



Association of
Performing Arts
Collections

APAC Members Survey 2014

Executive Summary

- Overall, the survey generated a positive response, with the reasons people gave for joining APAC reflected in the benefits they find as a member. Benefits were cited as networking, information-sharing, support and advice, visits, and study days.
- Tours of theatres, tours of collections, and presentations are the main draws of APAC meetings. The main difficulties in attending meetings are the distance to travel and getting time away from work or other commitments. The preferred time for meetings is 2-5pm.
- An easy train journey to a large event on an important or interesting subject would entice members to travel some distance to attend an APAC meeting. London and south central England are the easiest places for most members to reach, while Scotland is the place they would most like to visit.
- Study days are the preferred type of event, followed by seminars and conferences. Members predominantly want events that provide practical information and advice on materials.
- The majority of members subscribe to the listserv and find it useful. They feel the Executive Committee communicates adequately with the membership.
- Twitter is the overwhelming choice of social media for APAC to use.
- The most used sections of the website are APAC events and the UK Theatre Collections' search. Resources for researchers are the top priority in developing the website's content.
- Disappointingly, only 18% of institutional members outside London took the survey, in contrast to 65% of London-based institutional members and 53% of individual members.

Background

The link to online survey was emailed directly to 69 members in May 2014. Institutional members were asked to have more than one person respond, to gain the views of staff at different levels of the organisation.

A total of 38 responses was received, representing 32 unique members, a response rate of 46%. In comparison, the previous survey, taken in 1999, was posted to 69 members and received 24 replies, a response rate of 34%. The breakdown of the 2014 respondents is as follows:

- Of 31 London-based institutional members, 20 responded (sending in 26 responses in total)
- Of 17 institutional members outside London, 3 responded
- Of 20 individual members, 15 received the survey (due to lack of emails for the others); 8 responded
- Of 6 lapsed institutional members who had not renewed their subscription in 2013, 1 outside London responded and renewed membership

The survey was announced on the APAC-SDR listserv, and several reminders were sent to both the member's own email and the listserv. The survey closed after two weeks. The questions were mainly multiple-choice. Some were limited to a single choice, but most allowed people to tick as many items as applicable, and to leave comments. Several questions were free-text.

Following a disappointing turnout for the Leeds meeting in June 2014, the Executive Committee sent out a small survey specifically about regional meetings (the two questions on the larger survey had provided inconclusive responses). The small survey was open for a week and garnered 29 responses. Of these, 15 were from London-based institutional members and 6 from institutional members in the regions and nations. This division of responses almost mirrors the two-thirds/one-third split in institutional members as a whole. Eight individual members also replied, 5 from London and 3 from elsewhere.

APAC Membership

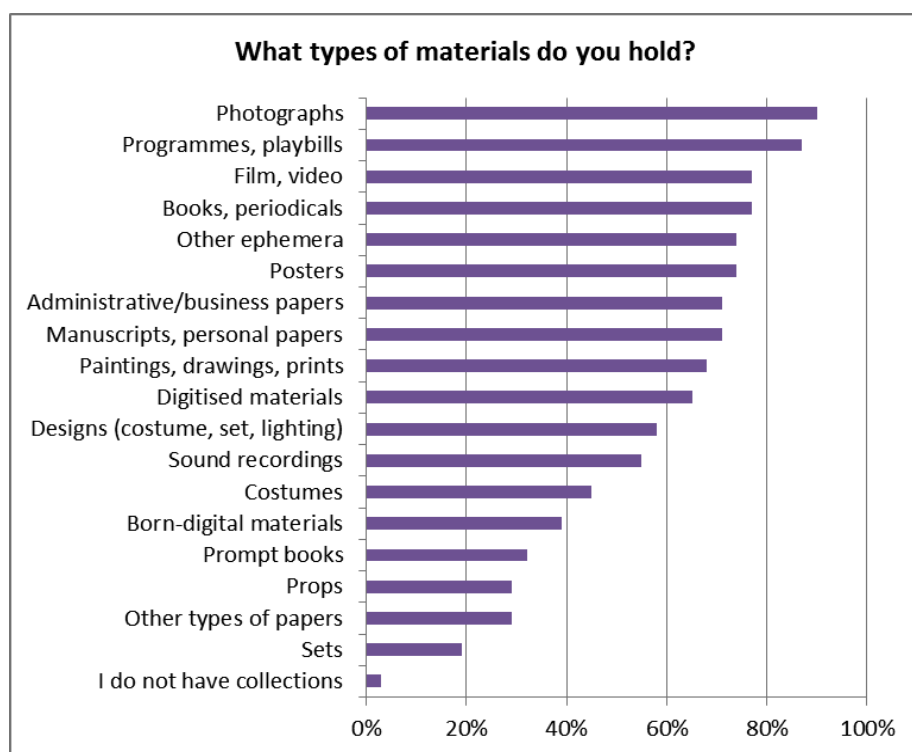
The reasons people joined APAC were reflected in the benefits they found in being a member, which suggests that APAC is meeting members' expectations. Benefits were described as:

- Networking, personal contact, establishing relationships with colleagues elsewhere, part of a community (38 comments)
- Knowledge sharing, ideas exchange, promoting awareness of own and others' collections and projects, current information on the performing arts sector (22 comments)
- Support and advice (9 comments)
- Visits (6 comments)
- Study days, conferences, training (5 comments)

Asked how APAC could help members with their work, respondents suggested:

- Information on current developments and discussion of common problems
- Connections with the wider heritage and research communities
- Promoting primary material in collections to students
- More of a contemporary performance focus
- Launching the National Performance Database

Rather than explain what type of repository they were, members gave an indication of the types of materials they hold, as shown in the chart below. In addition to these materials, members had maquettes, model sets, music scores, notation scores, architectural drawings, sculptures, silver, ceramic figurines, and furniture.



APAC Meetings

The majority of respondents attend meetings either 3-4 times a year (24%) or 1-2 times a year (24%). Only 11% come to 5-6 meetings annually. 22% had never attended, mainly because another colleague usually represented the institution at meetings. Several people requested more advance notice of dates.

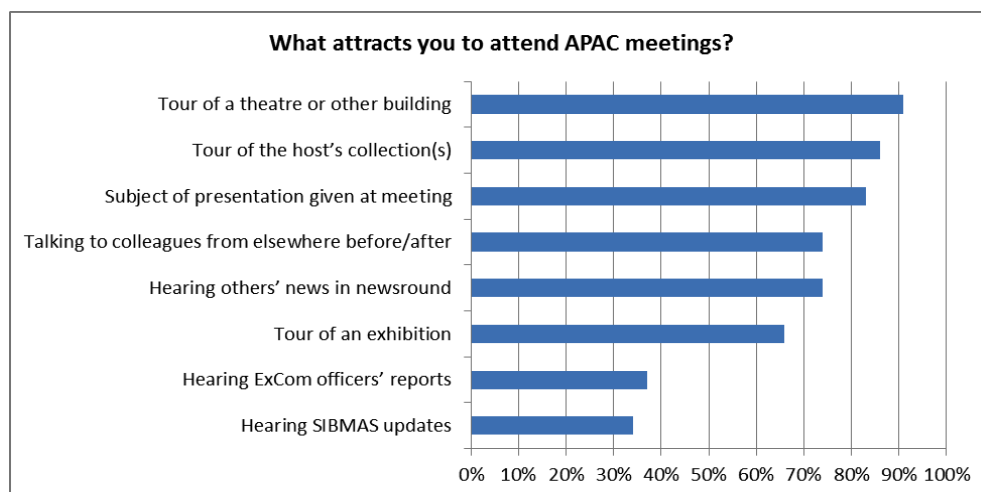
The reasons people cannot attend meetings are:

- distance to travel (50%)
- difficulty of getting time off work (43%)
- cost of travel (37%)
- time of the meeting (33%)

In the comments section, members noted difficulties of fitting in meeting attendance among other commitments and that the limit on only two staff per institution meant junior staff never attended meetings.

The usual time slot of APAC meetings, 2-5pm, is preferred (59%). The other contender is 3-6pm (43%). While some interest was shown in morning meetings (30%), little was shown in meetings starting after 4pm.

As the chart below demonstrates, the main attractions of APAC meetings are tours of a theatre or other building (91%), tours of the host institution's collection (86%), and presentations (83%).



Asked for other elements that the meetings could contain but currently do not, members suggested:

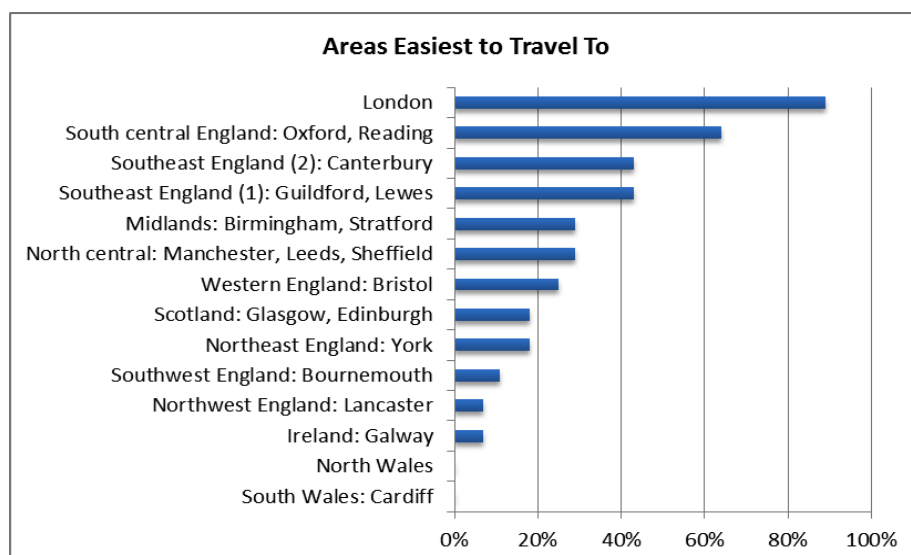
- Interactive discussions among the group on a single topic/issue (4 suggestions)
- Presentation from a member institution about a project they are working on (2 suggestions)
- Presentations from suppliers of conservation/preservation materials or collection management systems, with samples/examples

One member noted: 'The best meetings cover a specific topic/issue, in addition to the business meeting and therefore become a more targeted meeting. The sense of purpose focuses the meeting and adds value to the sharing of information.'

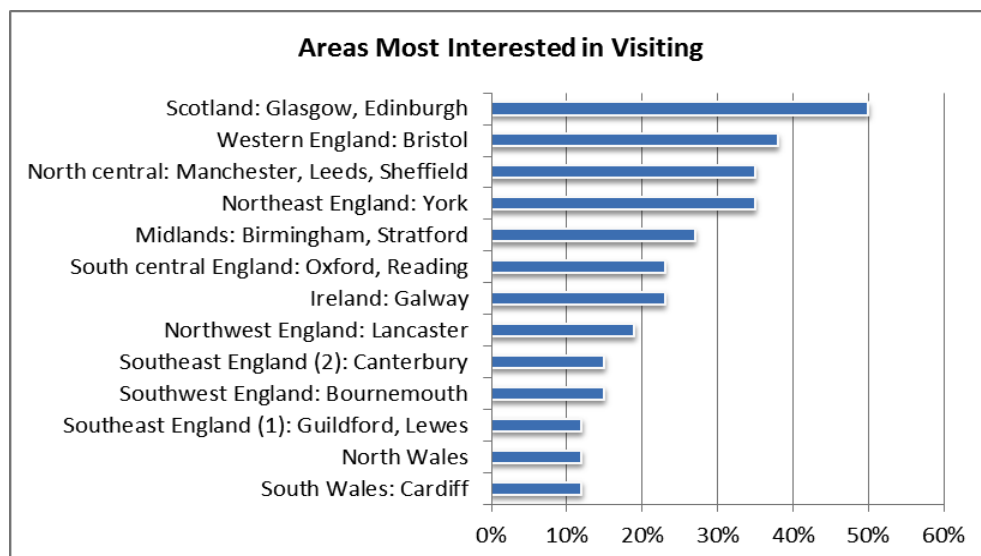
Regional Meetings

Asked if they would like more meetings outside London, 49% said yes, 27% were not sure, and 24% said no. 57% said their likelihood of attending a regional meeting depended on where it was held. Therefore, the follow-up survey about regional meetings tried to determine where members could travel to easily (including their own location) and where they were interested in going. 99% said they would travel by train.

Unsurprisingly, London is the best location for London-based members (institutional and individual), but also for 5 of the 9 regional members who responded (institutional and individual). The south central region of England was the top choice outside London, perhaps because cities such as Oxford and Reading are convenient for members based in the Midlands and the West.



Asked where they would like to go 'all things being equal', respondents chose Scotland. Bristol was the second choice, followed by a cluster of northeastern and north central locations in England. This is curious because APAC does not have an institutional member in the northeast and because the June meeting in Leeds was not well attended. (The question about why they had not attended the Leeds meeting garnered the inconclusive response that the specific date was difficult.) Galway received 23% of the votes, and on the larger survey, APAC's Irish member, NUI Galway, expressed an interest in hosting a joint event with APAC.



Members in the regions and nations were asked why they did not attend meetings (wherever held), while those in London were asked why they did not go to meetings outside the capital. As the table below shows, both groups gave the same primary reason – it is difficult to get time away from existing commitments.

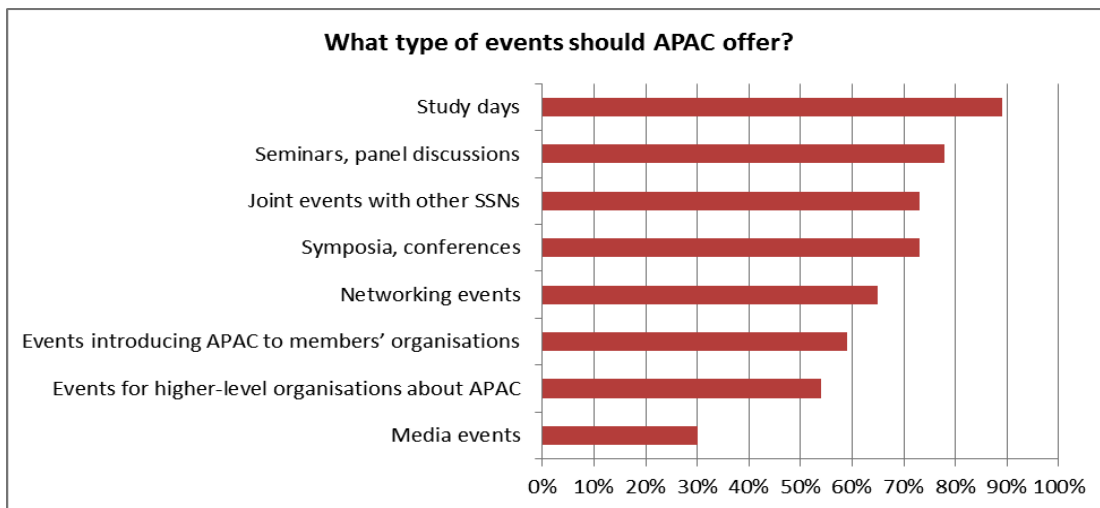
<i>Reason for not attending meetings</i>	<i>London-based</i>	<i>Regions/Nations</i>
Difficult to get the day off work, or from other commitments	72%	50%
An afternoon's meeting is not worth the time and/or expense	33%	42%
Distance too great / journey too long	33%	0%
Travel too expensive, even with advance notice	28%	33%
Difficult to arrange work cover	28%	33%

The survey then tried to determine what would make members in the regions and nations more likely to attend meetings (wherever held), and those in London to leave the capital. As the table below shows, the top three reasons were the same for both groups – an easy train journey to a larger event on an important or interesting subject. It is also clear that a minimum of 8 weeks' notice is needed, preferably 12 weeks' notice.

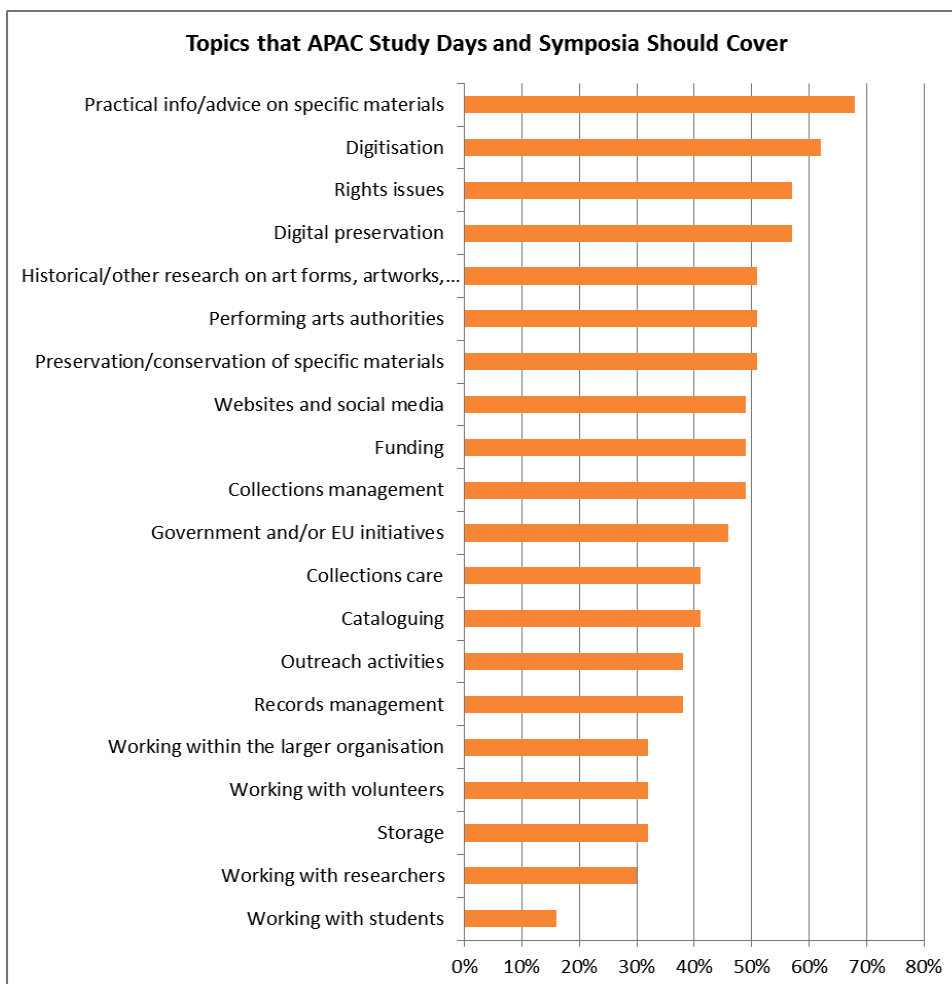
<i>What would make members more likely to attend a meeting?</i>	<i>London-based</i>	<i>Regions/Nations</i>
Ensure the location is an easy train journey (eg, direct route, or good connections)	70%	63%
Ensure the meeting's special focus is of top importance, or of widespread interest	61%	56%
Offer a full-day event (say, 10am-4pm), rather than just an afternoon	57%	69%
Advance notice of 8 weeks	39%	38%
Provide a travel grant scheme for those travelling more than 50 miles	26%	31%
Advance notice of 12 weeks	22%	44%

APAC Events

The preferred type of event is study days (89%), followed by seminars/panel discussions (78%). Symposia, conferences and joint events with other Subject Specialist Networks are also popular (73%). (See chart on next page.) One person suggested working with associated professions outside performing arts to tap into initiatives in the wider heritage sector. Two-thirds of respondents said that if they proposed a subject for an event, they would take the lead in organising it.



Typically, APAC study days focus on a specific material type, and this approach proved the favourite, as the chart below shows. Digitisation, digital preservation, and rights issues were other top subjects. In the comments, one person suggested curation of exhibitions as a possible topic.



All the choices of speakers for APAC events scored high: experts and knowledgeable people in the topic (86%), anyone with a good proposal submitted in a call for papers (81%), and APAC members (78%).

Asked if they would prefer fewer half-day meetings and more full-day events, 38% of respondents said no, 38% were not sure, 24% said yes. This question was tackled a different way in the regional meetings survey, which garnered strong support for full-day events if members were travelling some distance (see above).

APAC Website

In the previous 12 months, respondents had visited the website 1-3 times (45%), 4-6 times (27%), or more than 10 times (21%). They liked its clean, clear design, saying it was 'easy to navigate' and 'easy to find information'. Written in 'clear language', it looked 'professional' and had 'great' images.

They had mainly viewed or used:

- APAC events page (68%) or events box on the home page (45%)
- UK Theatre Collections search page (55%) or search box on the home page (52%)
- Slideshow of gallery images on the home page (58%)
- News box on the home page (52%)
- About Us (45%)
- Members' listings (39%)

Asked what else the website should contain, respondents voted for resources – for researchers (73%) and for students (60%). Votes for other choices: job ads (63%), meeting minutes (53%), blog with posts contributed by members (50%), online exhibitions (43%). In the comments box, members also suggested:

- A search box for Archives Hub
- An explanation of UK Theatre Collections' records and search function
- More member records on UKTC
- Direct contact details for individuals within institutions, with their areas of expertise
- Other contact lists, such as of willing volunteers

Given that websites such as Collections Link already offer resources for the wider heritage and research communities, the survey asked for ideas for sector-specific resources. Members suggested:

- Information and links to existing resources as not everyone will know about all of them
- Specific guidance on processing theatre collections, such as cataloguing and indexing
- Resources that provide links among collections, for example, a guide to Shakespeare performance resources
- Subject guides for researchers, with links to members' websites (and others')
- Guides to common types of materials found in theatre collections, how they might be useful in research, and how to read the documentation of performance
- Guidance for researchers on using images (i.e., rights issues)
- Information on project funding
- National Performance Database

APAC Listserv and Social Media

Most respondents (88%) felt that the Executive Committee communicated adequately with the membership. The majority were signed up to the APAC-SDR listserv (89%). Over two-thirds had posted a message, finding replies very useful (55%) or somewhat useful (36%). Nearly two-thirds read all the postings. The people who had not joined the listserv had not known about it until the survey question.

Respondents' use of social media broke down as follows: Facebook (64%), Twitter (50%), LinkedIn (50%), did not use social media (22%). Asked which avenues APAC should use, the clear vote was for Twitter (69%). Votes for the others: Facebook, 38%; LinkedIn, 22%; no need to use social media, 25%. Two people noted that because social media requires constant maintenance to stay current, the volunteer Executive Committee might not have the time to commit to this. APAC has since launched itself on Twitter as @apac_ssn and on Facebook as apac.ssn.

Asked for APAC's main purpose in using social media, responses were neatly split between the survey's two choices: promoting members by relaying their news and events (55%) and publicising APAC meetings and events to members (45%). Other suggestions were to use social media as a platform for discussion, for raising issues relevant to members, for raising awareness, and for promoting APAC to a wider audience.

Report by Chris Jones (website officer), September 2014