

UKeiG Membership Survey

An informal survey of members reveals that, of all the group's activities, members value most training and current awareness briefing.

At Online Information last year, UKeiG carried out an informal market survey based around people visiting the stand, both members and non-members. We found the exercise very valuable, and some conclusions from the research are summarised below. With 66 responses, the survey cannot pretend to be a fully validated sample. Nonetheless, it was a large enough number to provide valuable feedback to the committee, and we hope it provides some interest as a profile of those interested in the group's activities.

Membership profile

A third of UKeiG members work in the academic or HE sectors; 17% in commercial organisations, and 17 % in government. 7% are from public libraries. The remainder include healthcare, professional associations, and voluntary sectors. In any subsequent survey we will measure these membership areas in more detail. Interestingly, of the non-members visiting the stand, there was a considerably higher proportion of information professionals from commercial sectors.

Job title

You wouldn't imagine a seemingly innocent question like "job title" could generate such a wide-ranging response. Perhaps it's the nature of the business we are involved in, but job titles seem to be wild and wacky these days. Along with the expected "information scientist", "academic liaison officer", and "learning centre manager", respondents listed "managing director" (good to see the status of information getting the respect it deserves), "business manager, databases" (that sounds to me a good description), "senior technical advisor" and even "technical director" (clearly one of the IT stars in the UKeiG) . It makes you long for the days of university, when all you needed to list under job title was the simple word "student".

Knowledge of IT

Clearly you are a knowledgeable lot, since everyone in the survey claimed to have at least fair knowledge of IT, and a good third (36%) stated they were expert. No problems with the implementation of Shibboleth, then.

What you look for from UKeiG

Pretty clearly, both members and non-members see UKeiG as the provider of two things: as a source of training, and to provide updates on the latest information.

Training

Training is one of the strengths of UKeiG – it's an indication of the healthy state of the group that there is such an extensive range of courses, not just in London (a frequent cause of complaint in other associations) but throughout the UK.

A third of those interviewed reported attending one or more UKeiG training courses during the past year. Of course the nature of training is such that only a small proportion of members have the opportunity to attend face-to-face training courses. To provide our most successful course for all our current members, on search tools and techniques, to every member, given that the number of attendees is limited to around 15 so they all have a PC, would take us almost ten years, even if we ran the course every month.

But we were surprised that many non-members said they had little idea which courses were coming up.

Several respondents mentioned value for money – we know that UKeiG courses cost considerably less than fully commercial training courses. Other comments on training included:

- High quality affordable training [a consultant, commercial sector]
- Information briefings at fair price.
- Good source for current online information.

Among the reasons why people didn't attend training, there were the following:

- I've just moved to new job so didn't want to go on any courses [!]
- I'm mainly retired from training courses [perhaps CPD stops once you're 50?]

Topics for training courses

It sounds like we are getting this right! The key areas of interest in training courses reported were:

1. Making use of online resources
2. RSS and Blogs;
3. Locating the right information
4. Searching the Internet.
5. Taxonomies and metadata.
6. E-book collections
7. Using the Web (this sounds very much like searching the Internet)
8. Bibliographic reference management.

This list looks pretty much like the current list of training courses on offer. For non-members, the proportions were similar, but they were also interested in content management and statistics information. Interestingly, one non-member complained they didn't have sufficient information on forthcoming training courses (How can I know about them if

I am not a member?). Other proposals for topics included Project COUNTER, and federated searching.

eLucidate

The question here is the extent to which members read eLucidate, now that it is only available in electronic form. It is encouraging to know that 66% of respondents read most or all issues of eLucidate via electronic delivery.

One difficulty we have is that, as Gary Horrocks explains in his letter to new members (above), we cannot e-mail the PDF to members unless they have elected to receive it, because of data protection issues. However, not all members have realised this, and it has taken us some time (and several repeats of the message) to communicate this.

One action we have already taken is to make more of eLucidate open to all. During 2006 we have been steadily increasing the content that is open to non-members; anyone can now access book reviews and meeting reports. During the period of Online Information, access to eLucidate is open to all.

What you read in eLucidate

All parts of eLucidate are described as “useful”, but the most-read sections are the articles and the monthly columns, as well as the current awareness section.

Where else members get information from

The major sources of information listed were *Information World Review*, *Update*, and *Library + Information Gazette*. But even in the case of IWR, which is probably the most widely read industry publication, only 50% of those interviewed reported reading it regularly. In other words, we will make no apology for covering topics that have appeared in IWR if only half the members read this title. There would appear to be no other single group or periodical that matches UKeIG's profile.

The UKeIG website

Most respondents reported that they use the UKeIG website only infrequently. Since the date of the questionnaire, the site has been extensively redesigned and we think the usability has been dramatically improved. The most-used parts of the website are the factsheets and eLucidate.

Other membership organisations

Most members of UKeIG are also members of CILIP, unsurprisingly. But apart from that overlap, there was little commonality of membership with other organisations apart from CILIP. This suggests the constituency of UKeIG is clearly defined.

What next?

We intend to carry out another survey of membership at this year's Online Information. If you have any comments on the above or suggestions for additional questions, please contact any member of the committee.

Michael Upshall