

TO: PLA Board of Directors

FROM: Joe Potaczek, CAE
PLA Deputy Executive Director

RE: **Membership Research Study Report**

DATE: June 26, 2009

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:
Information

ACTION REQUESTED BY:
Joe Potaczek CAE, PLA Deputy Executive Director

DRAFT OF MOTION:
N/A

BACKGROUND:

Attached is report developed by Loyalty Research based on the member survey conducted in Winter 2009 to PLA members and lapsed members. This information is being used by PLA staff for strengthening membership offerings/value proposition and messaging.

Mr. Larry Siebert, PhD of Loyalty Research, who conducted the survey for PLA will present an executive summary of the data to the PLA board.

Notes

Public Library Association

2009 Member Loyalty Survey

Executive Summary

Program Objectives

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1. Provide PLA with an understanding of members' specific needs and service expectations.
2. Provide PLA with a clear understanding of the most important drivers of member behavior – specifically what drives loyalty the most.
3. Provide PLA with a valid, objective, and quantitative evaluation of loyalty so that PLA performance metrics can be measured year after year.
4. Provide the ability to identify loyal, neutral and vulnerable members and to determine why they are loyal, neutral or vulnerable.
5. Establish priorities for improving member relationships and migrating members from one relationship segment to a higher one.

Data Collection

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1. On January 12, 2009, an email invitation was sent by the Loyalty Research Center to all current members with an email address on file as well as former members who had allowed their membership to lapse in the past 5 years. The email message contained a clickable link to the online survey. A reminder email, using the same wording as the original email, but noted as a reminder, was sent on January 20, 2009. Data were gathered from current members and lapsed members via the online survey software from January 12 to January 27, 2009.
2. There were 9,734 emails sent to current members, of which 9,183 (94.3%) were delivered. Of those emails delivered, 2,630 (28.6%) were opened and 2,319 (25%) of the recipients clicked on the survey link.
3. There were 5,804 emails sent to dropped members, of which 4,483 (77.2%) were delivered. Of those emails delivered, 1,090 (24.3%) were opened and 806 (18.0%) of the recipients clicked on the survey link.
4. There are 2,532 completed member surveys, and 676 completed dropped member surveys. Some individuals in the dropped member list identified themselves as current PLA members.
5. Participants who completed the survey were entered into a drawing for a \$300 AMEX gift card, or one of four \$50 AMEX gift cards.

Overview of Statistical Analyses

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1. Percentages in this report that relate to all respondents as a group are precise to +/- 1.67%.
2. As a rule of thumb, any performance rating (top 2 rating) that exceeds 70% is considered adequate, and no special attention is recommended. Organizational areas and attributes with performance ratings below 60% should be considered for improvement efforts, when the area or attribute is a key driver.
3. Loyalty is determined by individuals' responses to three questions: (1) likelihood to recommend PLA, (2) likelihood to renew their membership, and (3) their rating for the value of their membership. Individuals who give top 2 responses to all three questions are loyal. Those who give a bottom 2 response to any of the three questions are vulnerable, and everyone else is considered to be neutral.
4. During the data analysis, we discovered that the only member type with a sufficient number of respondents for detailed analysis is Regular members, who account for 86% of all respondents. The next largest member group is students, but with only 190 respondents, there is an insufficient number for detailed analysis. Therefore, all the analyses and recommendations in this report focus on Regular members.

Characteristics of Respondents

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1. Forty-two percent (42%) of Regular members have recommended PLA to a friend or colleague recently.
2. Eighteen percent (18%) of Regular members have intentionally allowed their membership to lapse, and then rejoined PLA.
3. Of those who intentionally allowed their membership to lapse, 31% maintained their ALA membership, and of those, 56% joined or maintained their membership in another division of ALA.
4. Forty-four percent (44%) of Regular members have 100% of their dues paid by their employer.
5. Of those who do not personally pay all of their dues, 43% are extremely likely or very likely to renew their membership if they had to pay 100% of their dues. Twenty-four percent (24%) of those who do not pay their dues would be not very likely or not at all likely to renew their membership without being reimbursed.
6. For the 2008 National Conference, travel expenses had a major impact in the decision to attend or not attend for 42% of Regular member respondents, a minor impact for 24% of respondents, and no impact for 34% of respondents.
7. If PLA made education available through online webinars, 42% of respondents would be extremely likely or very likely to participate.

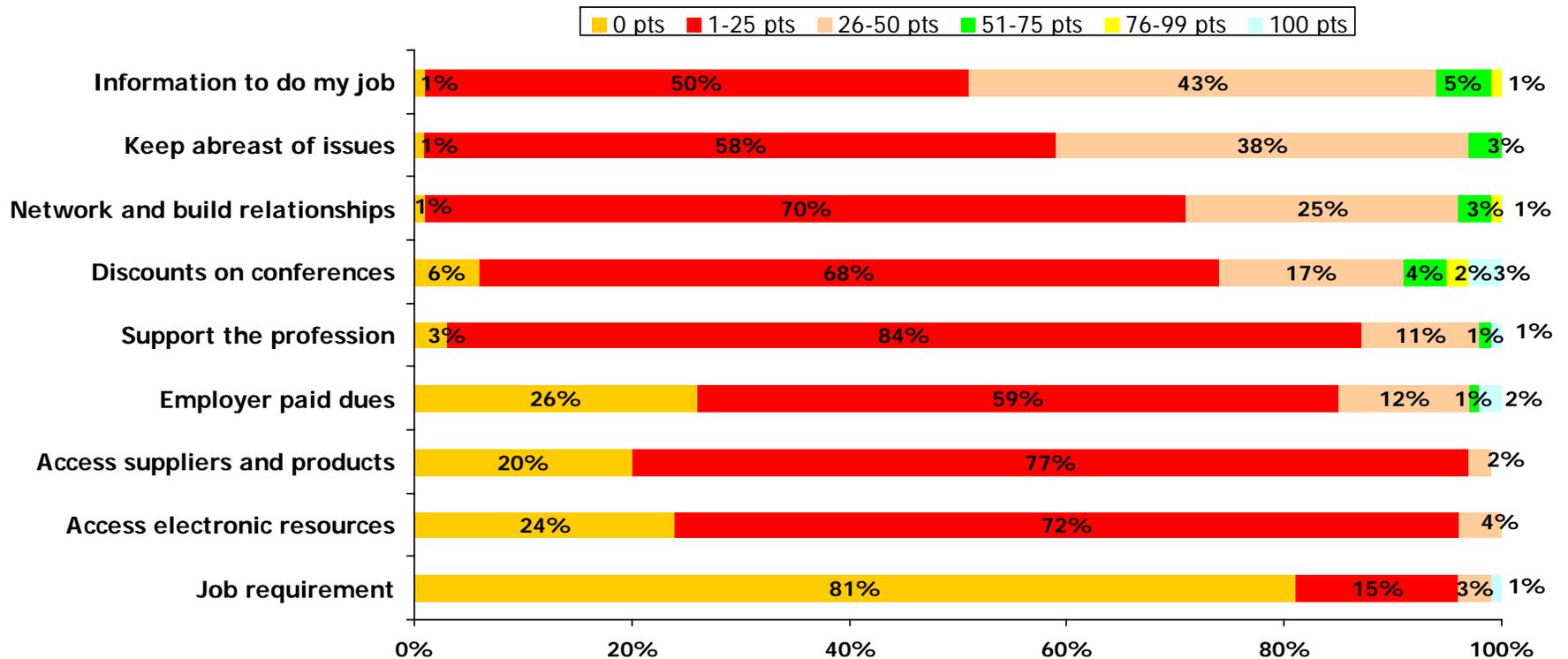
Characteristics of Respondents

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8. Seventy-two percent (72%) of Library Directors allow their staff to take online courses during work time, 2% do not, and 26% decide on a case by case basis.
9. With the changes from Committees to Communities of Practice, 27% of respondents feel they have more opportunities to get involved, 15% believe they have fewer opportunities, and 58% believe they have the same number of opportunities to get involved.
10. Thirty-three percent (33%) of respondents are aware of PLAspace.
11. One percent (1%) of respondents have experienced a significant problem with PLA in the past 6 months. (A typical organization will experience 8%-10% problem experience.)
12. Twenty-eight percent (28%) report they are extremely confident or very confident that if a problem arises they know whether it is a PLA issue or an ALA issue, 44% are somewhat confident, and 28% are not very confident or not at all confident.
13. Ninety-three percent (93%) of Regular member respondents have a Master's Degree in Library Science, and 3% have a CPLA certification.
14. Fifty-three percent (53%) of Regular member respondents voted in the latest National Election of Officers.
15. Eighty-six percent (86%) of Regular member respondents are female.

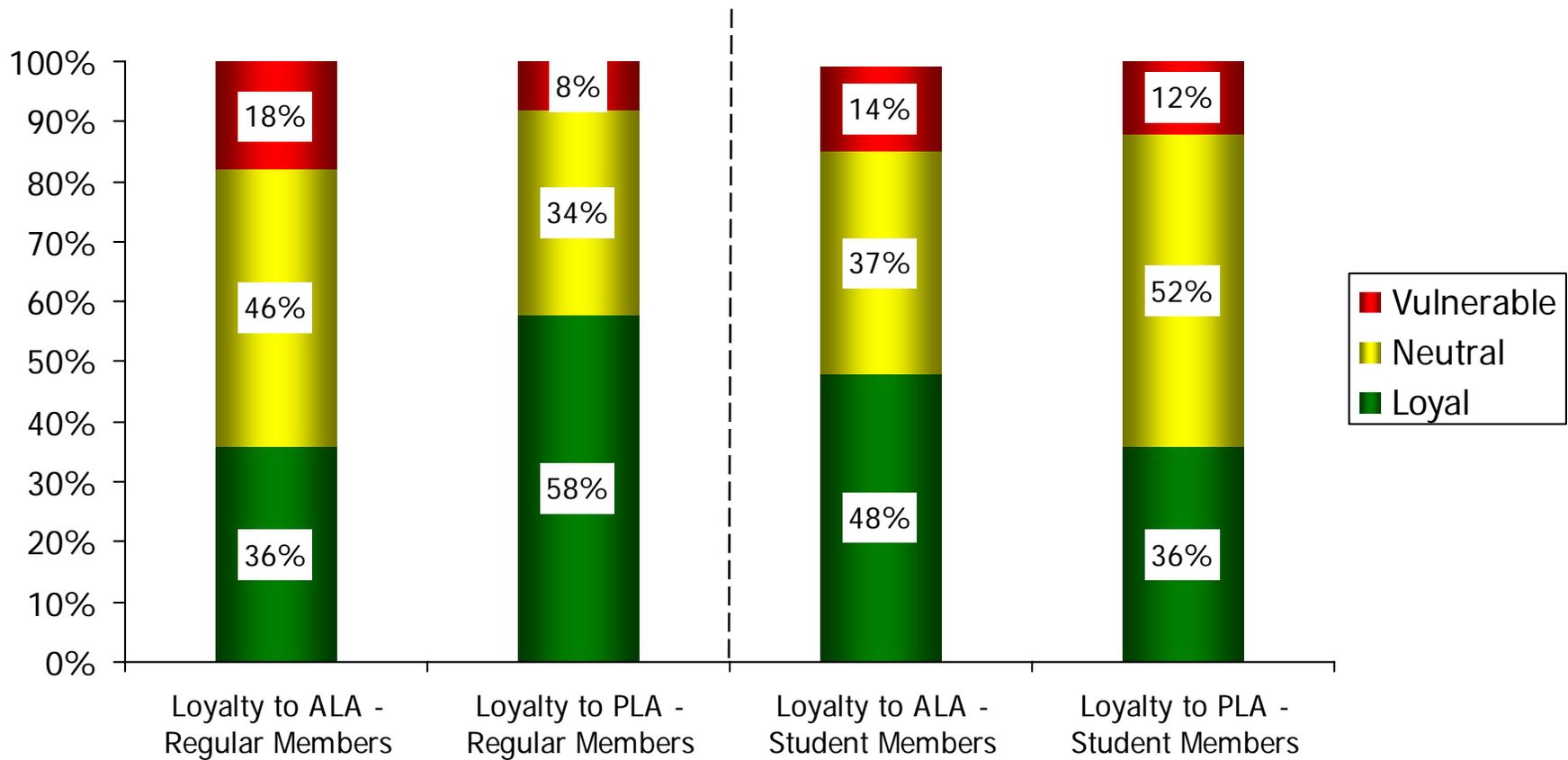
Reasons For Joining PLA – Regular Members

- The reasons why members join PLA are shown below, ranked by importance, with the most important reason at the top to the least important reason at the bottom.
- Of the 100 points each respondent allocated, 91% of Regular member respondents allocated 50 of their points or less to getting discounts on conferences as the reason why they initially joined PLA.



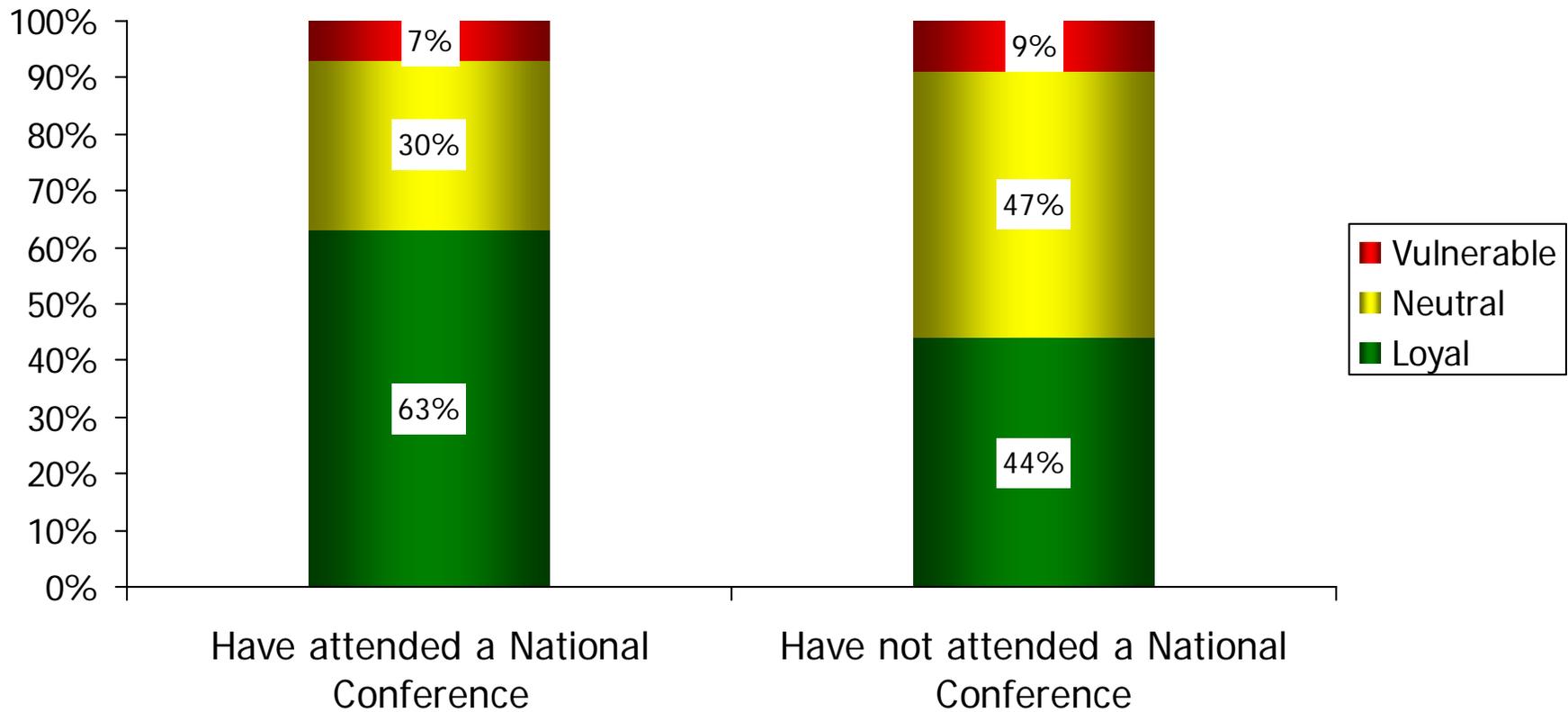
Loyalty Profile – PLA and ALA

- PLA Regular members are more loyal to PLA than they are to ALA.
- Student members are just the opposite, they are more loyal to ALA than they are to PLA.



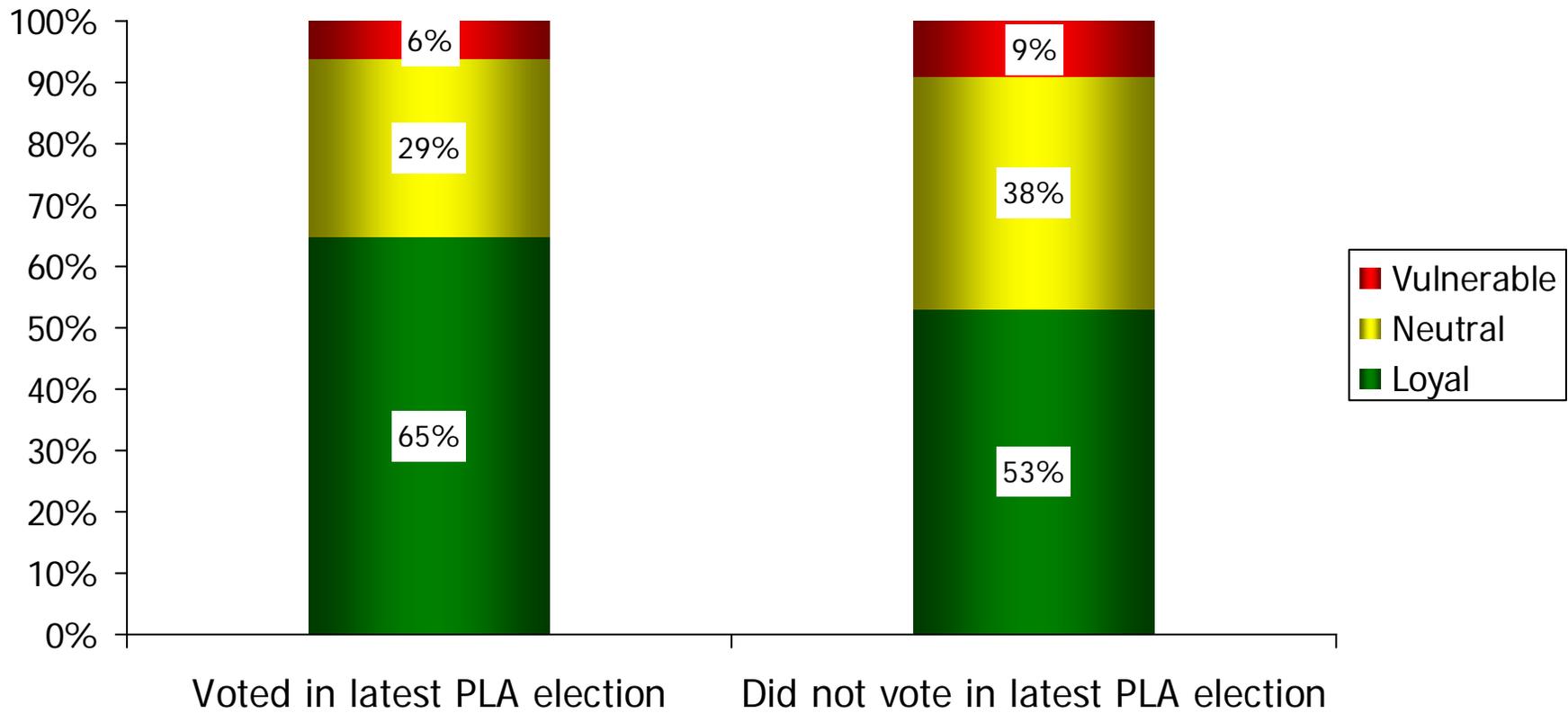
Loyalty Profile – Attended National Conference

- Respondents who have attended a PLA National Conference are more likely to be loyal than respondents who have not attended a PLA National Conference.



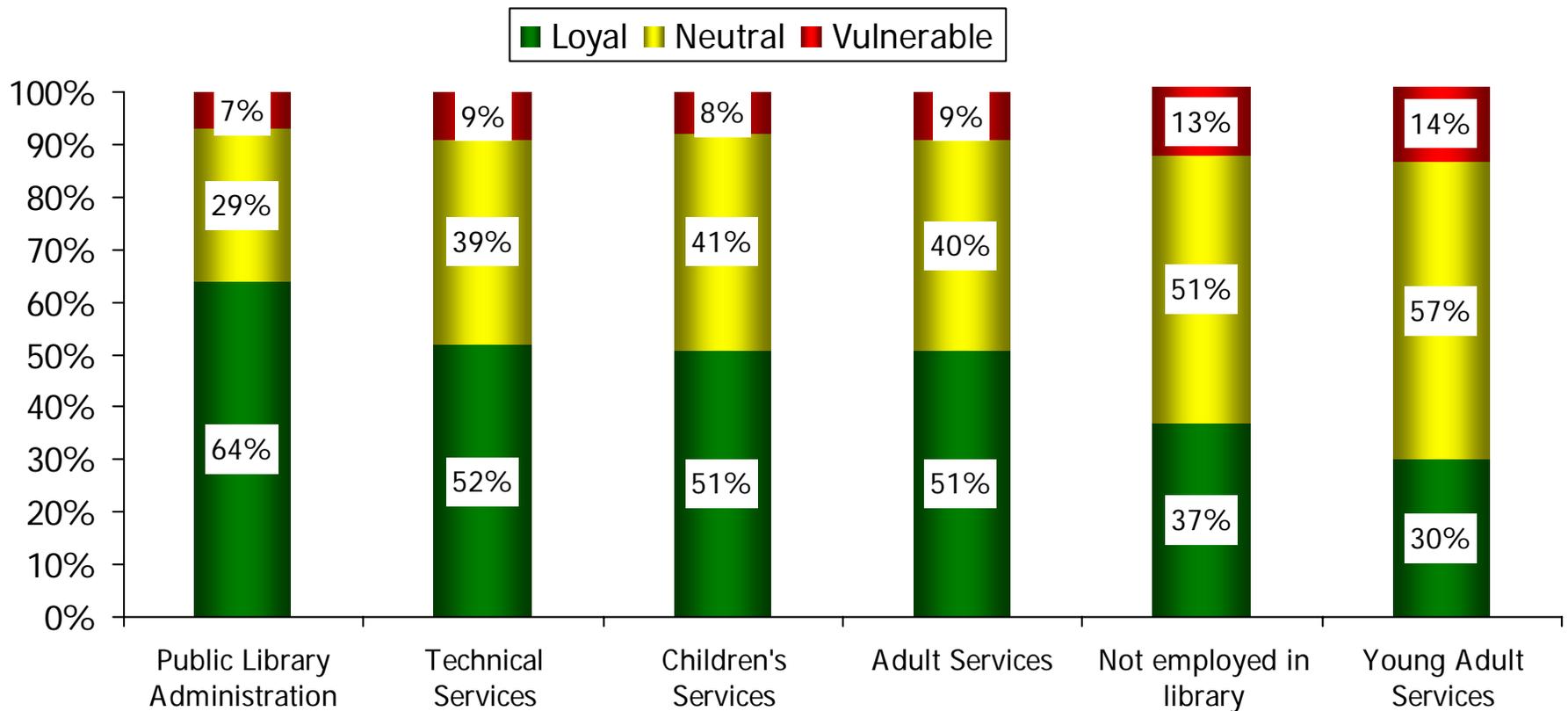
Loyalty Profile – Voted in PLA National Election

- Respondents who voted in the latest PLA National Election of Officers are more likely to be loyal.



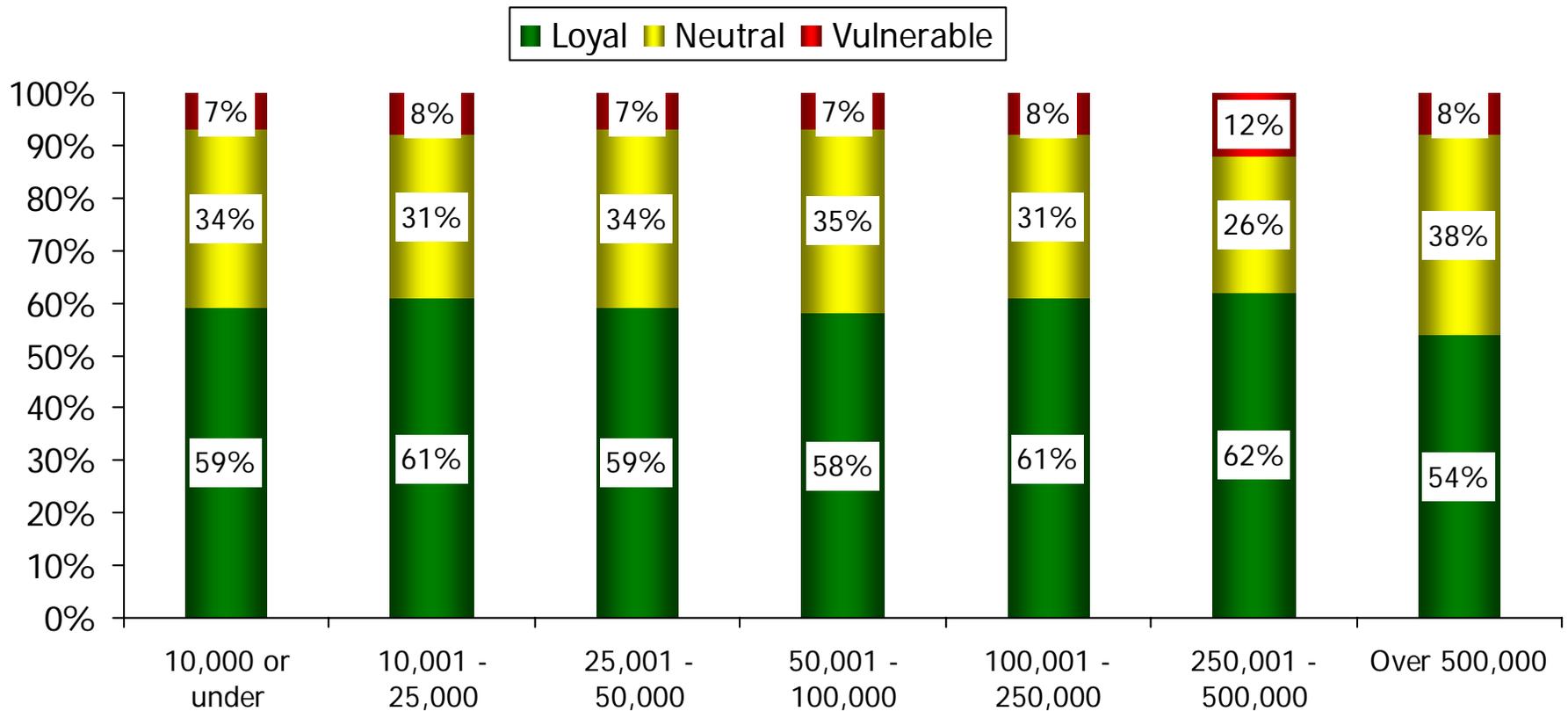
Loyalty Profile – Professional Responsibility

- Members who work in Public Library Administration have the highest percentage of loyal members and the lowest percentage of neutral members.
- Those who work in Young Adult Services have the lowest percentage of loyal members and the highest percentage of neutral members.



Loyalty Profile – Population of Service Area

- Population size of service area is not a predictor of loyalty because the differences among the sizes of service areas are not significant.
- This indicates that PLA's products and services appeal to librarians across the full range of service area sizes.



Characteristics of Loyal Members

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- All the demographic characteristics from the survey and from PLA membership data were tested to see which characteristics could be used to identify loyal members from among all PLA members. The characteristics that can be used to differentiate loyal members from those who are not loyal are listed below.
- Characteristics that are common among loyal, neutral, and vulnerable members, and therefore cannot be used to separate members by their loyalty classification, are not listed.

- All of member's PLA dues are paid by employer
- Has attended a National Conference
- Voted in the latest PLA election
- Is aware of PLAspace
- Works in Public Library Administration
- Is 50 years of age or older
- Has been in the library profession for more than 20 years
- Has been a member of PLA for 5 years or more

Characteristics of Neutral Members

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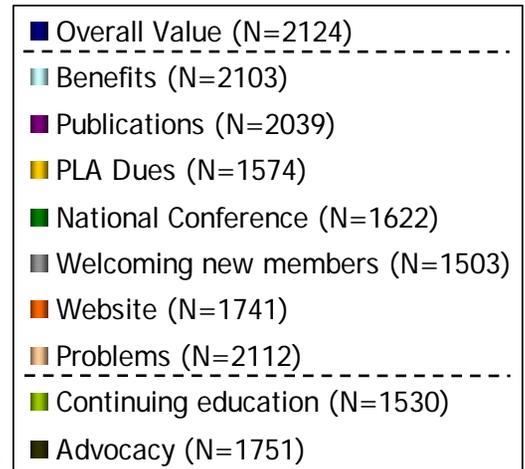
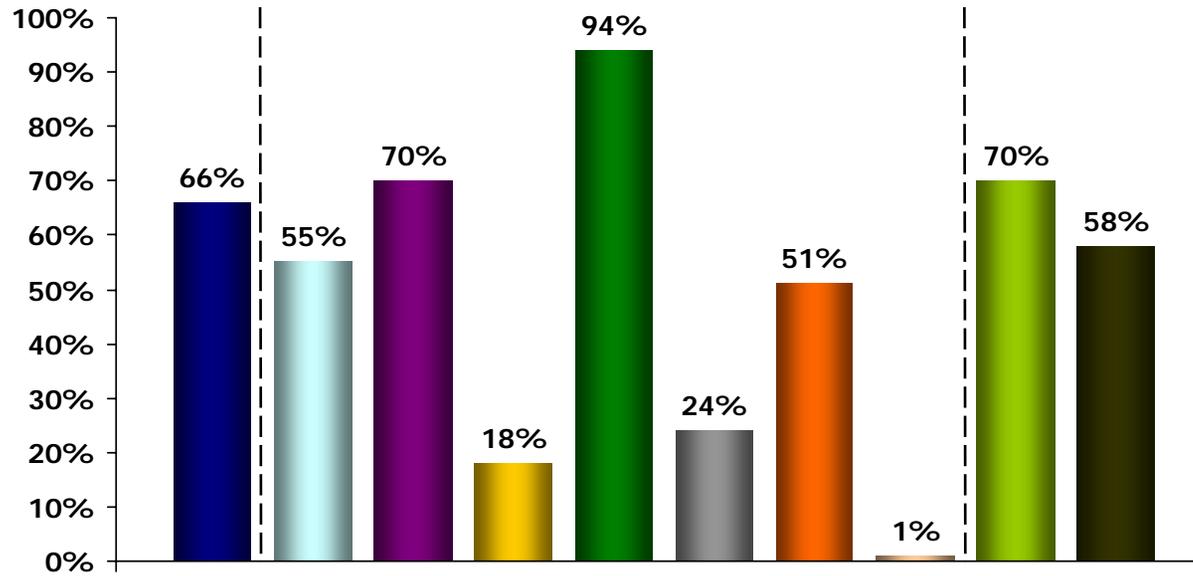
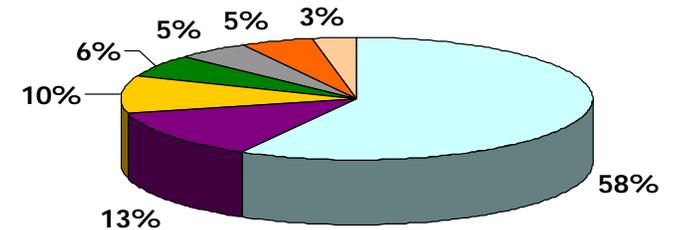
- Similarly to the loyal member segment, various characteristics were found to be unique among neutral members. Those characteristics are listed below.
- There were no characteristics found to be unique among vulnerable members.

- Has not attended a National Conference
- Did not vote in the latest PLA election
- Works in areas other than Public Library Administration
- Is under age 50
- Has been in the library profession for less than 10 years
- Has been a member of PLA for less than 5 years

Value of PLA Membership

- Two-thirds (66%) of respondents rate the overall value of their PLA membership as excellent or very good. (Performance ratings in the bar chart below)
- Eighteen percent (18%) of respondents rate PLA's dues lower or somewhat lower than other associations. (Industry average is about 10%)
- Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the value of a PLA membership is determined by member benefits, compared to 13% for publications and 10% for dues. (Impact ratings in the pie chart)

Contribution to Overall Value

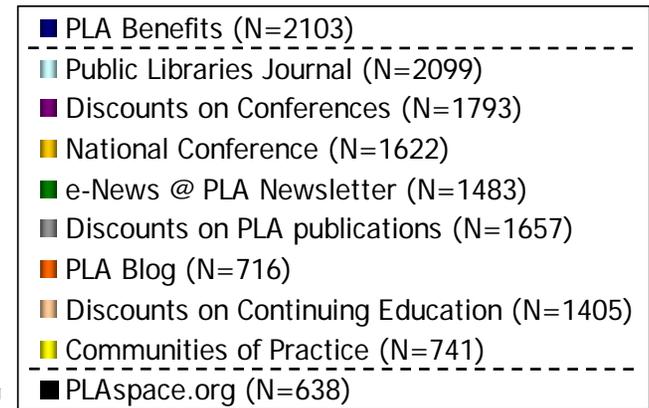
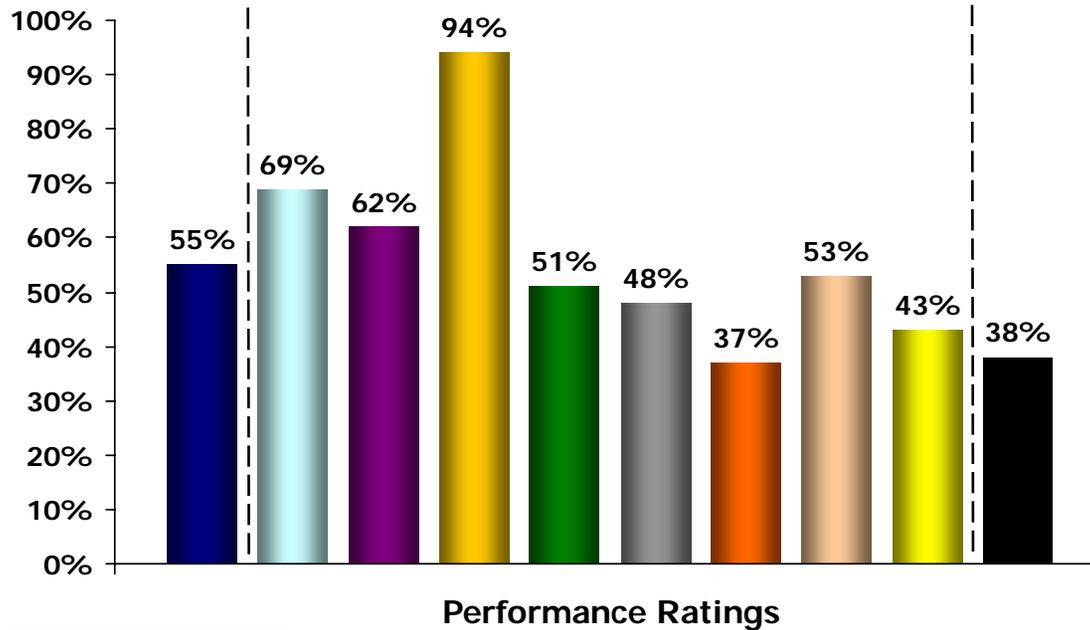
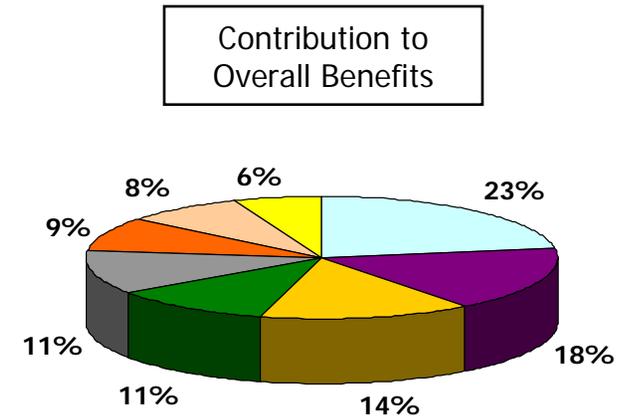


Performance Ratings

Bar chart percentages represent the percentage of respondents who gave ratings of excellent/very good, except for dues, which is ratings of lower/somewhat lower and problems, which is percent of respondents who experienced a problem with PLA.

PLA Benefits

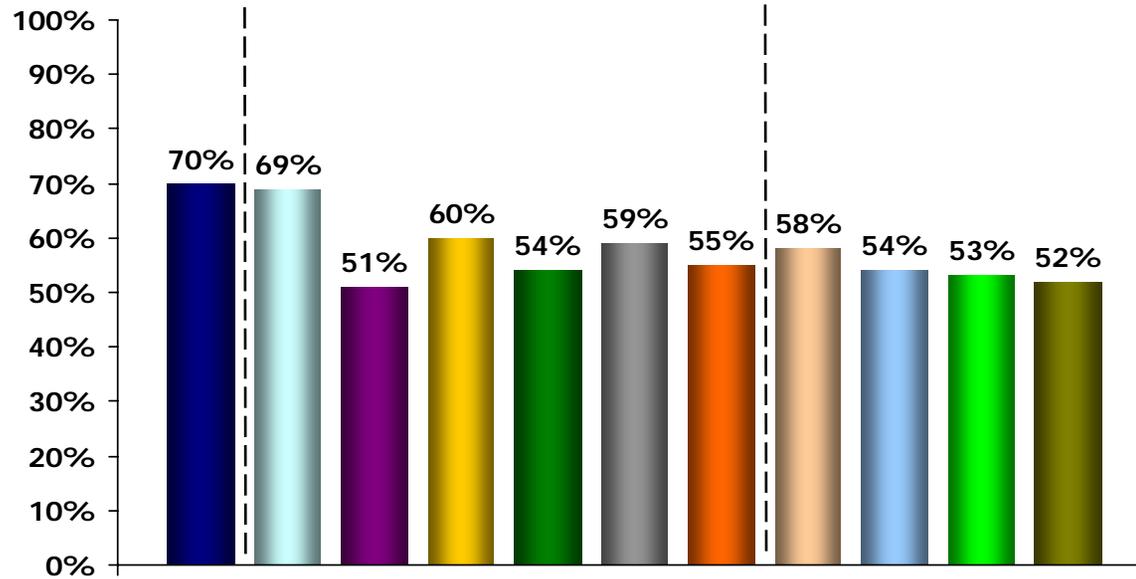
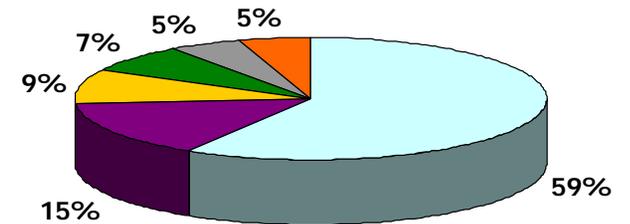
- Any benefit with a performance rating above 70% (bar chart) should be maintained, and any benefit with a rating below 60% should be considered for improvement.
- Discounts on the National Conference, and the National Conference itself, combine for 32% of the rating for member benefits (pie chart). Improving any of the key drivers shown in pie chart, should improve the overall rating of benefits.
- Dotted lines in the bar chart and in the legend separate key benefits from non-key benefits.



PLA Publications

- Publications represent the second strongest driver of the value of a PLA membership.
- The *Public Libraries Journal* can be viewed by members as a part of the benefits package, as well as a part of the publications that PLA offers. Of all the publications tested, the Journal has the greatest impact on publications as a group.

Contribution to Overall Publications



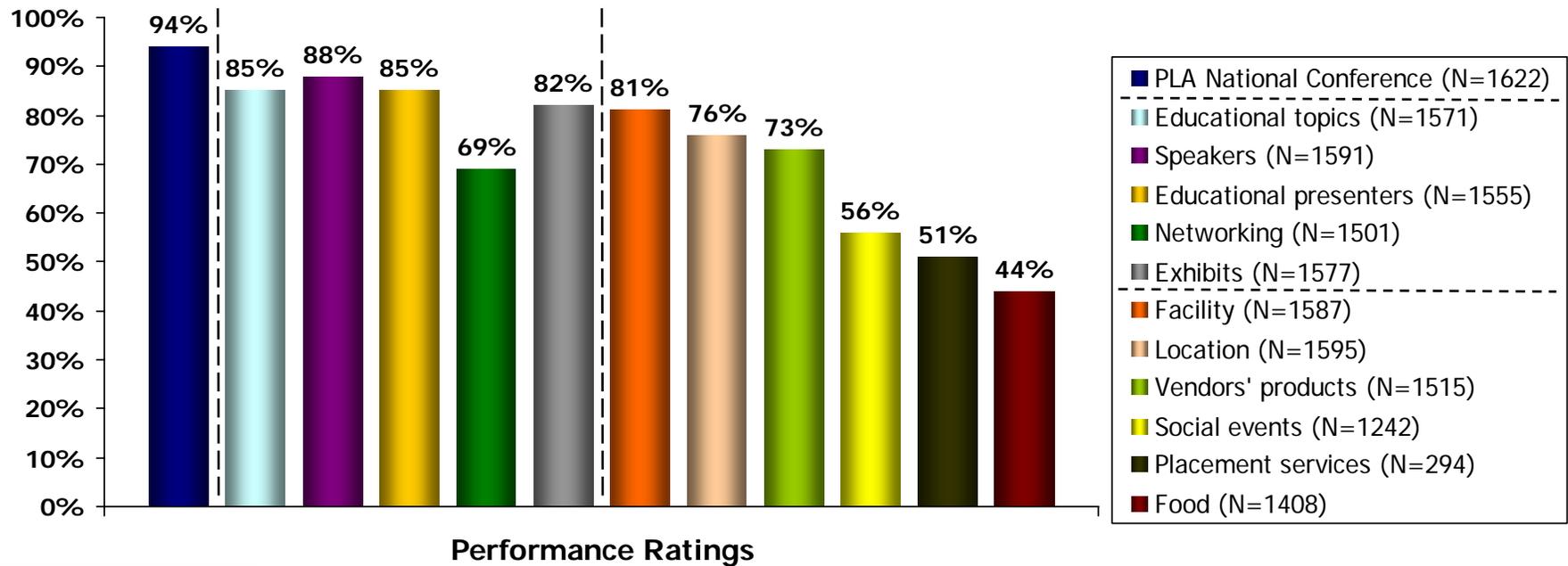
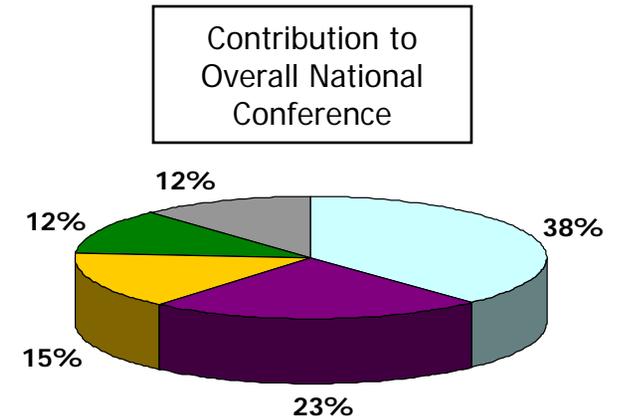
- PLA Publications (N=2039)
- Public Libraries (N=2099)
- e-News @ PLA (N=1483)
- New Planning for Results (N=758)
- Public Library Service Responses (N=583)
- Public Library Data Service (N=732)
- Staffing for Results (N=670)
- Creating Policies for Results (N=382)
- Managing for Results (N=664)
- Libraries Prosper with Passion (N=310)
- Managing Facilities for Results (N=458)

Performance Ratings

Bar chart percentages represent the percentage of respondents who gave an "excellent" or a "very good" response.

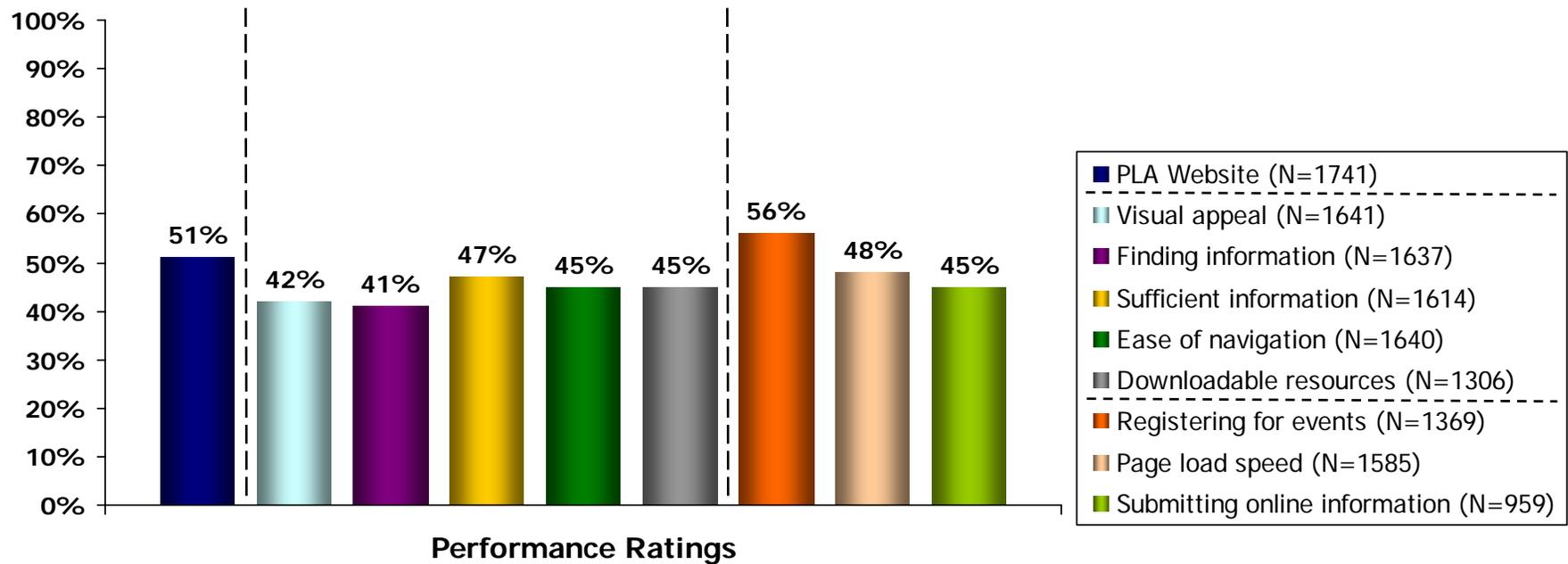
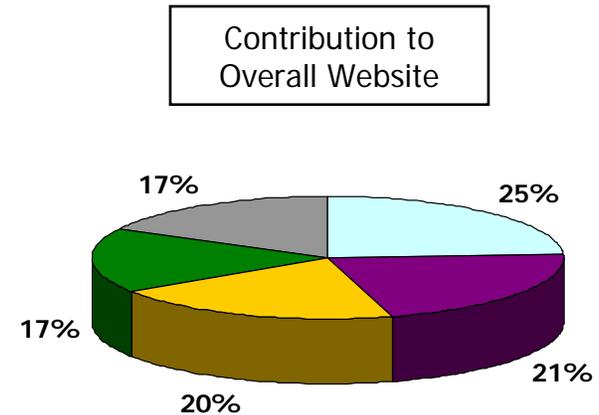
PLA National Conference

- With such high overall ratings for the Conference, the focus should be on maintaining performance.
- Our recommendation is to continue on the current course of improvement and not make any major changes to the structure of the conference. It will be beneficial to improve networking opportunities, which is the lowest performing key driver of the National Conference.



PLA Website

- The PLA website is the sixth strongest driver of the value of a PLA membership, accounting for 5% of the value rating.
- Key drivers of overall website quality are being visually appealing, ease of finding information, sufficient information being available, ease of navigation, and downloadable resources.

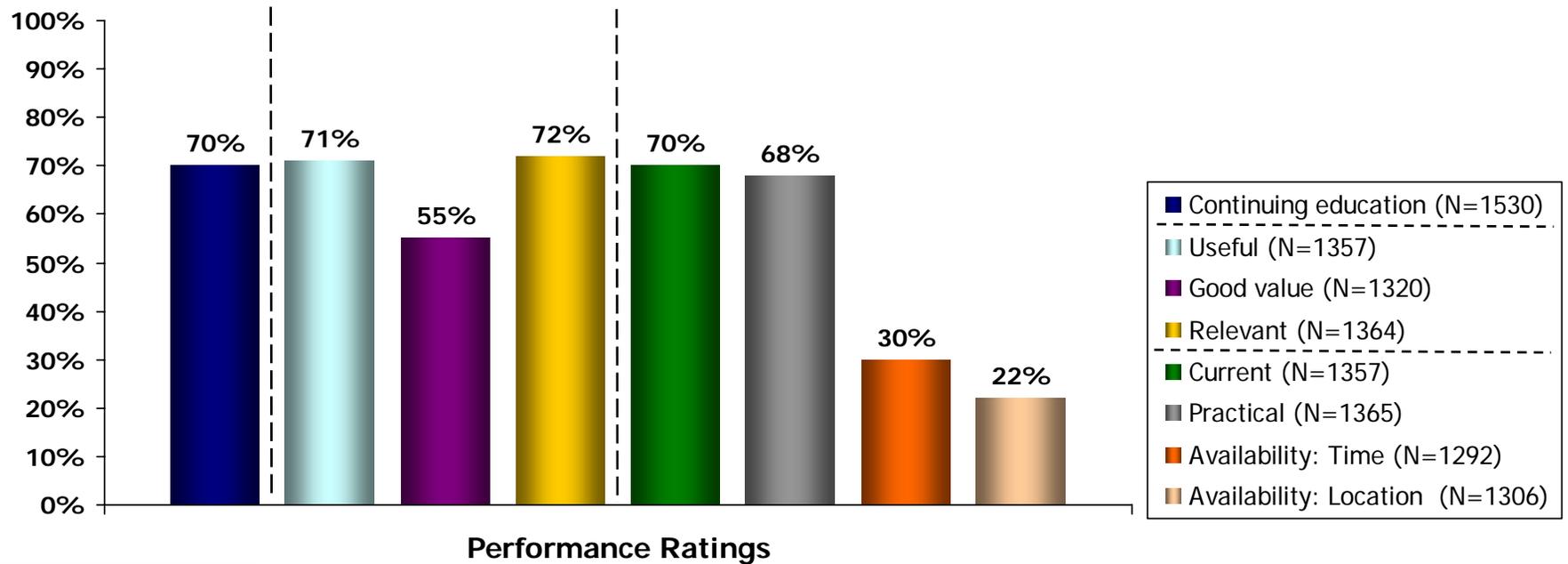
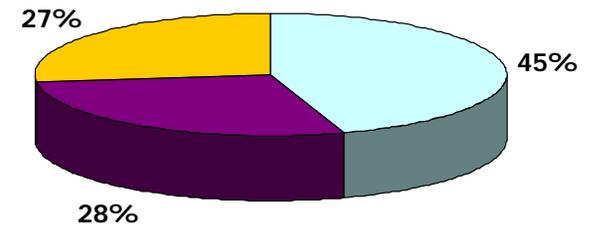


- PLA Website (N=1741)
- Visual appeal (N=1641)
- Finding information (N=1637)
- Sufficient information (N=1614)
- Ease of navigation (N=1640)
- Downloadable resources (N=1306)
- Registering for events (N=1369)
- Page load speed (N=1585)
- Submitting online information (N=959)

Continuing Education

- At this time, continuing education is not a key driver of membership value.
- With a strong overall rating of 70%, we recommend that the focus for continuing education should be on maintaining the performance rather than improving the performance.

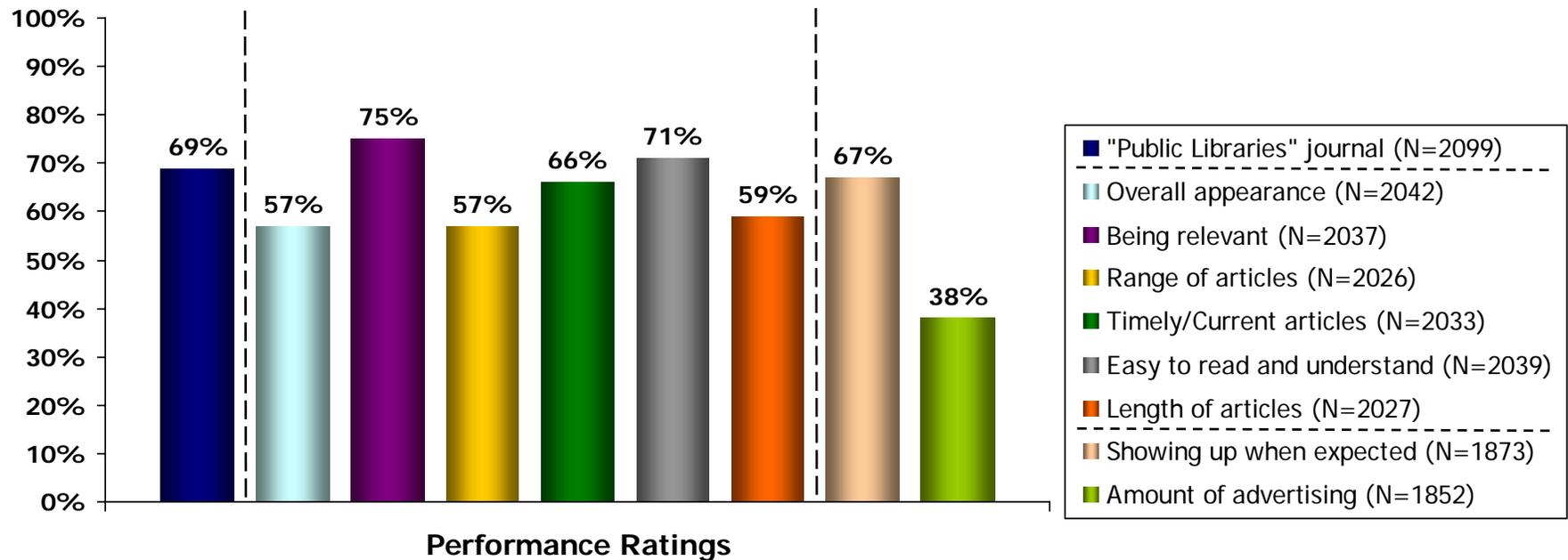
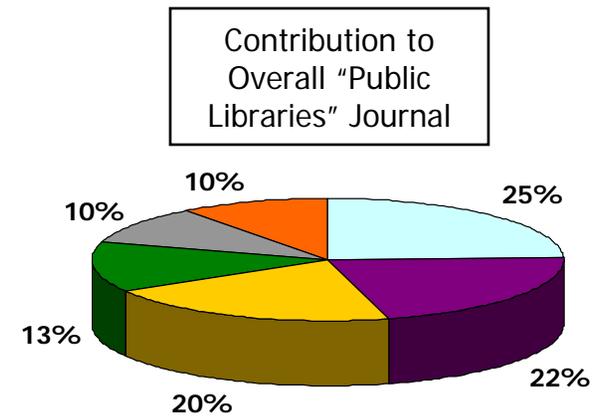
Contribution to Overall Continuing Education



Bar chart percentages represent the percentage of respondents who gave an "excellent" or a "very good" response.

"Public Libraries" Journal

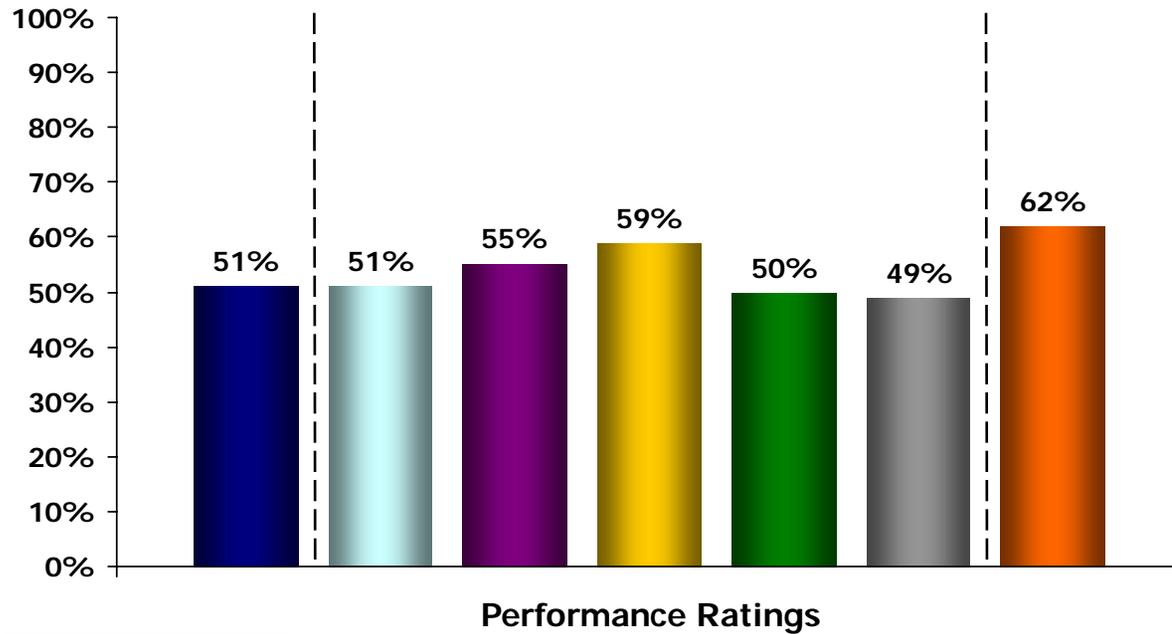
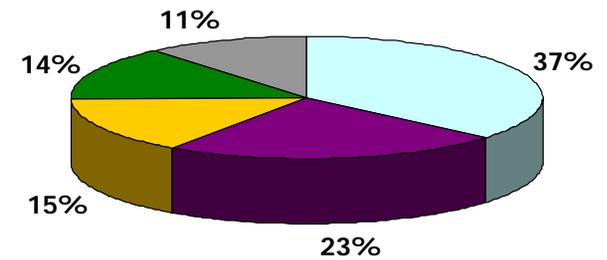
- "Public Libraries" journal is the strongest driver of benefits, and is the strongest driver of publications.
- There are six attributes of the journal that are key drivers: overall appearance, being relevant, the range of articles, being timely, being easy to read, and the length of the articles.
- Showing up when expected and the amount of advertising are not drivers of the journal's quality perception.



e-News @ PLA Newsletter

- The e-News @ PLA newsletter is also a strong driver of benefits and a strong driver of publications.
- There are five attributes of the newsletter that are key drivers: having useful information, having relevant information, being easy to read, the frequency that it is published, and having practical information.
- Having current information is not a key driver at this time.

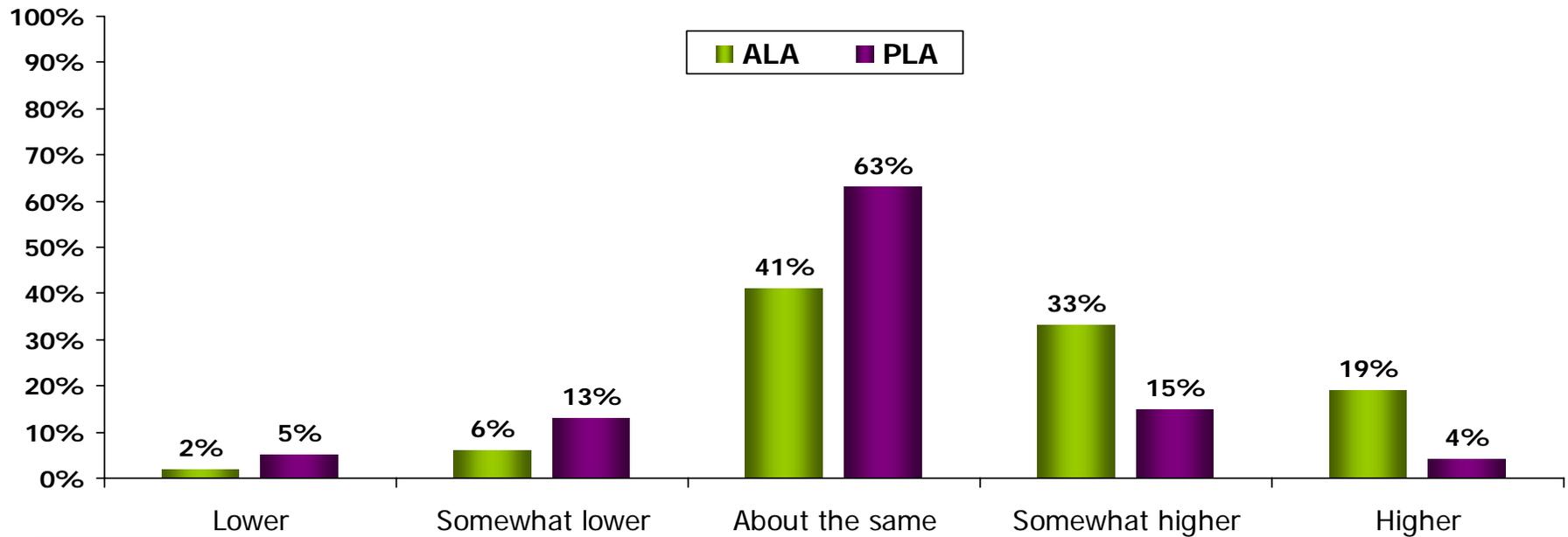
Contribution to Overall Newsletter



■ e-News @ PLA Newsletter (N=1483)
 ■ Useful information (N=1395)
 ■ Relevant information (N=1391)
 ■ Easy to read and understand (N=1398)
 ■ Frequency that it is published (N=1336)
 ■ Practical information (N=1395)
 ■ Current information (N=1392)

Dues – All Regular Members

- Respondents rate PLA's dues more favorably than they rate ALA's dues.
- Only 19% of respondents rate PLA's dues higher or somewhat higher than other associations.
- With 81% of respondents rating PLA's dues no higher than other associations, there appears to be an opportunity to increase dues at this time.



PLA's Image

- Respondents were asked to list adjectives they would use to describe PLA, without being given any suggestions or a list of possible adjectives from which to choose. The most frequently given adjectives are listed below, with the number of times each was mentioned.

Adjective	Mentions	Adjective	Mentions
Relevant	260	Valuable	31
Professional	136	Proactive	30
Practical	129	Excellent	26
Useful	120	Innovative	25
Informative	115	Friendly	25
Helpful	102	Fun	25
Current	97	Important	25
Timely	78	Committed	24
Focused	58	Interesting	23
Active	57	Effective	21
Supportive	55	Dynamic	20
Good	53	Advocate	17
Educational	41	Worthwhile	16
Responsive	32	Pertinent	16

Conclusions

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1. The National Conference is one of the most important elements of PLA's membership value. Seventy-six percent (76%) of respondents have been to a PLA National Conference, which is extremely high for a professional membership association.
2. While it may be a widely held belief that members join or renew their membership to gain a Conference discount, only 3% of Regular member respondents say that getting a discount on the Conference is the only reason why they joined. The top three reasons members join PLA, in order of importance, are getting information to help them do their jobs, keeping abreast of issues, and wanting to develop a professional network.
3. *Public Libraries* was tested for its impact on the member benefits package as well as the publications package, and it emerged as the strongest driver in both areas.
4. PLA Regular member respondents are more loyal to PLA than they are to ALA. Conversely, Student member respondents are more loyal to ALA. The majority of Regular members are loyal to PLA, and the majority of Student members are neutral to PLA.

Conclusions

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5. Members over the age of 50, or have been in the library profession for more than 20 years, or have been a PLA member for at least 5 years, are more likely to be loyal to PLA. Members who are under age 50, or have been in the library profession for less than 10 years, or have been a PLA member for less than 5 years, are more likely to be neutral. This provides PLA with opportunities to enhance its efforts to members who are younger and relatively new to the profession.
6. The population size of service area is not a predictor of loyalty, because the loyalty profiles of members from all sizes of service areas are statistically identical. This indicates that members across the full spectrum of population sizes see the same value in their PLA membership.
7. The top 2 ratings for dues compares very favorably to ratings found among professional membership associations in general. Only 19% of respondents rate PLA's dues higher or somewhat higher than other associations.

Recommendations For Improving Membership Value

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1. The number one driver of membership value is the Benefits package, with the overall PLA Benefits package scoring a total of 55% performance rating, indicating an opportunity for improvement in the benefits package. The two strongest drivers of Benefits are *Public Libraries* and discounts on conferences. Additional drivers in the membership benefits bundle to be addressed that would improve overall membership performance, are e-News, PLA blog and communities of practice. There are two key member benefits that allow members to participate and interact with PLA and other PLA members – communities of practice and the PLA blog. With a performance rating of 43%, communities of practice should be included in the list of benefits considered for improvement, as should the PLA blog, with a performance rating of 37%.
2. Publications overall is the second strongest driver of the value of PLA membership, having a 70% performance rating. In publications, *Public Libraries* has the greatest impact at 69% performance rating and a 59% overall contribution to publications value. Second is the e-News with a 51% performance rating and a 15% contribution to publications value. Looking at continuing development of relevant and timely content possibly in electronic format or other methods of delivery will increase overall value of this category.

Recommendations For Improving Membership Value

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3. PLA's dues rating as a variable in over all member value scores very favorably compared to other membership associations. (Only 19% of respondents rate PLA's dues higher than other associations). This means that PLA members have a positive perception of current dues as it relates to member benefits. Additional value could be created by improving the performance of key value drivers.
4. The PLA National Conference is the fourth strongest driver of value, and receives extremely high performance ratings. Because of these high ratings, we recommend that the structure of the Conference be maintained.
5. Welcoming new members is fifth strongest driver of value, and received some of the lowest performance ratings. Respondents offered many suggestions on how to improve the welcoming process, including some of the following frequently mentioned ideas:
 - a. *A personal phone call*
 - b. *An initial mailing of services and opportunities*
 - c. *Assign a mentor*
 - d. *Encourage them to get involved, even from a distance and actually allow them to get involved.*

Recommendations For Improving Membership Value

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6. The PLA website is value driver number five. With a performance rating of 51%, it is an area where improvement should result in an improvement in overall membership value. To improve the website, the focus should be on improving the five key drivers of the website: visual appeal, ease of finding information, sufficient information being available, ease of navigation, and downloadable resources. The performance for all five website drivers are in the 42% to 47% range.
7. The final key driver of membership value is problem experience. Problems tend to erode the relationship members have with their associations, particularly if the problems are serious, or they go unresolved. Only 1% of respondents report that they have had a problem with PLA, which is much lower than the association industry average of 10%.
8. The current strategy for continuing education should be maintained at this time, as its performance is satisfactory at 70%, and it is not a key driver of membership value. Overall, the key drivers of continuing education are performing well, with the only key driver that falls below 70% is continuing education “being a good value”. Additional opportunities for continuing education include offering additional programs and examining additional content delivery models.