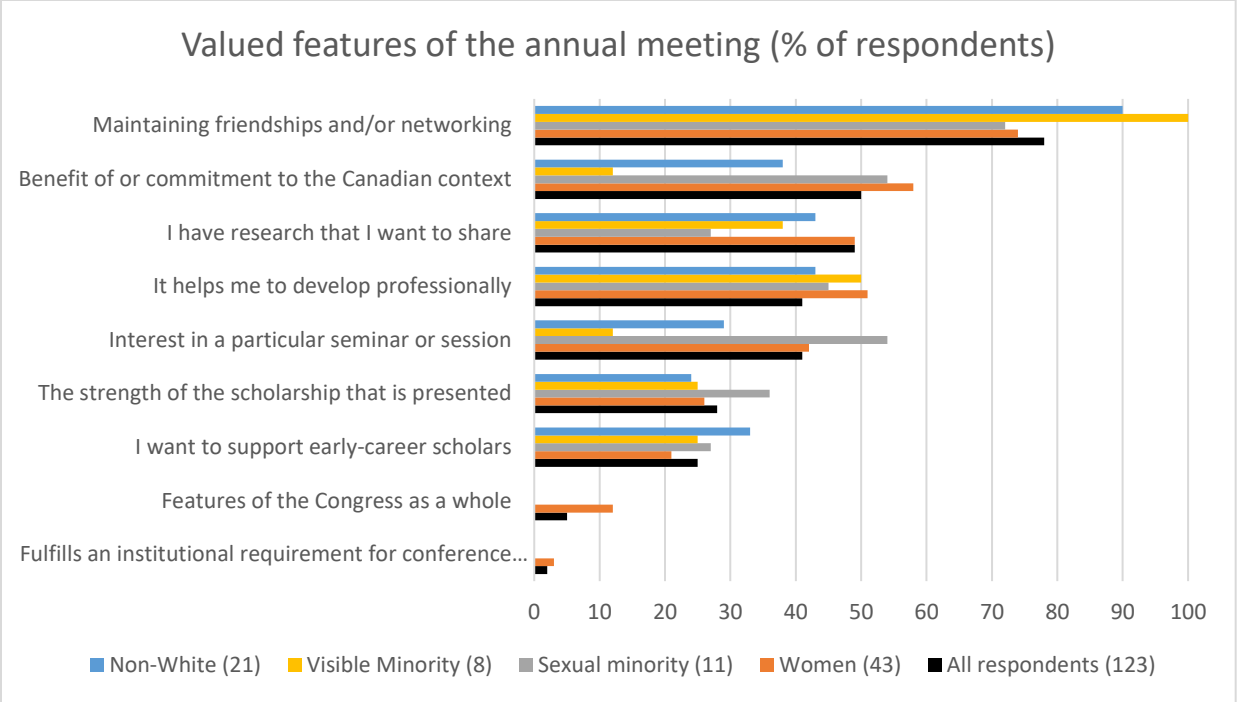


Figure 17a: Features of the annual meeting most valued by respondents; minoritized groups vs all respondents

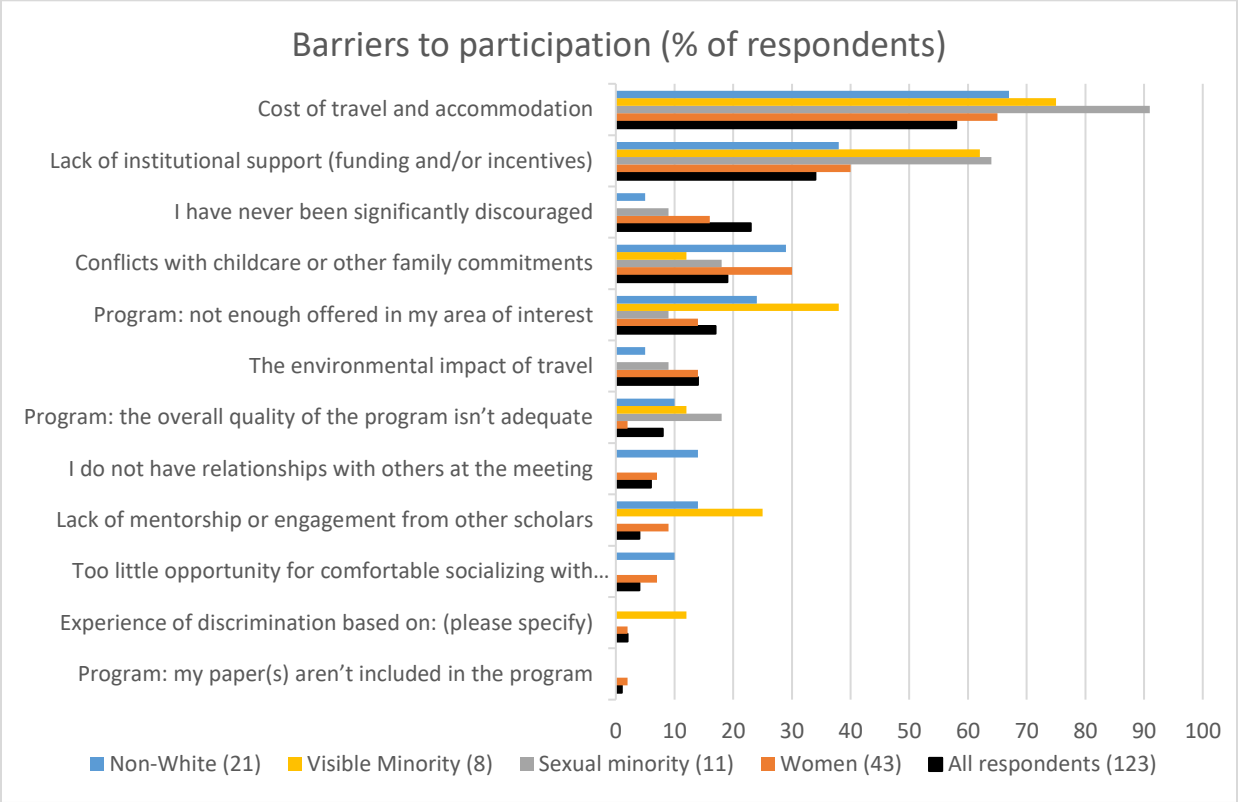


Figure 17b: Aspects of the meeting that have discouraged or would discourage participation; minoritized groups vs all respondents

Beyond the annual meeting, respondents were invited to indicate as many **additional functions of the Society that they find valuable**. Only one respondent indicated that they find only the annual meeting valuable. Several indicated functions not on the list, most significantly publication opportunities and support for student travel. See Figure 18.

Middle-aged respondents were more likely to value SR than younger respondents. Otherwise, the valued features of the Society did not vary significantly across demographic or employment categories. There did not seem to be significant differences between student and non-student members, so additional charts are not provided.

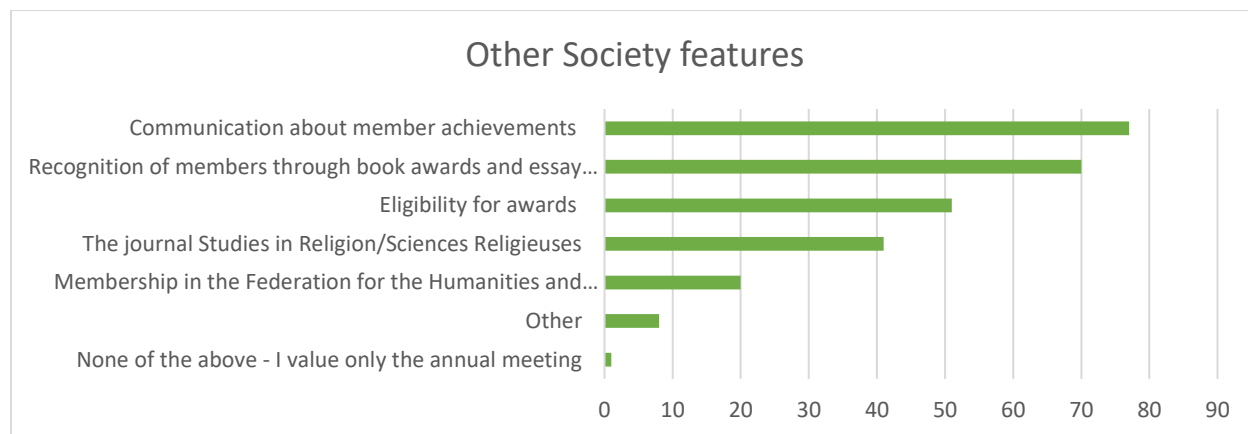


Figure 18: Features of the Society valued by respondents

Approximately 20% of all respondents had comments or suggestions about the annual meeting; these are summarized in Appendix A. Approximately 15% of respondents made comments or suggestions about features of the Society; these are included in Appendix B. A similar number made general comments about the survey and/or the Society; these are included in Appendix C.

Discussion

From the CSBS constitution: “The object of the Society shall be to stimulate the critical investigation of the classical biblical literatures, together with other related literature, by the exchange of scholarly research both in published form and in public forum.”

The committee considered the stated aims of the Society during its reflections. From the survey, the annual meeting seems to meet the needs of the members: respondents praised the support for students/ECRs, the social aspects, professionalization, and the value of the Canadian context. It has been the conscious choice of the Society to accept papers in order to maximize participation and provide support for students / early career researchers. The meeting may not be the place for detailed technical discussion (although that can happen), and it may be the place for engagement with research at an earlier stage of development.

The CSBS is a small society as academic societies go. The committee agreed that the benefits of a small society – networking, informal mentorship, participation, and opportunities for involvement (especially for students) – should not be lost. Since the Society is run by volunteers, the workload of Executive members needs to be kept manageable; the fact that the Society can get volunteers speaks well to its value, overburdening the volunteers would be counterproductive. The committee’s recommendations

are meant to improve existing functioning rather than adding work that would be unsustainable in the long run.

Because of the small size, there is the possibility of a community-feeling to a certain extent, but it also means members won't always find people with like interests and/or positionality. However, community comes in many types and forms (and sizes) and CSBS may be well-suited for an academic community based on geographic and national affiliations and the professional friendships that ensue. The challenge for such a society is diversity – naming it and incorporating it – which is what the committee was formed to address.

The small sample size for visible-minority/non-white respondents means the data is less reliable for comparisons, particularly for correlating barriers to participation with minoritized identities of all kinds (race/ethnicity/gender/sexual identity/disabilities). The lack of Canadian data on race/ethnicity/sexual identity further impeded the committee's analysis. The small number of minoritized members (even including women) means that their responses could have been overwhelmed in the survey, leaving open the possibility that the Society is reproducing itself in its own image.

The committee noticed overlap between individuals' positionality and their research interests, and there is also a variety of research interests and approaches even within the membership as a whole. Because of the small size of the society, greater creativity will be needed about how to attract a diversity of topics and approaches. The values of the academy (e.g., anonymized peer review, originality) are values of diversity whether these values are always lived out in practice. Programming is key and intertwined with the problems of addressing deficiencies in EDID. Greater diversity and inclusion of both persons and research interests will strengthen the Society's ability to fulfill its stated aims; lifting up scholarly diversities and their value will strengthen our shared enterprise.

Recommendations

The committee strongly recommends the Executive consider a focus group(s) with minoritized members to nuance the survey findings and derive concrete suggestions or create a task-force on/with minoritized members (combining focus seen in SBL's CUREMP, Women, LGBTQIA task groups) with its first task being to follow up on the survey findings. Another task might be to find ways to connect members with like interests and/or positionality (as suggested in Part II above).

In order to foster a culture within the Society of addressing occurrences of discrimination, microaggressions, and harassment as they happen, and preventing future occurrences, there are a few concrete steps that can be taken at the Annual Meeting to help grow transparency and accountability:

1. The Programme Coordinator (or Programme Committee) should develop and send out advice on best-practices for chairs that includes both dealing with logistical issues like technology and goes beyond to address behavioural issues.
2. Every AGM should begin with a land acknowledgment (or similar), session chairs should be encouraged to begin each session with one.
3. The Executive could promote by-stander intervention awareness to the membership before the annual meeting; examples include: uwaterloo.ca/human-rights-equity-inclusion/svpro/give-support/bystander and www.concordia.ca/conduct/sexual-assault/bystander.html

To increase the diversity of programming, the Programme Coordinator (or Programme Committee) could set aside a session named explicitly for work using new or under-represented approaches, and encourage members (especially senior members) to support it, with doctoral supervisors especially encouraged to attend and send students.

The committee strongly encourages the Communications Officer (or Executive) to define “excellence” in awards criteria in a way that includes theoretical and methodological innovation and contextual sensitivities; to examine membership on awards committees in terms of diversity; to develop terms of reference for awards committees (e.g., how many times can one scholar win?). The awards process should be more transparent for nominees: what is the process, what can you expect, and when. The committee also suggests developing or repurposing an award in order to recognize public-facing scholarship.

In order to foster greater transparency in how the Society operates, the website and regular mailings (as appropriate) should include information about Executive positions and their functioning, the Society’s relationship to publishing avenues (book series, SR), the Society’s relationship to the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences and the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, how papers/presentations etc. are selected for the annual meeting, and notifications about dues. Much of this information is already available and should be promoted.

Finally, the Society might make better use of the resources available from our membership in the Federation and Congress. The Executive should promote the services of Congress as a whole for the Annual Meeting (e.g., childcare), and should look at what services of the Federation might be available for the Society.

Conclusion

The committee used the survey responses to provoke conversations among committee members about the Society's functioning and commitments. The results from each of the three parts of the survey led to discussion and to recommendations in the areas of professional profile, members' identities (multiple and overlapping), and the Society's functioning.

The Society does a lot of things well for many members. The committee recommends steps to expand what the Society does well to those members who are under-represented and/or under-served so that the Society does not self-replicate or cater only to dominant group(s). The survey may not have fully captured the experiences of minoritized members – since by definition they are in the minority.

The committee makes these recommendations to the Executive with the full understanding that the Executive will choose whether or how to accept them. In some places the committee suggests a particular role be given a task, while in other places the role responsible is left open. Nevertheless, the committee strongly recommends that the Executive oversee the assignment of these tasks to appropriate people, and that regular follow-up ensue. Ideally this would include the Executive designating a particular individual with the overall responsibility for tracking follow-up.

The committee thanks the Executive and the Society for commissioning this work, for listening, and for taking the work seriously. The committee also wishes to thank the respondents to the survey for their investment in improving the society – our work could not have been done as effectively without the over 130 people who responded.

Recapitulation of the recommendations

The recommendations from the three parts of the report are repeated here in abbreviated form, this time grouped by Society function rather than by the structure of the survey.

Annual Meeting

- Take a few concrete steps to foster a culture of addressing occurrences of discrimination, microaggressions, and harassment (Part III)
- Set aside a session named explicitly for work using new or under-represented approaches (Part III)
- Promote the services of Congress as a whole during the Annual Meeting (Part III)

Society functioning

- Establish a Programme Committee chaired by the Programme Coordinator (Part I)
- Consider forming a nominating advisory group to assist the Vice-President in order to ensure Executive reflects diversity of membership, including geographic (Part II)
- Sign on to the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences EDID charter as a Society, and encourage members to do likewise as individuals (Part II)
- Consider forming a focus group or task-force to nuance further this report's findings and derive further concrete suggestions (Part III)
- Define "excellence" in awards criteria in a way that includes theoretical and methodological innovation and contextual sensitivities and make the awards process more transparent (Part III)
- Keep website and other communications media up-to-date and frequently promoted (Part III)

- Make better use of resources of the Federation (Part III)

Membership and members' work

- Explore whether the membership would encourage a role in advocating for contingent faculty or against instability in faculty working conditions more generally (Part I)
- Continue celebrating the richness of the scholarship of the membership (Part I)
- Host a session on the state of the profession annually at the annual meeting or in other fora (Part I)
- Explore possibilities for collaboration within groups of members (Part II)
- Consider the value of a regular member survey (Part II)

Appendices

These appendices include the write-in responses from the survey. Potentially identifying information has been removed. Responses have been grouped by similarity, and some have been condensed. Individual responses that addressed more than one issue have been split. Responses that were entered in response to one prompt but that belong better to another category have been moved.

Appendix A: Comments and suggestions about the annual meeting

Appendix B: Comments and suggestions about the Society beyond the annual meeting

Appendix C: Comments and suggestions about the survey

Appendix A: Comments and suggestions about the annual meeting

Programming:

- “[Perhaps] our members are starting to “save” papers for larger conferences such as SBL, instead of taking advantage of the fruitful discussion that could arise with a slightly more intimate gathering.”
- “quality of chosen papers”
- “The annual meeting is organized very well.”
- “More joint sessions with other societies would be good as well. Sometimes the CSBS feels a bit siloed.”
- “More seminar style programming”
- “I am generally happy with the current organization of the CSBS meetings, both the opportunity for offered papers, and especially the ongoing seminars, which have proved to be a special mark of the CSBS and an incentive to good research.”
- “I have enjoyed CSBS over the years. I greatly appreciate opportunities to participate in ongoing discussions (over years) with excellent scholars, as well as to connect more informally in a smaller group (as opposed to SBL). Over the years there has been less concentrated sessions (multi-year seminars, etc.) in my areas of interest than in others.”
- “Colleagues have often been unable to attend when I am presenting a paper because another session was being held at the same time -- I have been sorry to have missed their feedback.”
- “I would love to see more outside-the-text papers (reception, intertextuality, other literatures and cultures, etc.).”
- “Please consider newer, more interesting work.”

Atmosphere:

- “I also from time to time have a small, lingering sentiment that I hear/observe more of a “male” voice than a female one in terms of who speaks, who responds, who is encouraged after a paper is given. I have had and continue to have many supportive male mentors and colleagues, and this comment is not to put down any of that collegiality; it is simply a comment.”
- “More diversity in the programs and in the leadership of the society”
- “I’m not sure, but I think a greater openness to welcome newer members.”
- “I appreciate all the efforts CSBS leadership has put into mindfulness regarding support for new scholars, equal opportunities, and affordable networking (such as the reception instead of dinner).”
- “I miss the old banquets that were seated meals. Last time I attended the banquet it was more like snacks on paper plates.”
- “While presenting itself as a bilingual space, there is no real opportunity (if one wants to really exchange with colleagues) to present in French. I am especially thinking of French-speaking students in Canada.”
- “I think the meetings are quite valuable as well as being convivial, a place where it is easy to get to know others.”
- “I love CSBS culture, esp. that senior scholars will engage and offer critiques to emerging scholars and students.”
- “Ensure that known sexual harassers, predators, etc. (whether convicted or not) are barred from participating in the annual meeting.”
- “Alienation comes in many forms and is frequently not outright harassment and hostility. Centring white scholars and white research questions while not taking seriously contributions from racialized

scholars has served the same ends as more overt harassment, people are made to see that they are not welcome. But this does not mean that there has not been open hostility.”

Costs, format, timing:

- “I don't see a solution to the costs such events have. Maybe a shorter and online version for those who can't come.”
- “Some thought might be given to post-pandemic use of Zoom to include members who aren't present at an annual meeting. For example, a (members-only) Zoom link to the Presidential Address, and perhaps some other elements of the society afternoon (student prize papers, annual meeting, book awards).”
- “More funding for students would be nice—I remember having a bit of financial help many years ago, which was much appreciated. Thinking more about barriers for contract faculty would also be worthwhile. They often need more support than students do, depending on their circumstances.”
- “More scholarships available for graduate students to cover travel expenses. Additionally, childcare in Canada is very expensive, and I think this should be acknowledged by the society. One way of doing this by taking measures so members can feel more comfortable bringing their children, or even providing some sort of childcare.”
- “I have not attended recently because [an institutional commitment] nearly always coincides with the Annual Meeting. :(“
- “Not scheduling it at a time of year I tend to be out of the country.”
- “Timing of the conference.”

General:

- “Departments of Religious Studies, and Theological Colleges in Canada, in the 21st century, need a strong and robust Canadian academic/research learned society. Without the research venue that CSBS has historically represented in the last 40 years, those departments and colleges will not be well served.”
- “I would be less inclined to attend if the CSBS or the Congress more generally were to continue down a path of emphasizing "woke" ideology.”
- “Efforts to decrease a political correctness gone rampant; efforts to promote freedom of speech and freedom of thought.”
- “I have not attended enough to be specific about what is lacking.”

Appendix B: Comments and suggestions about the Society beyond the annual meeting

Communications:

- “What you just did over the last months was extremely important -- the notices of members who have recently taken up first or new jobs -- especially to introduce new members in the Canadian biblical scene. That was a very significant initiative and much appreciated.”
- “I really appreciate how CSBS highlights member achievements. However, there is never any mention of information pertaining to French-speaking institutions and members.”
- “Are there ways to have better communications for members and their institutions to promote lectures, related scholarly conferences/workshops, etc. Could CSBS not just promote but perhaps also endorse such events (even just in name). Certainly this would help draw attention and profile smaller institutions and their offerings.”
- “As a relatively new member of the society, I'd appreciate more communications about ways to get involved in the CSBS (and perhaps also about when membership dues need to be paid).”
- “I am a lapsed member almost certainly because there is no system reminding me to pay my dues.”
- “Could the website be a repository of resources related to the field?”

Events:

- “Regular (bi-monthly?) sessions/webinars delivered online”
- “Book panels of 3-4 recently published first-time authors who might present quick overviews of their work.”

Collaborations:

- “Increased collaboration with the Canadian Society for Patristic Studies Online workshops? Especially in area of EDI”
- “Why not a form of partnership with ACEBAC to link French and English scholarship?”
- “More deliberate involvement in the CCSR would also be worthwhile (did a rep go to the last CCSR AGM?).”

Representation:

- “Stop centring and rewarding the same people. In the history of the [Beare] award, only four women have won it. And no racialized scholars have won it. Try to find a way for this society to speak to people outside of our own membership.”
- “Stop publicizing the publications of harassers/predators in CSBS related newsletters/emails.”
- “The SBL has a few 'women in the profession' events which can be very beneficial, perhaps adding something like that to the CSBS would be helpful.”
- “I am concerned about the increasing evangelical makeup of the society and the effect it is having on scholarship and on the comfort of queer members. This includes advertising jobs at institutions that actively discriminate based on sexuality.”

Functioning of the Society:

- “I do get the sense that the Society is not always very democratic in its decision-making, that the Exec doesn't undergo much collaboration with the members except at the AGM. And Exec members are "voted in" officially, but I have never witnessed more than one person chosen to stand for the position--it seems that the Exec simply chooses the people they deem worthy. I could be wrong, but

this process is not very transparent. Is there another way to get members involved who aren't necessarily "on the radar" of the few people who make up the Exec, especially since we are a relatively large society (as far as [Canadian religious studies] societies go)."

- "I wonder whether we can try to recruit members to the executive with more attention to geographical diversity. I realize that this is always a difficulty to find people who are across the country. But for example this year's executive has a UoT president, a UoT vice-president, a UoT student Liaison officer, a communications officer from McMaster, and a treasurer from Mississauga who presumably has UoT contacts. I think that the nominations committee needs to be more cognizant of the diversity of talent in Canadian biblical studies. Perhaps a solution would be to make it a rule that the president and vice president will not come from the same institution, that members will as a rule be recruited from a variety of geographical locations, even that this be done on a rotating basis (ie year 1: president from Central Canada, year 2, west, year 3, east; etc). This will help to assure that [the executive] is more representative of a diversity of interests and needs."

General/other:

- "I believe CSBS is doing a good job already"
- "Discounts on Canadian authors might be an idea. Even for books of early-career scholars."
- "It's not clear to me what the relationship between CSBS and the SCJ book series is. Or if it still exists..."
- "My feeling has tended to be that there are a lot of "extras" that are available through the SBL (which most of us are a part of), e.g., job posting page, teaching resources (like Bible Odyssey). The CSBS is wonderful because it doesn't overstretch. It offers an amazing annual meeting and the member updates are encouraging. I would hate to overstretch the exec."
- "I do think we could always be working on the publication angles. It would be nice to see more antiquities related materials in SR. And maybe one way to do that would be to have the presidential address published there rather than in the Bulletin. It is also discouraging that McGill-Queens doesn't usually have a booth at SBL (which is where so much book publicity happens beyond our smaller Canadian context). That was a major factor in me considering other publishers for my work."

Appendix C: Comments and suggestions about the survey

Thanks/kudos:

- “Thanks for all your efforts!”
- “Really appreciate this work. Thanks for taking the initiative to ask these questions and to gather this info. Looking forward to seeing how this helps the Society moving forward!”
- “The survey is good [but suggestion follows]. Thank you for your work.”
- “Hope this helps! Thank you to the exec and other volunteers for your service to the society and its members.”
- “I hope it helps =) “
- “Thank you for this effort! It is exemplary.”
- “This is a worthwhile endeavor. I appreciate it.”
- “I appreciate this initiative. It should provide the executive with valuable information in a changing context for the Society.”
- “Thanks for the survey!”
- “Well done. Thank you.”
- “Thanks for your work on this!”
- “Thank you for asking for feedback. I hope that you are able to get some good information from this survey.”

Comments/suggestions for improving the survey instrument:

- “The earlier part of the survey about working could be further expanded a bit more to allow clear answers from people whose situation is working full-time outside of academia and teaching adjunct.”
- “It would have helped for options for those of us with multiple employers and alt-ac side gigs. Well done, though!”
- “It could have included a space where confidentiality is more pronounced. For example, under the category of discrimination, one could be hesitant to put a specific item, say being discriminated on the basis of race or sexually or both. That person could prefer to talk to a member of the leadership about the complexities involved in being discriminated against on the basis of the aforementioned biases. I hope that helps.”
- “It was hard to select only 4 answers for [the question about features I value most about the annual meeting].”
- “There was not an option to identify as 'scheduling' re: not attending CSBS.”
- “Thank you for providing several spaces above to make comments.”

In addition, there were 17 individual comments at the end of Part II of the survey in response to the prompt “Specifically, are there categories or formulations [in Part II] that you think are missing or could be better formulated?” Several commenters said something like “seems fine”; other comments below:

- “Cis woman and cis man would be more accurate I think”
- “I would prefer ‘male’ rather than ‘man’.”
- “Kudos for including asexuality!”
- “Why would you ever need to know the sexual orientation of members?”
- “I am puzzled by the questions on sexual orientation -- what possible interest does the CSBS have in my sexual orientation? -- and ethnicity.”

- “I would deeply appreciate it if an "etc." can be added after "Chinese, Japanese, Korean" in the "East Asian" category.”
- “The language of "visible minority" is hard to work with as [redacted], and the specificity of how minority is defined in Canada. I'm honestly a little confused about the way I am asked to identify race/ethnicity/minoritized status across different contexts and across different nations. I'm also less sure about how that gets helpfully quantified for the organization when "visibility" is understood differently. Which isn't to say that the question isn't helpful or valid, just to say that I'm never sure what to do with it. As someone who is constantly told "what I am" and what I can "claim" by people from other backgrounds than my own, there's a lot of tension wrapped up in these questions.”
- “Eastern European is different from Western European or Mediterranean European.”
- “Yes - you have “Jewish” listed, however, you haven’t listed any of the “Jews of Colour” identifications (I.e differentiate between Ashkenazi/Sephardic, Mizrahi Jews, etc.)”
- “I love the Part II inclusion, but just like in the SSHRC questionnaire, the categories in the Act don't match the self-response list. E.g., an autistic person would struggle to answer honestly in a way that gave proper data.”
- “I am surprised at the number of identity questions. Is there nothing as important as this question in the mind of those who wrote the survey?”