

Last November, the AAR joined with SBL to host their 2011 Annual Meetings in San Francisco, California. 10,513 AAR and SBL members and exhibitors attended the San Francisco meeting, making it the second largest Annual Meeting in history.

In terms of programming, the San Francisco meeting set new participation records. Over 1,300 AAR, SBL, and Additional Meetings sessions occurred during the five-day time period from Thursday, November 17, to Tuesday, November 22. AAR continued to expand its program and hosted 456 sessions, making it the largest ever.

Responses to the post-Annual Meeting survey reflect positive experiences by the members in attendance. Survey results are [posted online](#).

An overwhelming 89 percent of survey respondents thought the 2011 Annual Meeting was a satisfactory or very satisfactory experience. Satisfaction with this year's sessions was high; 85 percent of survey respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality. The opportunity to network with other colleagues also received high marks; 88 percent reported satisfaction. Respondents rated the San Francisco Annual Meeting location favorably, giving positive feedback about its hotel facilities (77 percent) and meeting room space (67 percent).

The Annual Meeting attracted attendees from around the world; 64 nationalities were represented. A number of Canadians made up the largest international group with 487 attendees, followed by the United Kingdom (349), Germany (176), Australia (81), Israel (79), Sweden (61), the Netherlands (57), Norway (55), South Africa (49), and Denmark (40). The International Focus on the Mediterranean brought 144 attendees from that region. California was the best-represented state in 2011 with 1,669 attendees, followed by New York (517), Illinois (491), Texas (482), Massachusetts (450), Pennsylvania (353), and North Carolina (300).

This year's Annual Meeting registration and housing was handled in-house by AAR and SBL. Satisfaction with the registration and housing process was very high; 94 percent of respondents rated the process positively. The peak hotel night was Saturday, November 19, with almost 5,000 hotel rooms in use. Overall, more than 20,000 room nights were occupied during the meeting.

The comments from survey respondents were generally positive. The most frequent complaint was the distance between some of the hotels (especially the Hilton Union Square) and the convention center. Unfortunately, to get the number of sleeping rooms and meeting rooms we needed, this was unavoidable. While the distance was considerable (0.4 miles) compared to previous years, we felt it was walkable. While we considered running shuttles, the wait times would have been longer in most cases than walking the distance. That, combined with cost, sustainability concerns, and previous years' low ridership levels, led to our decision not to use shuttles.

In Chicago in 2012, we will be running shuttles between the hotels and the McCormick Place Convention Center. All but one of our hotels are located miles away from McCormick Place. So to simplify logistics and minimize travel, we are scheduling all of our daytime activities at McCormick Place and all of our evening activities at the Hilton Chicago and the Palmer House Hilton hotels.

The second most frequent complaint was about meeting room space, and sessions being assigned in rooms that were either too large or too small. Meeting room space is assigned by considering several factors, including the estimated attendance at a session as provided by the Program Unit Chairs; proximity to another session so that two sessions hosted by the same Program Unit are assigned to the same hotel; and the audiovisual equipment requested in the session. In order to keep audiovisual costs as low as possible, sessions with similar AV needs are placed in the same room. Since this year all of our daytime sessions will be in McCormick Place, we will be better able to manage these factors in Chicago.

The Annual Meeting Satisfaction Survey is sent via e-mail to all Annual Meeting attendees at the conclusion of each meeting and is offered online at the AAR website. The number of responses this year was 1,627, which represents about 30 percent of those AAR and dual members who were sent the survey. Respondents did not answer each question, so the values were measured from the number of respondents who did. The survey is voluntary and open to all attendees. The Executive Office staff would like to thank everyone who participated in the post-Annual Meeting survey. It continues to be valuable to the Annual Meeting process, for it provides the AAR's Program Committee, Board of Directors, and Executive Office staff with an important measure of member satisfaction. We value this opportunity to hear your comments and suggestions on how we can continue to meet your needs and offer an excellent meeting.