



CHLA/ABSC Chapter Engagement Survey Spring 2019 - Summary of Results

Compiled by Sandy Iverson, President CHLA/ABSC 2019/20

October 2019

Introduction

The CHLA/ABSC Board of Directors (BOD) has been concerned about membership burn out and diminishing membership at the local level. Rumours of severe volunteer burnout, especially following conference hosting have been common. While over-all membership in CHLA/ABSC has remained reasonably steady over the last 5-10 years, some Chapters have reported difficulty in attracting and retaining membership. In addition, the BOD frequently received questions from members or potential members that indicated that the relationship between Chapters and CHLA/ABSC was unclear and/or misunderstood. Therefore, in the spring of 2019 we conducted the Chapter Engagement Survey in order to gather some actual data to determine how

Primary Take-Aways for CHLA/ABSC National:

- Retain the ability for people to belong only to a Chapter if they wish
- Improve access to participation for members in remote communities, especially by offering robust CE offerings but also in other ways
- Work to do more advocacy on behalf of our profession and facilitate knowledge transfer on advocacy
- Investigate increased access to funding for Chapter events with fewer restrictions on those funds
- Improve communication to members and Chapters, as many misconceptions and misunderstandings abound

accurate these rumours and concerns might be and what we might be able to do about any of the more serious concerns.

The BOD received feedback during the survey and in the survey that suggested that some people perceived this survey to be an indicator that the BOD was contemplating a change to our governance structure or otherwise had an ulterior motive. For example, one comment stated a concern “with the Association’s attempts to fundamentally change the relationship between the Chapters and the Association.” While it is probably true that the BOD could have consulted more thoroughly and directly with Chapters about this survey before distributing it, I am confident that neither I (as the primary BOD member responsible for this project) or the BOD had a preconceived notion regarding our structure and simply wanted to engage with members and Chapters to learn what people thought and to find out how we as an organization at both the local and national level can do a better job in serving our members. This survey was designed largely to support Strategic Direction #5 of our current strategic plan: Strengthen the Association Infrastructure and Communications and goal #5.3: Assess the organizational structure, governance, membership structure, relationships with Chapters, and financial model. I believe that we have learned a lot about what our membership appreciates about CHLA/ABSC and its Chapters and what they would like us to do to better serve their needs.

Results:

It is important to understand that the survey had many branches to it and depending on each respondent’s situation they received different questions. Therefore, in this summary I have attempted to indicate who specifically provided which information.



All Respondents:

- 107 total respondents
- 50% Hospital based
- 33% University or college based
- 64% identified as librarians
- 14% identified as managers
- 74% have been working in the field of health libraries for over 5 years
- 20% have been working in the field of health libraries for 1-5 years
- 68% have been CHLA/ABSC members for more than 5 years
- 70% (75) were CHLA/ABSC members and of these, 58 were Chapter members. 32 respondents (30%) were not members of CHLA/ABSC national. 22 (21%) were members of Chapters but not members of CHLA/ABSC national. 10 respondents (9%) were not members of either CHLA/ABSC or one of its Chapters.
- At least one respondent from every Chapter except southern Ontario (which has since disbanded)
- ASTED and NAHLA had the highest # of Chapter members not being CHLA/ABSC members
- Most often cited reasons for CHLA/ABSC members not being a member of a local Chapter included not perceiving value and belonging to multiple library associations already. Absence of an accessible (due to geography) Chapter was also frequently cited. Of those that provided reasons for not being members of either CHLA/ABSC or one of the Chapters, cost and lack of perceived value were cited.
- Most often cited reasons for Chapter members not being members of CHLA/ABSC national was cost of membership (57%). 34% did not perceive value in a CHLA/ABSC membership.

Chapter Member Opinions

80 Chapter Members responded to the survey. 58 of these were also members of CHLA/ABSC. 22 were only members of their local Chapter.

Chapter	Total # of respondents	# that are ALSO CHLA/ABSC members
ASTED (now FMD3S)	15	6
Golden Horseshoe Health Libraries Association	2	1
Health Libraries Association of British Columbia	9	9
Manitoba Association of Health Information Providers	4	4
Maritimes Health Libraries Association / Association des bibliothèques de la santé des Maritimes	6	5
Newfoundland and Labrador Health Libraries Association	3	2
Northern Alberta Health Libraries Association	14	10
Ottawa Valley Health Libraries Association / Association des bibliothèques de la santé de la Vallée d'Outaouais	4	3
Saskatchewan Health Libraries Association	3	1
Southern Alberta Health Libraries Association	4	3
Toronto Health Libraries Association	11	10
Wellington-Waterloo-Dufferin Health Library Network	1	1
Undeclared:	4	3



Those who were both members of CHLA/ABSC and a local Chapter (58 people) were asked whether they thought that Chapter membership should be an automatic benefit of CHLA/ABSC membership. 24 people said yes, while 8 people said no, and 25 people were unsure. (1 person failed to respond)

This question also generated a lot of comments and concerns. While people were divided on whether this was a good idea or not, most of the concern was regarding affordability of membership and how Chapters would be funded. There seems to be some support for simplifying things for members by having a single membership fee but that funds would then have to flow through to the Chapter level. However, there is also significant support for retaining the option of only having a Chapter membership. Many people noted that for some people (especially students and support or paraprofessional staff) a Chapter membership is affordable and meets most of their needs.

Approximately half of the Chapter members responding to the survey indicated they had served on a Chapter executive within the last 5 years and many of those (41%) had served in more than one capacity over the years.

Most Chapter members rated their level of engagement in their Chapter between 3-5 on a 5point scale with 5 being described as extremely active.

Chapter members found most of the Chapter membership benefits we listed as highly beneficial with networking and social events and continuing education being the top cited benefits.

When Chapter members were asked how satisfied they were with benefits and opportunities they receive from their local Chapter membership, most (67%) rated their satisfaction between 4-5 on a 5point scale with 5 being described as extremely satisfied.

When asked to rate the health of their Chapter in terms of finances, membership, ability to engage members, ability to offer programming of value, etc. 62% of Chapter members rated their Chapter at 4 or 5 out of 5 with 5 being very healthy.

Chapter Leader's Opinions

A number of questions were only directed at those that had served on the executive of their Chapters in the last 5 years. (33 people)

Regarding perceived level of support that the Chapters receive from CHLA/ABSC on a 5-point scale with 1 being not enough support most Chapter leaders reported dissatisfaction with the level of support provided to Chapters with the weighted average being 2.43.

Most Chapter leaders also reported perceiving their Chapter as receiving very little value by being affiliated with CHLA/ABSC and most rated the value as quite low. (a weighted average of 2.47 out of 5).

The comments received in response to this question indicate that in many instances people are unaware of the support that is available from CHLA/ABSC but that additional support would be welcome, especially in terms of financial support. Some comments indicate that the financial support available to Chapters may not be sufficient or too restricted. Fortunately, some of these concerns are being addressed as part of the CE committee's work and we expect to restructure some of the grants available to better meet Chapter's needs.

Chapter leaders expressed pretty good satisfaction with the level of engagement of members in Chapter governance and activities. Weighted average 3.15 out of 5. Fifty one percent of leaders do not believe it is important that Chapter members be CHLA national members and very few people found this important at all.

When asked to what degree they felt they understood CHLA/ABSC's Chapter governance and by-laws most rated their understanding at 2 or 3 on a 5point scale where 5 is described as having a clear understanding.

Most people did not feel they received adequate training or orientation to their Chapter executive roles although answers to this question were more evenly distributed with a total weighted average of 2.73 out of 5, with 5 being described as having received adequate training and orientation to their executive role.

Qualitative data

A lot of rich data was received in comments and other open text fields.

When asked what kinds of benefits or support a Chapter would like to receive from CHLA/ ABSC we received numerous suggestions and the most often requested form of support was financial. However other suggestions included:

- help articulating the value of professional association membership;
- templates and resources to help people with applying for professional development grants or organizing an event;
- tech support for distance CE; (now provided through access to the Association's Zoom account for Chapter activities)
- recommendations for CE offerings, and guidance on how we can participate in national level projects;
- lobbying for universal access to resources (e.g. RxTx);
- advocacy materials

Access to Chapter and CHLA/ABSC national benefits and events need to be improved for members in remote locations. Several comments were received about Chapters being city (or



Canadian Health Libraries Association Association des bibliothèques de la santé du Canada

very small region) centric and not providing enough virtual options for participation in CE or other activities. Of those CHLA members who are not Chapter members a lack of ability to actively participate due to geography was frequently cited. Hopefully making the CHLA/ABSC Zoom account available to Chapters to use for their own activities will help to provide access to activities and learning for more members.

The BOD has reviewed the results of this survey and a number of initiatives have already been put into place to try and address these findings, and more will be forthcoming. Chapter leaders may also want to review these results with a view to exploring how they might also better meet the needs of members.

Any questions or comments about this survey can be directed to the CHLA/ABSC President, Sandy Iverson president@chla-absc.ca

Thanks to all members of CHLA/ABSC and its Chapters for sharing their thoughts and opinions.