Emerging Leaders 2020 Team Report Form

Project Team 'Letter': G

Project Host Unit: LITA

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Project Description: Build on ALA's recent resolution on sustainability and brainstorm practical and groundbreaking ways for LITA to live out this organizational value. The team will research the implications of different activities and choices for the division, and benchmark against the practices of other associations inside and outside of the library world. They will present the results of their research and make recommendations for new and changed practices. The team should also consider how to make transitions in division practices and communicate them with the membership.

A Way Forward: LITA Sustainability Solutions

2020 Emerging Leaders Project
Kristen Cooper, Tonya Ferrell, Kelsey Flynn, Laura Mendez, Tonya Ryals, Paige Walker

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Executive Summary

The following report represents a synthesis of the research and recommendations of the 2020 Library Information Technology Association (LITA) Emerging Leaders team for the project *A Way Forward: LITA Sustainability Solutions.* The team researched the organization and sustainability plans of the top fifteen trade organizations in the United States, surveyed LITA membership, and developed a set of recommendations and best practices for both financial and environmental sustainability.

For reference, all project documents, including team meeting notes, are available in the shared Google folder 2020 Emerging Leaders Team.[1] This report also links to several appendices that are located in the shared folder.

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[1] "2020 Emerging Leaders Team - Google Drive," accessed June 17, 2020, https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1AG9zmNskVJTi52z0T11RRsIbD4lhysE1.

Initial Research and Benchmarks

Summary

At the outset of our project, we conducted research on a selection of the top fifteen trade organizations in the United States.[2] We examined their leadership structure, membership fees, annual conferences, finances, and sustainability initiatives and compared them to LITA's current practices. The analyzed results were then used as benchmarks for recommended transitions and best practices.

Methods

LITA is a division of the American Library Association, the fifth largest trade association in the United States.[3] We began our project by examining the structure and practices of a selection of the top fifteen trade and professional organizations in the United States in order to identify best practices in similar organizations. Trade associations are focused on an industry as a whole, and support research, advocacy, and education. Professional organizations work to help individual members advance their careers, typically through offering perks like certifications, education, and job boards.

The following is an analysis of the membership, practices, and governance of the American Advertising Federation, the American Bar Association, the American Dental Association, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the American Management Association, the American Medical Association, the American Nurses Association, the American Psychological Association, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Association of Female Executives, the National Association of Realtors, the National Association of Social Workers, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and United for Libraries.

For reference, the aggregated research points are provided in Appendix A.

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[2] "Professional and Trade Organizations," accessed June 17, 2020, https://www.referenceforbusiness.com/encyclopedia/Per-Pro/Professional-and-Trade-Organizations.html.
[3] Ibid.

Results

Membership

LITA, a division of ALA, currently holds approximately 2,000 members[4] and is governed by a President, Vice-President/President-Elect, Board of Directors, and the Executive Committee. In addition to the ALA annual membership fee, LITA members contribute an extra $60 annually, with discounted rates available for non-salaried individuals, students, or corporate membership. In comparison, the organizations we researched varied in membership from 5,000 to 1.3 million individuals. Membership fees for LITA include discounts on online webinars and courses, a discount on LITA Guides and annual Forum attendance, and a variety of interest groups, committees, and publishing and presentation opportunities.

Many of the top US professional and trade organizations offer corporate or group rate membership opportunities. The American Advertising Federation (AAF) is a smaller organization with about 40,000 members, many of which are corporate memberships. Corporate membership costs are based on how many staff members are in each business. LITA could employ this tactic by allowing for library memberships in addition to individual memberships. The American Bar Association (ABA) also has a similar approach to membership with group rates for entire firms. Over 400,000 people are members of ABA, with separately 2,000 firms having group memberships. The American Management Association (AMA), founded in 1923, has over 25,000 members and offers individual or corporate packages for membership ranging from $250 to $2,495.

Other organizations base their membership on a sliding scale rate, or length of membership. For example, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) was founded in 1887 and currently has over 657,000 members. Members pay dues on a sliding scale, from $150 to $475 annually for individual memberships. The American Psychological Association (APA) has over 118,000 members and bases their membership costs on how long you have been a member. Similarly, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics offers two levels of membership; essential membership is $89 and includes access to online content, while premium membership is $139 and includes access to the online content in addition to discounts to in-person events.

Other organizations utilize different membership models that LITA may consider for future development. For example, The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), with 113,000 members, offers Basic, Select, and Premium membership categories that correspond with services offered. The National Association of Realtors has a membership base

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[4] "LITA Membership Statistics - Google Sheets," accessed June 17, 2020, https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13FTlx8DzERA4v4AukJj6WubGpM5tE2hCGUPtkRmwI9w/edit#gid=863236981.

of approximately 1.3 million members. Their membership structure requires individuals to sign up for the local chapter of the association, and that membership is automatically extended to the state and national association. They also offer international membership for members who live outside the United States. Another model of interest is the National Association of Female Executives (NAFE), supported by a membership of 60,000 women from multiple career disciplines. Rather than focusing on a single professional track, NAFE works to empower women in their careers by offering public advocacy, education, and networking opportunities. Finally, United for Libraries has 5,000 members paying $50 annually; the organization formed in 2009 as a merger between FOLUSA and ALTA, combining the interests of Friends of the Library and board trustee members.

Conferences

National Conferences

National conferences grant members the opportunity for networking, professional development, and exposure to new products and practices in their fields. Eleven of the fourteen professional and trade organizations our team researched offered an annual conference. These include: American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the American Dental Association, the American Management Association, the American Medical Association, the American Nurses Association, the American Psychological Association, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Association of Female Executives, the National Association of Realtors, the National Association of Social Workers, and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. In contrast, LITA holds an annual Forum, as well as Board meetings at both the ALA Annual and Midwinter conferences.

United For Libraries members pay $50 a year and do not have a standalone conference. While they host sessions at ALA's conferences, they have online offerings that are available to members. Notably, they provide training to new trustees. They also provide "quick take" training videos of 5-10 minutes that can be shown in a board meeting as an abbreviated training course. Finally, they maintain recordings of past webinars on general "beginner" topics.

Local Conferences

In addition to their annual conference and legislative meeting event, the National Association of Realtors offers smaller specialized summits along with a Leadership Academy that is similar in nature to the ALA's Emerging Leaders program. The Academy is composed of in-person and online components that include special guests who host live online "office hours." These guests answer questions and expand on session topics.

Some associations have robust local chapters that support networking and professional development objectives. The National Association of Social Workers has annual chapter conferences across 55 chapters in the United States, and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics hosts between two and three regional conferences with proposals due nearly a

year in advance. Although the National Association of Female Executives offers an annual conference and awards ceremony, their networking opportunities are buoyed by a thriving local network structure, featuring over 35 chapters around the United States. These local networks help keep costs down and encourage organic collaborations.

Virtual Conferences

Virtual conferences and forums are an increasingly attractive option for associations to cut down costs. Given the current climate, many more organizations are turning to virtual environments; however, six of the fourteen associations researched were offering virtual conferences prior to COVID-19. These include the American Bar Association, the American Dental Association, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the National Association of Realtors, the National Association of Social Workers, and the National Conference of Teachers of Mathematics.

Many of these organizations offer virtual conferences as a supplement to in-person national annual conferences rather than a replacement. For example, the National Association of Realtors offers Conference Live, a virtual window into in-person conference events. In addition to their annual conference, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants offers over 35 mini-conferences throughout the year catering to specialized topics; most of those conferences offer a virtual attendance option.

Virtual Learning

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual learning has gained wide popularity across professional and trade organizations as a viable income stream. Examples of virtual learning include online forums and discussion boards, access to databases, webinars, and virtual conferences. These services may be included in the membership rate, or be offered at an additional charge. For example, all membership levels of the American Medical Association (AMA) include access to JAMA, their online journal database. The AMA has worked to provide a robust online platform of helpful articles on a range of topics of interest to their membership, including advice for students, medical practice management, budgeting advice, and how to deliver the best care for various ailments. Thirteen of the fourteen associations we researched offer virtual learning options, with the National Association of Female Executives as the outlier.

Webinars

Webinars are a cost-effective tool that can attract a diverse range of attendees. They can be hosted in real time or recorded for later access. The majority of associations researched offer webinars as a core virtual service. Members-only webinars are provided by the American Advertising Federation, the American Bar Association, the American Dental Association, the American Institute for Certified Public Accountants, the American Management Association, the American Medical Association, the American Nurses Association, the American Psychological Association, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National

Association of Realtors, the National Association for Social Workers, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and United for Libraries.

Associations have the option of offering webinars at tiered levels. ASCD provides an example of tiered membership with a unique system of different levels of membership receiving different benefits. For instance, members at the premium level have access to webinars, courses, and toolkits for free. Members at lower levels have the option of attending paid webinars, which may be sponsored by the individual member or their organization.

Continuing Education and Accreditation

Many professional and trade associations offer continuing education (CE) and accreditation options for members to enhance their professional development. For example, The National Association of Realtors provides a variety of online and in-person CE classes and events. Attendance for these events is bolstered by the requirement for real estate agents to earn CE credits throughout the year in order to maintain their license. Their certification and designation program offerings are also valuable tools as the agent is incentivized to gain expertise and accreditation that will allow them to become highly sought-after experts.

With a heavy emphasis on continuing education, the American Medical Association launched an online learning hub, called the AMA Ed Hub,[5] with the aim of being the best multimedia education and training resources in one location that is on demand and available on any device. Ed Hub offers a convenient means for physicians to receive CE credits, which they are required to obtain in order to maintain their medical license. AMA membership provides resources and benefits in addition to Ed Hub, including access to experts that specialize in contract terms, licensing, and certification. The American Advertising Federation also offers their members different certificate workshops at regional conferences as well as online courses and individual webinars. They advertise that these certificates can be put on resumes to boost job marketability.

Additional Membership Incentives

In addition to the membership benefits described above, many professional associations offer incentives beyond discounted conference fees and continuing education. For example, the American Advertising Federation offers a speaker directory which contains contact information for presenters on a range of topics, as well as associated costs for speakers in different areas of the country. The American Bar Association facilitates member networking at conferences, meetings, and webinars using a calendar of events that is displayed prominently on their home page. Membership in the American Nurses Association gives access to credentialing discounts, a job board, and access to professional tools such as CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing &

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[5] "Online Courses and CME from the AMA Ed Hub, JAMA Network, and Steps Forward," accessed June 17, 2020, https://edhub.ama-assn.org/.

Allied Health Literature)[6] and a drug error database, and the American Dental Association membership option includes access to journal subscriptions.

Sustainability Options

Of the professional and trade associations researched, our team identified promising organizational sustainability options outside of traditional member benefits that could be adopted by LITA. For example, the American Psychological Association employs partnerships with many different organizations that have mutual goals, thus cross-marketing webinars, job openings, and research opportunities; their website also features an engaging section on why members should attend conferences, with a "by the numbers" report provided annually.

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics supplies a group registration discount for five or more individuals, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development offers membership conference vouchers, which entices members to attend multiple conferences by providing a discount. Finally, the American Dental Association's famed "Seal of Acceptance" certification provides an extra revenue stream for the organization.

Membership Survey and Analysis Summary

As part of our Emerging Leaders project, we surveyed LITA membership to ascertain members' level of interest in virtual events and gauge attitudes about sustainability and the annual Forum. We had a total of 69 responses to our survey, which equates to approximately 3.4% of LITA's 2,040[7] members. The majority of respondents had been members of LITA for 0-5 years, indicating an influx of new ideas and expectations. We also saw substantial financial concern among respondents; for example, when asked to select the top three reasons they had chosen not to attend a year of LITA Forum, 60% selected the cost of the conference and 50% selected a lack of institutional support. When asked about the benefits of attending a virtual Forum or conference, 74% selected that they most value saving money. Financial and environmental concerns existed prior to the current COVID-19 pandemic and are likely even more striking now as institutional budgets are cut and professional development is frozen at many cultural heritage institutions. A full analysis of the survey responses can be found in the report below; please note that all questions in the survey were not required to be answered, and therefore not all survey response percentages equal 100%.

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[6] "Access the Best and Most Current Nursing and Allied Health Literature," accessed June 17, 2020, https://www.ebscohost.com/nursing/products/cinahl-databases/cinahl-complete.

[7] "LITA Membership Statistics - Google Sheets," accessed June 17, 2020, https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13FTlx8DzERA4v4AukJj6WubGpM5tE2hCGUPtkRmwI9w/edit#gid=863236981.

Methods

The project team developed the survey questions based on the results of the research into other professional and trade organizations, as well as conversations with LITA leadership at the ALA Midwinter 2020 conference. The survey was drafted in Google Forms and consisted of twenty-two questions. Once drafted, the survey was sent to member guide Margaret Heller, staff liaison Jenny Levine, LITA President Emily Morton-Owens, the LITA Assessment & Research Committee, and the Forum 2020 Chair for review before delivery. The survey was then sent to the current LITA membership by Jenny Levine and was open from March 24 to April 19, 2020. It was also shared via the LITA blog[8] on April 12, 2020. See Appendix B for the full survey questions and responses.

Analysis of Survey Responses

Response Rate

The total number of responses was 69, or a 3.4% response rate based on LITA membership of 2,040 as of February 2020. All respondents were members of LITA.

Demographics

Academic librarians were the largest group of survey respondents at 48%, followed by those that selected "other" at 25%, and public librarians at 23%. Respondents came from 30 states with an additional three selecting "other." The states with the largest number of respondents included Illinois (9), Texas (7), Michigan (5), and New York (5). When asked how long they had been members of LITA, 44% selected 0 to 5 years, 25% selected 16+ years, and 16% selected 6 to 10 years. Additionally, respondents were asked how their LITA membership was funded. The majority (74%) pay for membership themselves, while 25% indicated that their institution pays. The remaining individual indicated that their membership is paid for by a combination of self and their institution. For the full demographic results, please see the tables in Appendix B.

LITA Forum

When asked if they have ever attended a LITA Forum or were planning on attending in 2020, 40 respondents (58%) indicated they had attended or would be this year. In addition, respondents were asked how many times they have attended the Forum, with most having attended between one and three years (Table 4). When asked about the top three reasons they enjoy the Forum, the most common responses were: sessions (95%), speakers (50%), and meeting new people (40%) (Figure 1). Other responses indicated that members attended Forum in order to present or in order to meet their peer committee members. Respondents were also asked what they felt

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[8] "ALA LITA Emerging Leaders: Inventing a Sustainable Division – LITA Blog," accessed June 22, 2020, https://litablog.org/2020/04/ala-lita-emerging-leaders-inventing-a-sustainable-division/.

the benefits were of attending LITA Forum versus other conferences, the most popular reasons were applicable sessions and lower costs for attending at 83% and 43%, respectively. (Figure 2). Other responses included that the smaller size of the conference makes it easier to make better connections with fellow attendees.

When asked to select the top three reasons they had chosen not to attend a year of LITA Forum, 60% selected the cost of the conference, 50% selected a lack of institutional support, and 45% selected that they attended different conferences that year (Figure 3). Additional reasons given included that the respondent was new to LITA or that previous job positions and duties had not been relevant to LITA.

For the twenty-nine respondents who selected that they have not attended the LITA Forum, the most common responses were cost (62%) and lack of institutional support (35%) (Figure 4). These results were similar to the reasons the respondents that have attended in the past have missed conferences some years. Other reasons provided included that the respondent had not been aware of the event, that the respondent felt the Forum was very specific and geared toward academics, and that they had not been a member at the time of the last conference.

Sustainability

In this section of the survey, respondents were asked if they or their institution would be willing to donate to an optional carbon offsetting fund when registering for the Forum. 36% were not willing to donate, 17% selected six to ten dollars, and 15% selected zero to five dollars (Figure 5). Respondents were also asked how much more they would be willing to pay more for registration if the location were partnering with LITA on sustainability initiatives (e.g., donating or composting food, recycling, or being held in a LEED-certified building). Members were split on this choice, with 28% not willing to pay more, 26% willing to pay twenty to twenty-nine dollars more, and 16% willing to pay ten to nineteen dollars more (Figure 6).

While the majority of participants either had no additional suggestions for environmentally sustainable practices or were unsure of what they would like to see, 14% of respondents indicated that they would like to see either a virtual conference or a remote attendance option.

Other notable suggestions included moving paper handouts and conference programs online (perhaps to the ALA Connect app); making sure conferences are fully accessible by public transportation and giving clear guidance on how to utilize those transportation options (e.g., where to buy tickets or passes ahead of time); making sure recycling was available at the conference and/or not providing bottled water; and not providing "swag." Additional suggestions from individual respondents included the follow options: asking vendors to donate leftover food to charity, booking LITA adjacent to ALA Annual to reduce travel and environmental cost, sourcing food from local, sustainable, small farms, lobbying against planned obsolescence, and supporting green transportation options (such as electric). Two respondents also noted that if LITA is going to focus on being more environmentally conscious, they would also like to see a

focus on social justice issues, such as making donations to local organizations that support people with disabilities and addressing local hunger issues.

While it's clear that the survey respondents did not believe environmental sustainability should be a focus for LITA, there are still some small steps that LITA can take to make sure they are engaging in some environmentally sustainable practices.

Virtual events

Respondents were asked what they would value most if they attended a virtual conference. Of the 69 respondents, 74% selected that they value saving money, 57% value saving time, and 44% value saving the environment. In the free-response section, the most common response was they would attend if content/topics/sessions were interesting or applicable (Figure 7). Respondents also said that they would attend a virtual conference and find value in it if the content, topics, and/or sessions were interesting or applicable to them.

Of those who indicated that they would not attend a virtual conference, 39% responded that they prefer person-to-person interaction. Another 13% would not attend due to inconvenient days and times (Figure 8). In the free-response section respondents pointed out that virtual conferences are susceptible to interruption while tuning in from the office, causing attendees to miss content. Members were then asked about their past attendance to LITA webinars and courses. 64% of respondents have never attended a LITA webinar or course; when asked why they have never attended a LITA webinar 25% responded that it was too expensive, 22% percent did not like the topic, and 16% responded that it was not offered at the right time of day or year (Figure 9). The most common free-response answer indicated that respondents had prioritized other development opportunities.

Of those that had attended a LITA webinar or course, 25% indicated they enjoyed the specific content being related to their job as well as the presenter being knowledgeable on the topic. Another 10% indicated that they enjoyed the interaction with other attendees and the presenter as part of the experience. Three respondents noted that having access to the recordings afterwards and receiving handouts and documents was important to them. Other responses highlighted the convenience of the webinar or class (i.e., they did not have to travel to attend), the low cost of offerings, and the seamless technology experience in participating.

One survey respondent suggested that LITA emulate the Electronic Resources and Libraries (ER&L) Conference[9] as the division moves forward. Upon reviewing their model, we concur that this conference demonstrates the following highlights:
- Remote attendance is offered for every Forum
- Registration includes group attendance options
- Conference tracks correlate with relevant topics
- The conference is held in a recognized sustainable, green city (Austin, TX)

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[9] "Electronic Resources and Libraries," accessed June 17, 2020, https://www.electroniclibrarian.org/.

ER&L has been committed to remote attendance for fifteen years. This commitment helps colleagues who are unable to travel due to cost, family obligations, medical reasons, and more. ER&L's website includes a statement of commitment to accessibility and inclusivity, a statement of commitment to sustainability, and identified actions toward those commitments.

Recommendations and Best Practices

Short-Term Recommendations

Environmental Sustainability Registration Options

Our survey asked members if they or their institutions would be willing to donate funding that would offset their carbon footprint while registering for Forum. Although our survey results demonstrated that a slight majority (54%) was not committed to contributing extra money toward this cause, almost half (46%) of respondents did demonstrate interest in this option. Ten people said they would contribute zero to five dollars, twelve people said they would contribute six to ten dollars, three people said they would contribute eleven to fifteen dollars, and seven said they would contribute more than fifteen dollars. Therefore, the authors of this report recommend that the Division implement an option for a five dollar donation to offset carbon emissions while registering for the Forum. This would provide a means of increasing environmental sustainability for those who are in the position of doing so.

Student Governance Positions

The division may also consider designating one or two positions on its Board for students or new professionals. These seats would invigorate the Board with fresh ideas from ambitious and energized library workers, and provide an onramp for newer members to engage with the division at a higher level.

Affordability and Promotion of Continuing Education

With the proliferation of low-cost professional development opportunities, the authors of this report recommend that the division lower the cost of webinars and other professional development opportunities. Our survey demonstrated that the most common reason LITA members did not attend webinars or courses was due to their cost (42.5%). The lower costs of such content will encourage greater attendance and broaden the division's community engagement. Furthermore, affordable professional development opportunities provide a service to library practitioners who are underemployed or whose home institutions do not or cannot fund such learning opportunities.

64% of respondents have never attended a LITA webinar or course. As a main branch of LITA's services, outreach in this area should be a key strategy moving forward. We recommend more pre-planning and promotion of services so that members and non-members are aware of the opportunities well in advance. We also recommend including one free webinar yearly for those that join LITA or renew their membership. This strategy will not only entice people to join LITA, but will also be a gateway for people who have never attended a LITA webinar or course to experience the value a LITA webinar or course can provide.

Mid-Term Recommendations

A More Flexible Forum

The authors of this report recommend that Forum be held in-person every other year. Sixty percent of our survey respondents indicated that they did not attend Forum due to financial concerns; offering Forum as a biennial event may allow more participants to attend. Furthermore, a biennial Forum will reduce time spent on planning and implementation--freeing staff time to focus on implementing mid- and long-term recommendations--and would also help minimize the environmental impact of hosting large in-person events.

In the off-year, LITA could hold a virtual "unconference" that would be free to members and a nominal cost for non-members. This informal learning opportunity would require a much lower investment from LITA leadership, which could alleviate some cost. A virtual unconference could also allow attendees to be more active in the event, which could alleviate the virtual fatigue of passive listening and watching. Furthermore, the authors of this report believe that an informal virtual unconference may entice people to join the division and attend the in-person Forum since they would be able to better understand the division and its offerings without the overhead of attending an in-person event. In order to facilitate the unconference, LITA may identify topics for round tables, establish guiding questions for discussion, and recruit table hosts. This option also helps to replicate some of the in-person networking and discussion that LITA members value.

Pilot Certificate Program

The authors of this report recommend that LITA consider offering certificates as a part of its continuing education program. These certificates will incentivize members and non-members to invest in LITA programming and contribute to the overall financial wellbeing of the organization. Therefore, we recommend that the division investigate a pilot certificate program as part of their mid-term planning.

Certificate programs can be very beneficial to associations and divisions because they can create a sustainable revenue stream as well as increase membership.[10] Library workers value

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[10] "The Top 6 Reasons to Launch a Certification Program at Your Association," Accredible, October 9, 2017, https://www.accredible.com/the-top-6-reasons-to-launch-a-certification-program-at-your-association/.

learning new skills that relate to the latest trends and technology. Certificate programs have the ability to develop, qualify, distinguish, and recognize people for their work in attaining skills and knowledge.[11]

A study conducted by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) Foundation and North Carolina State University's Institute for Nonprofits revealed that associations, managers, and designation holders of certificates find value and standardization in certificate programs. The ASAE Foundation surveyed "managers of credentialing programs and leaders of associations that support one or more credential."[12] Their study found that members who earned certificates were both legitimized in their profession and were more loyal to their accrediting associations. The authors concluded that hiring managers interpret certificates as evidence of skills and competencies, and that listing them on resumes increases applicants' competitive advantage in the hiring process. Furthermore, associations that support certificate programs saw an increase in total membership as well as their legitimacy and visibility. A certificate program through LITA would be advantageous to libraries, staff, and the division.

In order to create a sustainable certificate program, the division would need to identify an in-demand certificate topic. They may complete this assessment by 1) inventorying their most popular past webinars, and 2) engaging with their membership to identify the needs of members and institutions. Our 2020 LITA survey demonstrated that members are interested in the newest technology trends, marketing, leadership, and accessibility. Offering a certificate program in any of these topics would provide members with a tangible benefit of their membership.

After identifying a topic, the division would then have to identify a Learning Management System (LMS) to host certificate content.[13] There are many resources and different types of LMS available at a wide variety of costs. Alternatively, the division could market certificate programs through different platforms like Coursera. This online learning tool has an affiliates program that would give an organization 45% commission on any purchases made on courses linked through the organization.[14] Partnering with Coursera or any kind of certificate program service could generate revenue to increase financial sustainability for the division.

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[11] Judith Hale and Raymond Robertson, "Performance-Based Certification: How to Design a Valid, Defensible, Cost-Effective Program," *Performance Improvement* 40, no. 2 (2001): 41–44, https://doi.org/10.1002/pfi.4140400210.

[12] "The Benefits of Credentialing Programs to Membership Associations," ASAE, accessed June 17, 2020, https://www.asaecenter.org:443/en/publications/107675-the-benefits-of-credentialing-programs-to-membership-assns-pdf.

[13] "How To Find The Right Learning Management System For Your Certification Course," eLearning Industry, December 27, 2017, https://elearningindustry.com/right-lms-course-launch-your-own-certification-program.

[14] "Affiliate Program," Coursera, accessed June 17, 2020, https://about.coursera.org/affiliates.

One model that the division may consider is the Society of American Archivists (SAA)'s Digital Archives Specialist certificate.[15] This program comprises a series of in-person and online courses that pertain to digital archives. Students may choose from a variety of listings, but must complete nine courses in total over a span of two years, pass a ten-question quiz after each course, and pass a 100-question exam at the end of the program before earning their certificate. Furthermore, the curriculum[16] is structured to give students a breadth of expertise in fundamentals, strategies, and tools. Certified Digital Archives Specialists must renew their certification every five years. Content is offered at a discounted rate to paying SAA members. This Digital Archives Specialist certificate not only benefits archives practitioners looking to boost their resume or gain new skills, but also benefits SAA with an in-demand program and continuous revenue stream. The authors of this report suggest that LITA confer with SAA to learn more about their certificate programs, including the labor necessary for their creation as well as the financial benefits of these continuing education options.

Long-Term Recommendations

Certificate Pathways

After launching the pilot certificate program, the division should build upon it with select diverse pathways. These pathways should represent the larger interests of the division. For instance, the division could create separate tracks that represent previous incarnations of divisions that united to form Core. By creating certificate programs for topics such as leadership, collection development, technical services, and information technology, the division would give its members the ability to deepen their own interests with specific tracks, as well as broaden their interests by pursuing other tracks.

Local and State Partnerships

In the next five to ten years, the division should consider whether it wants to strengthen its regional reach. If so, it should focus on developing partnerships with local and state conferences so that it can build sessions and meetings into state and regional conferences. These events could replicate the in-person experience of networking at conferences while simultaneously minimizing the fiscal and environmental cost of hosting an annual standalone conference specifically for the division.

Varied Membership Options

The authors of this report also recommend that the division explore offering varied levels of membership. Simple membership could include a limited amount of webinars; conference

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[15] "Digital Archives Specialist (DAS) Curriculum and Certificate Program | Society of American Archivists," accessed June 17, 2020, https://www2.archivists.org/prof-education/das.

[16] "DAS Curriculum Structure | Society of American Archivists," accessed June 17, 2020, https://www2.archivists.org/prof-education/das-curriculum-structure.

discounts; "deluxe" membership could include additional webinars, certificate tracks, training videos, etc. These membership options would allow prospective members to engage with the division in the way that best meets their needs, which in turn will allow the division to appeal to a variety of library workers.

Next Steps

Though LITA is now transitioning into Core, our group suggests that our recommendations be used for this new division. We were tasked with making a more environmentally and financially sustainable division and we believe that by following our plan, Core will be able to achieve this in the future. The main conclusions of our research have led us to recommend that there be a biennial Forum and in the off year an unconference. As cost is the biggest prohibitive factor with membership in attending Forum and webinars, we also suggest that there be lower costs for continuing education webinars. One suggestion is to have one free webinar available to members to entice them into sampling what the division has to offer.

Other short term goals would be to have at least one to two students or new professionals as a part of the Board. Also to make the Forum more environmentally sustainable by giving the option while registering, of a five dollar donation to offset carbon emissions. Eliminating plastic water bottles and swag given to attendees is another option that was requested by those who took our survey.

We also strongly recommend creating a certificate program as a means of increasing membership and creating a sustainable revenue stream. As the certificate program develops and becomes popular, the next step would be to create certificate pathways. For long-term suggestions we think that having the different types of membership options available would encourage growth in membership numbers. Finally, partnering with more local, state, and national organizations would be beneficial to the division's overall sustainability.

The 2020 LITA Emerging Leaders team would like to thank everyone who has helped with the assignment and to LITA for the opportunity to work on such a unique project. Developing sustainability practices and recommendations during such an unprecedented time was a rare opportunity that required flexibility, teamwork, and balance. During the course of our project, we saw an ALA election and the subsequent adoption of the Core division, a global pandemic, rapid changes in our home library operations, and one group member even experienced a tornado in her hometown. As Emerging Leaders, we welcomed these challenges as opportunities for growth. We look forward to seeing our cohort and colleagues at the 2021 ALA Annual Conference.

Appendix A

Please use the following link to access the [organizational research results spreadsheet](#).

Appendix B

Survey questions

Please use the following link to access the [full list of survey questions](#).

Demographics

What kind of library do you work in?	
Academic	33
Other	17
Public	16
Special	2
School	1
Tribal	0

Table 1.

How many years have you been a member of LITA?	
0-5	30
16+	17
6 -10	10
11 - 15	11
Not currently a member	0

Table 2.

Who pays for your membership?	
Self	51
Institution	17
Other*	1
*Mix between Institution and self depending on professional development funding	

Table 3.

LITA Forum

How many times have you attended the LITA forum?				
0	2		6	1
1	13		8	2
2	6		9	1
3	8		10	1
4	1		10+	1
4 - 5	1		15+	1
At least 5	1		1st time in 2020	2

Table 4.
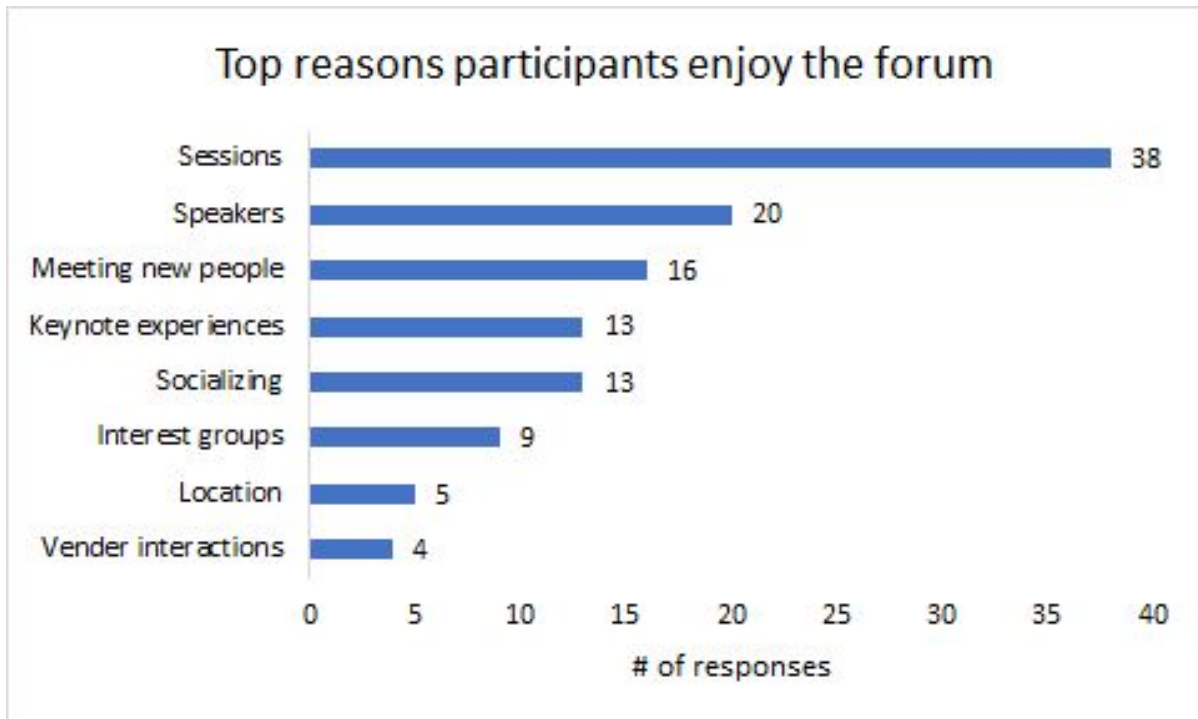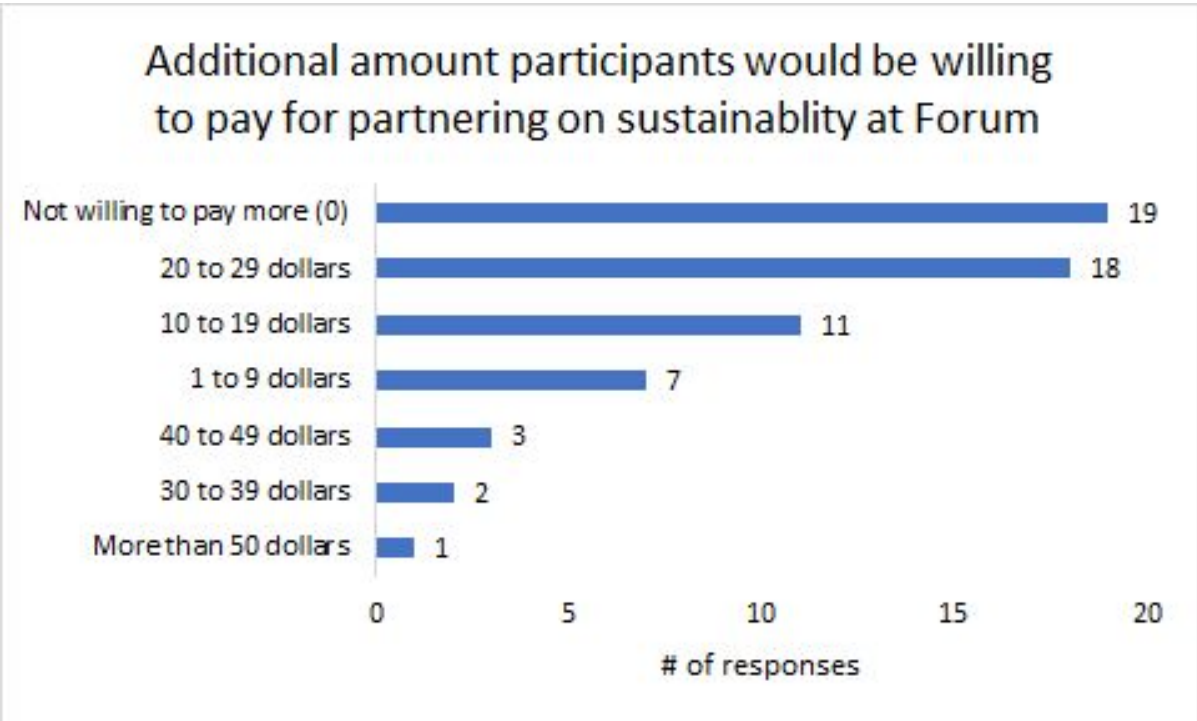
Figure 1.
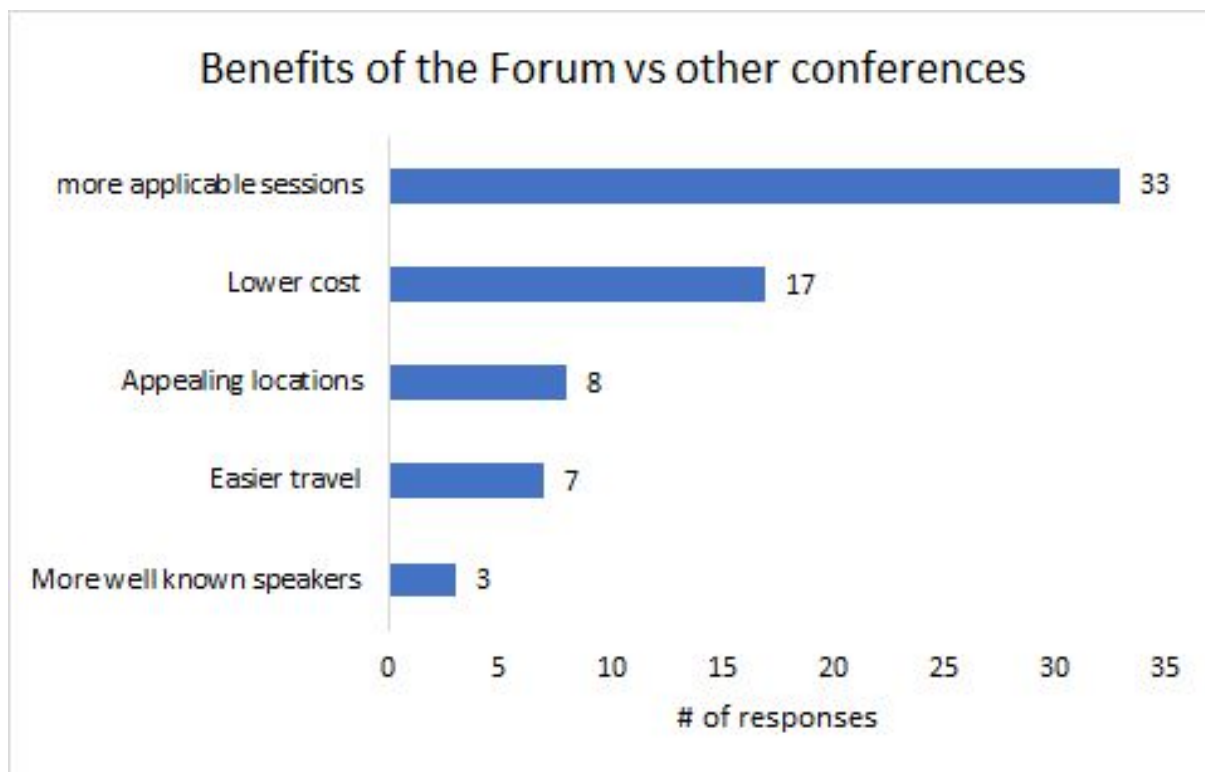
Figure 2.
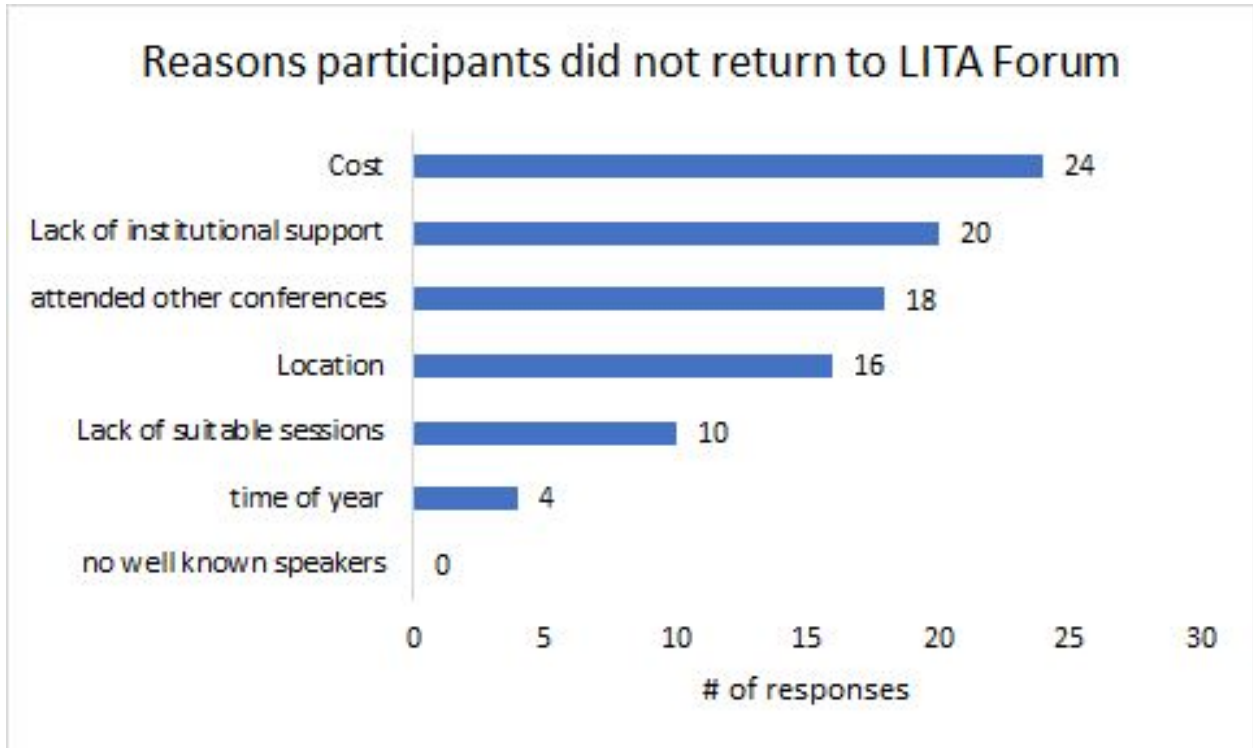
Figure 3.
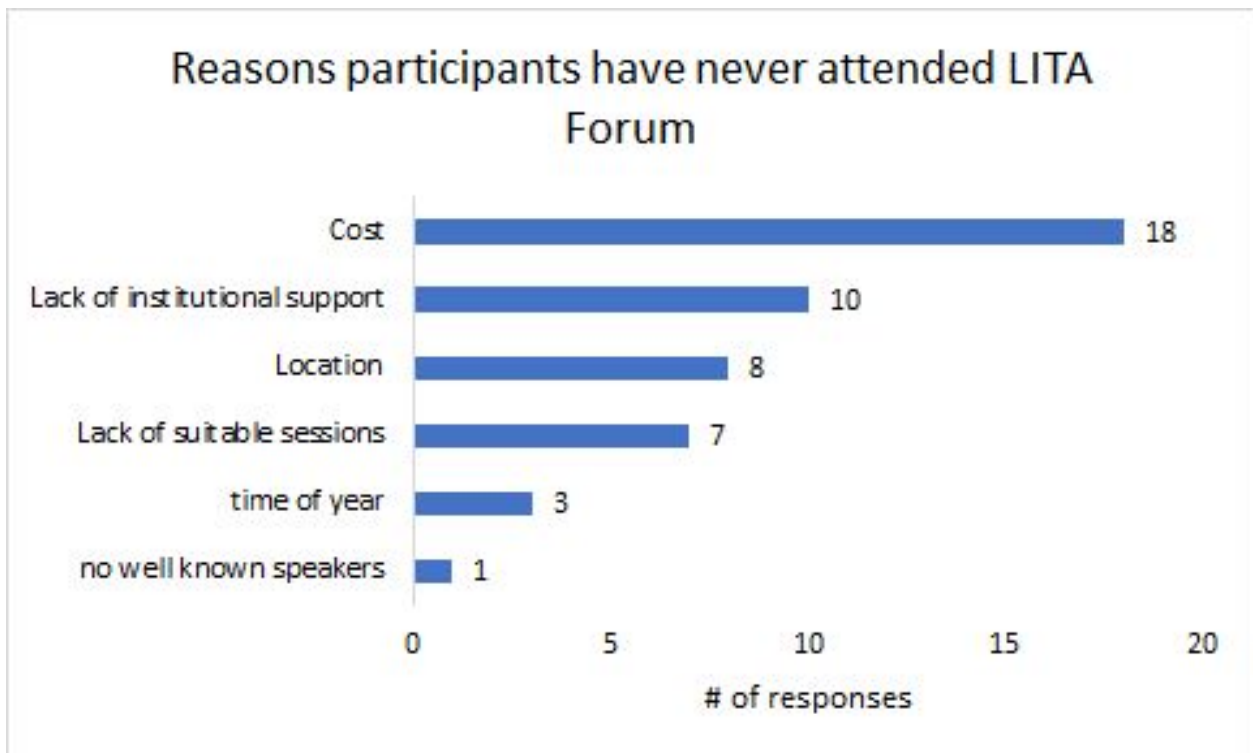
Figure 4.

Sustainability
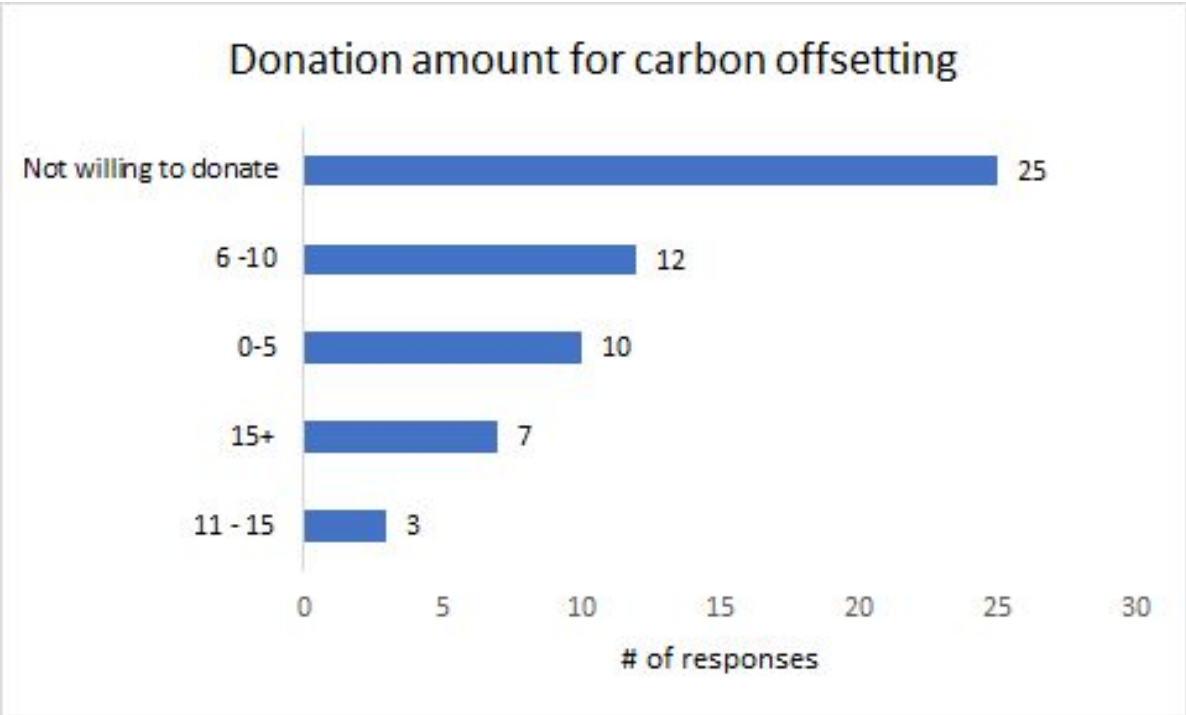
Figure 5.

Figure 6.

Virtual Events

Most valuable aspects of virtual conferences

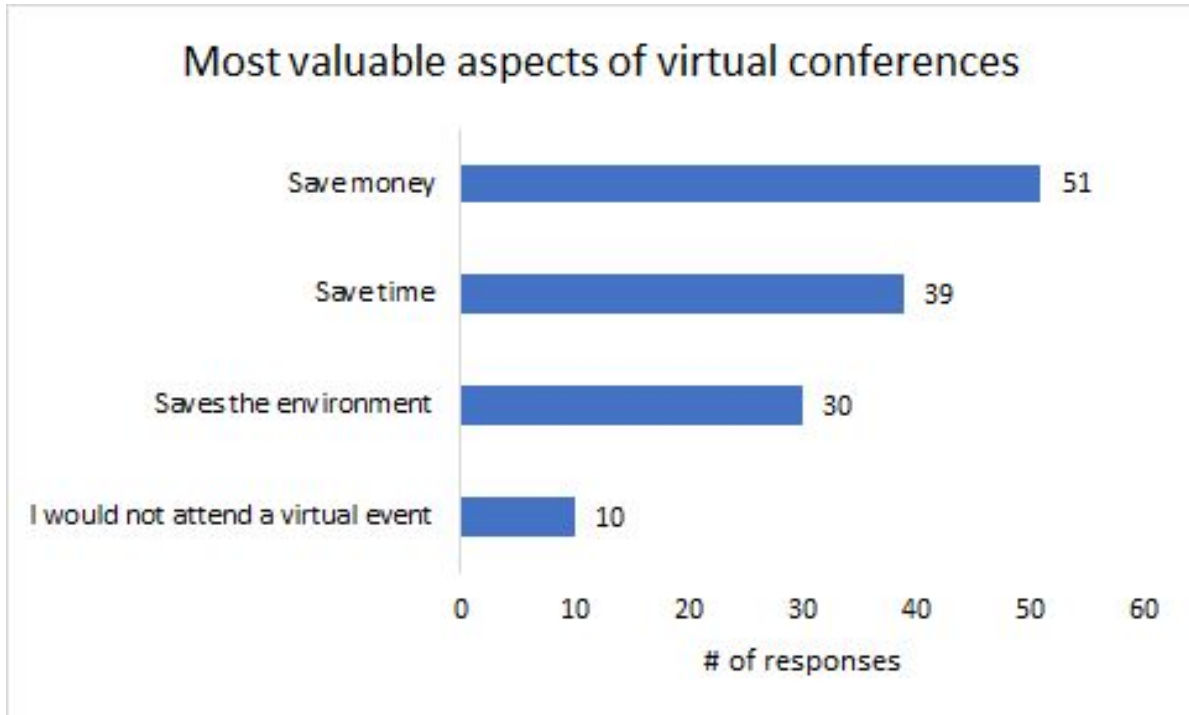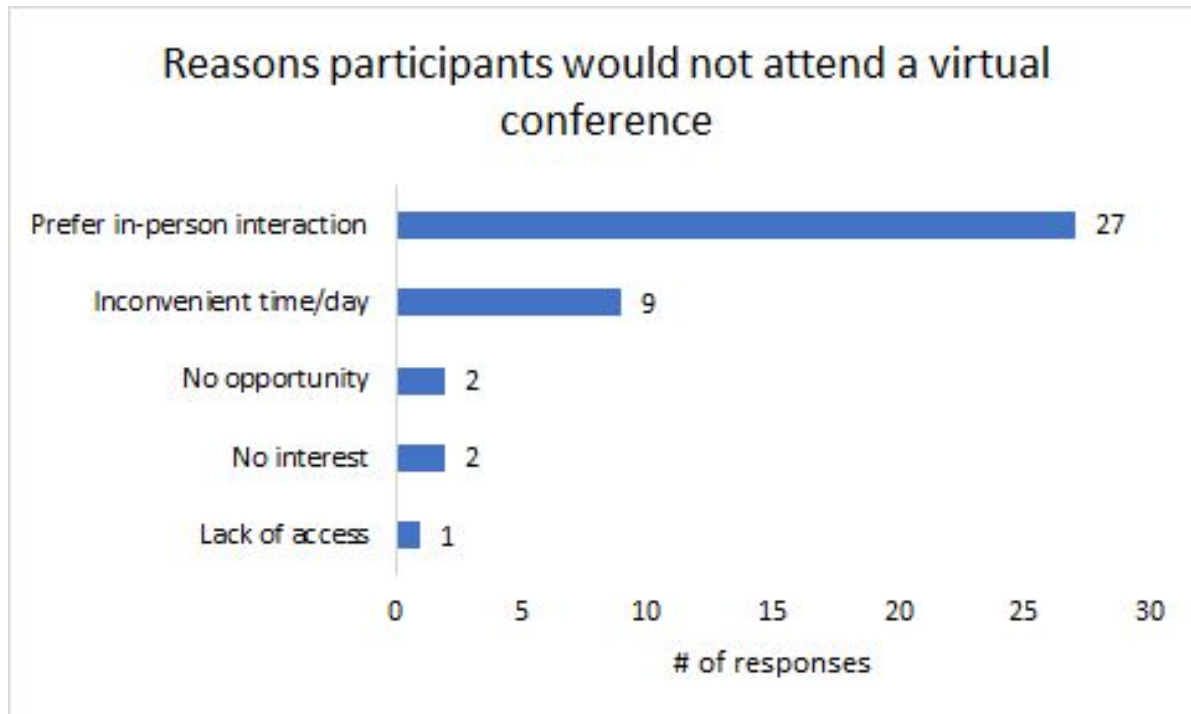| Aspect	# of responses
Save money	51
Save time	39
Saves the environment	30
I would not attend a virtual event	10

Figure 7.

Figure 8.

Figure 9.