READERSHIP SURVEY OF *iSGTW*

DECEMBER 2008

Document identifier:	GridTalk-D3.2.2-223534-V1.doc
Date:	**02/02/2009**
Activity:	**WP3: iSGTW**
Document status:	**FINAL**

Abstract:

This report provides the results and analysis for the December 2008 *iSGTW* readership survey, in which 12.4% of the 1,601 subscribers we contacted gave us their comments upon the publication, its editorial content and direction. Most subscribers said they read the publication regularly, enjoy the selection and variety of topics covered, and gave generally positive comments. We added one new question, (#9), asking about the technical level of the newsletter, which showed that most readers like the technical level of *iSGTW* (79%).

Delivery Slip

	Name	Partner /Activity	Date	Signature
From	Dan Drollette	CERN	20 Jan 2009	
Reviewed by	Sarah Pearce	QMUL	24 Jan 2009	
Approved by	PMB		30 Jan 2009	

Document Log

Issue	Date	Comment	Author/Partner
v.1	7/01/2009	Template adaption	Dan Drollette, CERN
v.2	20/1/2009	Initial draft	Dan Drollette, CERN
v.3	26/1/2009	Rewrite	Dan Drollette, CERN
v.4	27/1/2009	Revised as per Sarah Pearce	Dan Drollette, CERN
v1	30/1/2009	Final minor corrections	Dan Drollette, CERN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PURPOSE

The main purpose of this report is to provide the results and analyses of the December 2008 readership survey of the *iSGTW* newsletter.

1.2. TARGET AUDIENCE

This deliverable is intended for all GridTalk project partners as well as anyone interested in understanding how GridTalk's message and achieved results are being made available to the grid community. The European Commission (EC), project partners and project activities are free to use elements of this document to support individual promotional and marketing activities.

1.3. DOCUMENT AMENDMENT PROCEDURE

Amendments, comments and suggestions should be sent to GridTalk Project Manager, Sarah Pearce, email: s.pearce@qmul.ac.uk.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We have endeavored to learn more about our readership and their interests by conducting short (an average of 9 questions) surveys every 6 months using a survey service called Zoomerang. We have done so since the founding of *International Science Grid This Week*, or *iSGTW*, (www.isgtw.org).

For the most recent survey, approximately half of our subscribers were contacted in December 2008. Out of those, 12.4% responded, which is considered a very good response rate. (For comparison, our June 2008 survey had a 10.6% response rate, and the first survey – conducted in June 2007 – had a 5.6% response rate.) Among other things, they answered questions about their background, interests and their expectations and desires for the newsletter.

We compared their responses to those of previous surveys in order to get a sense of any trends.

Similar to our last survey, results showed that typical subscribers are male, somewhere between their 30s and early 40s, technically oriented, and working in IT or science. They regularly read *iSGTW*, with many reading it on publication day. They generally know what they are looking for in a given issue; as one subscriber said "I screen what is included in every issue using the email I receive, then go to the Web site for specific articles of interest." This was emphasized by another reader, who wrote: "I like the current structure of the weekly information mail. Very practical to read and dig in further on subjects of interest."

Of special note is a new question added to this survey (#9), asking "How do you feel about the technical level of the material in *iSGTW*?" Of those who responded, 79% said it was "About right," with another 19% saying it was "Not technical enough."

Looking at the results to this question in another way, almost 98% said that they liked the technical level of *iSGTW* content as it is — or wanted even more technical detail. Just over 2% said it was "Too technical."

As one reader told us: "It could be slightly more technical, I would certainly not make it any less . . ."

The December 2008 survey also reiterated some things we had learned from previous surveys: our readership likes variety in topics, and they are interested in the applications of the grid as much as the grid itself. Certain topics – grid security, for example – consistently top readers' lists of favorite subjects. Other items, such as the possibility of interactive features, consistently rank near the bottom.

In addition, we learned that if we wish to expand our readership base beyond its core, we may wish to attempt more outreach among non-technical audiences. (Some suggested ways of doing so were outlined in the Marketing Report of August 2008.)

Finally, when these latest Readership Survey results are taken in conjunction with other metrics, such as our Google Page Ranking (8 on a scale of 10) and our steadily increasing readership (14.5% more subscribers in the period between April and November,) these tools paint a consistent, mutually reinforcing portrait, that shows overall satisfaction with the publication among readers. This is buttressed by four times as many positive responses as negative responses in the open-ended "Further comments" section.

Of the few negative comments, the most striking one pleaded for a more impartial, journalistic slant, saying that "*iSGTW* needs to be focusing much more on the real progress that is being made on the grid and much less on being a conveyor of press releases and PR."

Typical positive comments said "Very good articles, my preferred grid newspaper," and "Well done journal, well balanced."

The most succinct comment of *iSGTW*'s role among grid-users was: "*iSGTW* provides an excellent survey of grid topics around the globe for those of us who are too busy to find out what is happening on our own nickel."

3. BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Ever since the founding of *International Science Grid This Week*, or *iSGTW*, (www.isgtw.org) we have tried to learn more about our readers: what they like reading, what components in the site that they find most valuable, and what they would like to see more of. By conducting surveys, we hope to better serve our readers and the grid community.

Consequently, since June 2007, *iSGTW* has been running on-line surveys twice per year, using "Zoomerang" (see next sections, 4 and 6.1). In order to provide continuity — and be able to compare one survey to another — we have tried to use roughly the same questions. Meanwhile, we have also tried to reformat questions so that they are simpler for readers to respond to, and we have introduced new questions as appropriate.

For the December 2008 survey, one new question (#9 "How do you feel about the technical level of the material in *iSGTW*?") was developed after consultations among iSGTW staff. As with all previous questions, it was reviewed by the *iSGTW* Advisory Board and the GridTalk Project Management Board prior to conducting the survey.

All questions are shown in section 4.

4. HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

Zoomerang (www.zoomerang.com) is a private service in the business of conducting surveys, for which a one-year subscription is paid by EGEE. *iSGTW*, as part of a collaboration with EGEE, is able to use this subscription. Zoomerang allows us to format questions, tally responses, and break down data.

After our questions had been agreed-upon and formatted, we submitted a list containing the email addresses of our subscribers, and Zoomerang sent each of those on the list an "invitation" to join. As it was the holiday season, in which such solicitations could be easily overlooked, we also sent out two "reminder" e-mails.

For this survey, we invited about half of the subscribers on our mailing list, or those whose email address began with the letters M through Z. (We saved the other half for our next survey, thus avoiding the possibility of bombarding the same individuals with solicitations.) Those who completed the survey were automatically enrolled in a draw to win GridCafé merchandise. This incentive had worked well previously, and seemed to increase the response rate.

Of the 1601 invitations we sent out, 199 people completed the survey, making a 12.4 percent response rate, which is considered very good. (That is, over 12 percent of those whom we invited to join the survey filled it out. An additional 7 percent followed the link to the survey website but did not fill it out. By comparison, our June 2008 survey had a 10.6% response rate. The first survey – conducted in June 2007 – had a 5.6% response rate.)

One possible reason for *iSGTW*'s high response rate may be due to the prize-incentives (grid-related T-shirts, hats and mugs) offered by *iSGTW* to those completing the survey. As this reward system has worked well in two successive surveys, we envisage using it in the future.

5. ONE PAGE OVERVIEW OF QUESTIONS

For the December 2008 survey, the questions were:

1. How often do you visit the iSGTW website?				
more than once a week	once a week	once every two weeks	once a month	hardly ever

2. What is your profession?						
Student	Industry	Scientist	IT Professional	Media	Funding body	Other

3. Which grid projects are you involved in?					
EGEE	OSG	GridPP	TeraGrid	I'm not involved in a grid project	I'm involved in other projects (please specify)

4. Age group					
<20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	>61

5. Gender	
Male	Female

6. Would you like to see articles that are:		
Longer	Shorter	about the same length

7. Are there any particular subject areas you would like to see more coverage of, such as:					
astronomy	grid security	biology	Genomics	pharmaceutical research	earth science	other (please specify)

8. Please mark the appropriate checkbox "little or no interest," "some interest," or "much interest" for each of the following categories:							
grid technology	science research	humanities research	opinion	grid project profiles	profiles of people	interactive features (blog, forum, commentary, email to friend)	educational resources	announce-ments

| 9. How do you feel about the technical level of the material in iSGTW? (Please pick only one.) |
|---|
| Too technical |
| Not technical enough |
| About right |

10. Further comments or suggestions

6. QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES IN DETAIL

1. How often do you visit the iSGTW website?		
more than once a week	17	8%
once a week	72	34%
once every two weeks	36	17%
once a month	54	25%
hardly ever	35	16%
Total	214	100%
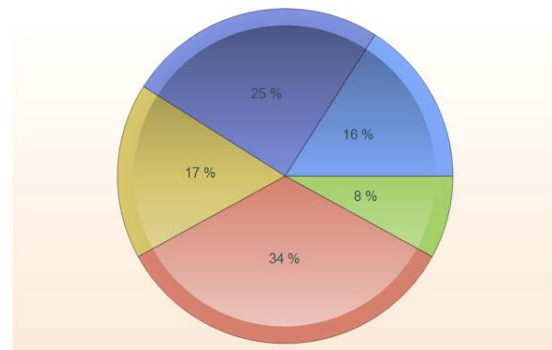
CONCLUSION: Most survey respondents (84%) said that they visit the *iSGTW* website regularly, with few (16%) "hardly ever" reading it. About 34% visit the site weekly, in line with the fact that the newsletter is published weekly. This feedback is supported by our other on-line analytical tools, such as Googleanalytics, which shows a sharp upswing in readership every publishing day. Of those who visit the site less than weekly, it is possible that they are still reading the email newsletter, but do not click through to read articles every week.

2. What is your profession?		
Student	13	7%
Industry	8	4%
Scientist	69	35%
Information Technology Professional	77	39%
Media	8	4%
Funding body	2	1%
Other	20	10%
Total	197	100%
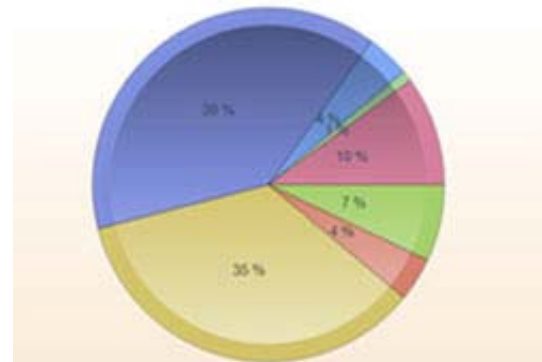
CONCLUSION: In line with our previous surveys, most of our readers are IT professionals and scientists. Together, these two groups make up about 74% of our readers. (In June 2008, it was 76%) There are at least two areas in which we see potential for drawing in new readers: students (7%) and the media (4%). Our earlier *iSGTW* Marketing Strategy (Deliverable 3.3, delivered in August 2008) detailed some ways in which we could increase the number of readers in these segments of the population. Due to staffing constraints we haven't yet been in a position to implement all of these ideas, but hope that we will be able to use interns over summer 2009 to increase our profile in these areas.

| 3. Which grid projects are you involved in?		
I work for an EC-funded project	75	38%
I work for a national project	67	34%
I'm involved in other projects (please specify)	42	21%
I'm not involved in a grid project	50	25%
Total	**234**	**100%**

CONCLUSION: In previous surveys, we had readers identify themselves by individual project; i.e., "GridPP" or "OSG." This time, we asked them to identify themselves by the categories above, with room to put in other affiliations. (Some worked for multiple projects at once, which accounts for 199 people making 234 entries.) Most of our readers (38%) are involved with an EC-funded project, with a similar percentage (34%) working for national projects. In "Other projects," responses included "Black Forest Grid," "US EPA Grid Project," "Australian eResearch," and "ArchaeoGRID," whose names suggest that those outside of high-energy physics are beginning to become interested in the uses of the grid for their work. Of particular interest were the 25% not involved in any grid project, showing that iSGTW can be used to reach out beyond those currently working in grids.

4. Age group		
<20	1	1%
21-30	33	17%
31-40	56	28%
41-50	55	28%
51-60	30	15%
>61	22	11%
Total	**197**	**100%**
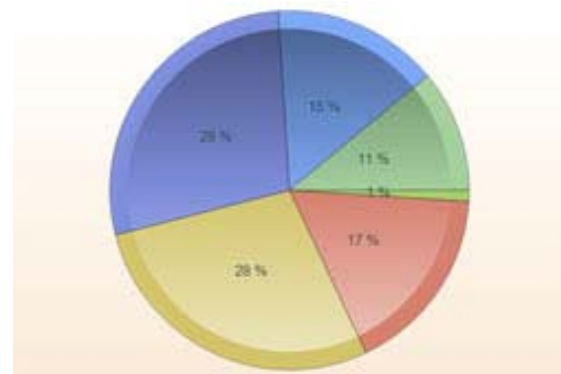
CONCLUSION: The largest segment of our readership has always been in the 30s- and 40s-age brackets. Where this latest survey differs from June 2008 is that there is now an almost equal number of those aged 31-40 and those aged 41-50; previously, we had nearly twice as many in the 31-40 age bracket as in the 41-50 age bracket. In the >61 age bracket, we saw over twice as many respondents in December 2008 (22) as in June 2008 (9). There were also fewer people in the 21-30 age bracket (33 in December 2008 versus 55 in June 2008). Overall, this shows a pronounced tilt toward an older audience for this survey, which we hypothesize may be because December's survey was conducted during winter break, while June's was done when there were summer students and interns working on grid projects.

5. Gender		
Female	40	21%
Male	154	79%
Total	194	100%
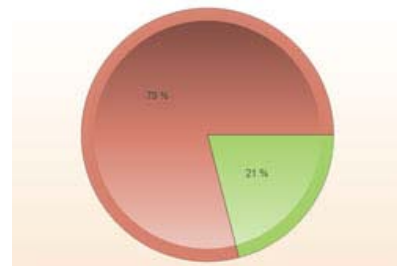
CONCLUSION: Our readership is largely male (79%), mirroring the gender distribution among engineers. While there is some minor variation in the percentages in each *iSGTW* survey, (85% male according to the June 2008 survey, 76% male according to the October 2007 survey, and 79% male in the June 2007 survey), the overall pattern is distinct: it is mostly men who read *iSGTW*. *iSGTW* is seeking to produce more profiles of women in an effort to encourage the entry of women into grid-computing and to be part of efforts to redress the gender imbalance. It has Advisory Board approval for a month-long theme on "Women in Grid," and a special section by the same name to be developed for its Resources area.

| 6. Would you like to see articles that are:		
longer	37	19%
shorter	10	5%
about the same length	158	80%
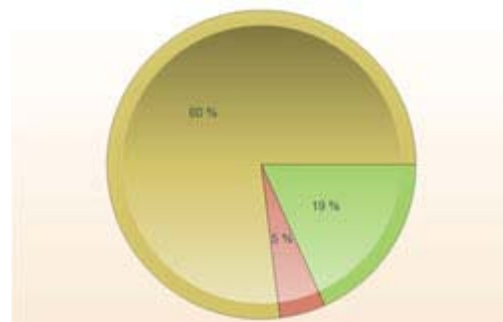
CONCLUSION: With 80 % of respondents saying they like stories of the same length as at present, and another 19 percent saying they could be longer, it seems that our strategy of having stories run 350 words minimum, with some longer ones (500 to 800 words on occasion) has been a success. We know from analysis of previous longer stories that readers do stick with them, showing that they respond to good writing and editing, the breaking-up of text into readable pieces, the use of colorful anecdotes and quotes, in-depth research (as opposed to regurgitating press releases), snappy headlines, plentiful illustrations, newshooks, and opinion pieces from prominent grid users such as Ian Foster. Consequently, we have been running more stories in the 500-to-800 word range, and our readers seem to be saying they approve.

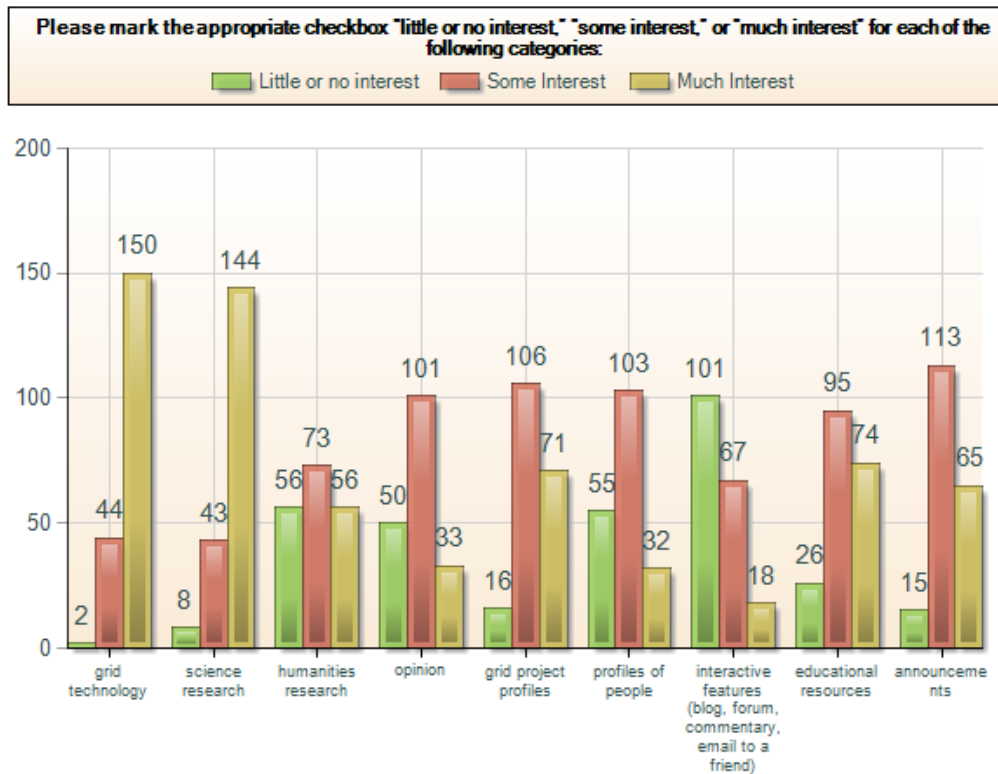| 7. Are there any particular subject areas you would like to see more coverage of, such as:		
astronomy	45	27%
grid security	83	51%
biology	46	28%
genomics	32	20%
pharmaceutical research	28	17%
earth science	42	26%
atmospheric science	25	15%
Other, please specify	68	41%
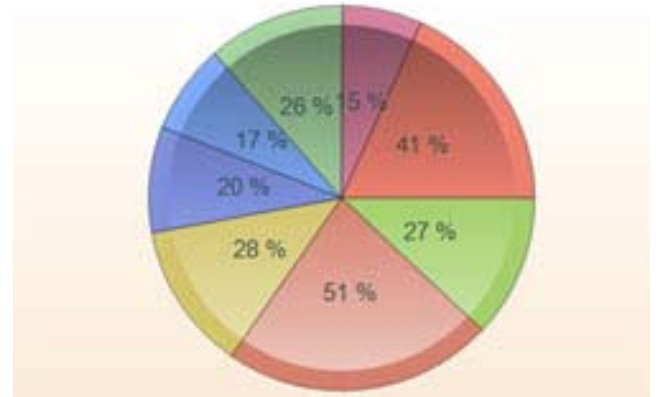
CONCLUSION: The percentages here are very close to what we had in June: 51% interested in "grid-security" now as opposed to 49% in June; 17% interested in "pharmaceuticals" now as compared to 16% in June; 15% in "atmospheric science" now as opposed to 18% in June. (The only anomaly was "biology:" 28% now, 19% then.) Once again, grid-security topped the list in popularity (49%). Readers also had the opportunity to write down areas in which they would like to see more coverage. "High energy physics" and "grid technology" were the items most frequently volunteered by our readers; next came medical applications, clouds versus grids, and humanities. However, our readers' interests span a wide range, and peppered in were finance, ecology, "cultural heritage," and climate change. One reader wrote "I like the diversity presented at the ISGTW." We aim to reflect the areas of interest preferred here in our plans for the newsletter and our weekly editorial meetings.

8. Please mark the appropriate checkbox "little or no interest," "some interest," or "much interest" for each of the following categories:

	Little or no interest	Some interest	Much interest
Grid technology	2	44	150
Science research	8	43	144
Humanities research	56	73	56
Opinion	50	101	33
Grid project profiles	16	106	71
Profiles of people	55	103	32
Interactive features (blog, forum, commentary, email to a friend)	101	67	18
Educational resources	26	95	74
Announcements	15	113	65

Please mark the appropriate checkbox "little or no interest," "some interest," or "much interest" for each of the following categories:

CONCLUSION: By far, the most popular topic is "grid technology," with 150 responses of "much interest," followed by "science research" (144). In the "some interest" category, "announcements", "project profiles," "profiles of people," and "opinion" scored well. Near the bottom were "interactive features" (101 respondents said they were of "little or no interest").

As noted in our previous survey report, we know that blogs and reader comments are some of the most popular areas in many online newspapers, so we suspect this may be a case of *iSGTW* readers commenting upon something that they have not tried yet. Nevertheless, their response to the proposal for interactive features shows that we will need to start slowly and take into account feedback when we deliver Milestone M3.3 ("Launch *iSGTW* community forum, a new feature of *iSGTW*, aimed at scientists working on Grid or considering doing so, to encourage peer discussion and support") by April 2009.

9. How do you feed about the technical level of the material in iSGTW? (Please pick only one)		
Too technical	5	3%
Not technical enough	37	19%
About right	156	79%
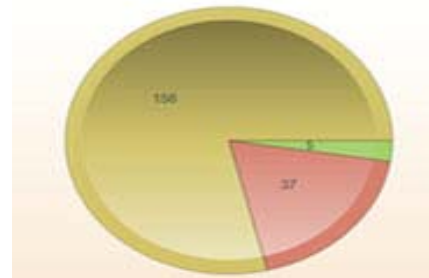
CONCLUSION: Between the 79% who said the technical level of iSGTW was "About right" and the 19% who said it was "Not technical enough," 98% of respondents said that they like the technical level of the publication as it is, or would like it even more technical. Only 2 percent wanted it less technical. We take this as an overall endorsement of the technical level of the publication, and will attempt to keep it much the same as at present.

_____

10. Further comments or suggestions
47 Responses

CONCLUSION: We had 33 different responses here, which is a good number for an open ended question.

17 responses, or just over half of the total, wanted iSGTW to remain much as it is. Four had complaints, about such things as the publication's title ("change the name please!"), a request for more business coverage, more in-depth research, and irritations with excessively promotional material (too much of "a conveyor of press releases and PR"). Three had suggestions, and 5 had no real information, other than general positive commentary ("well structured questionnaire, easy to complete"). Overall, there were 4 times as many positive responses as negative. The most common response was in the tenor of "excellent resource – well done."

6.1. COMMENTS ON THE USE OF ZOOMERANG AS A TOOL

Although Zoomerang is a successful tool, we had previously found some problems with the distribution of the survey, which we were able to correct this time by revising the email invitation. We also changed the formatting of a question, for greater clarity. Such minor improvements may also account for the slight increase in reader responses. The software is generally user-friendly overall; most importantly, the telephone help desk is responsive and knows their product well.

7. COMMENTS, OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the results from this survey continued the trends found in previous surveys. We found:

- Our typical subscriber is a male, in his 30s or early 40s. He is working in IT or in science, and he likes technically oriented material. He is most likely to be affiliated with EC-funded projects or national grid projects. He is a loyal reader, visiting the *iSGTW* site more than once a month. Googleanayltics tells us that our typical reader is familiar with the publication and its layout (Features, Opinion, Links, Images, Announcements) and after a quick scan of the front page, goes straight to the relevant pages.

- For *iSGTW* to reach out beyond the immediate grid community, it may need more material that is accessible to outsiders/newcomers, while not losing our core readership. (*iSGTW* has a brand, and a readership that has certain expectations about its content.) We are considering developing a glossary of technical terms that can be easily linked from within articles, giving more background on occasion, or having sections or areas devoted to newcomers. At the same time, *iSGTW* must not water down the editorial product to the point of losing existing readers, or run the risk of becoming less useful to the grid community.

- Although *iSGTW* aims to promote grids for science, we must be careful not to be seen as a PR tool, simply republishing press releases. We do not consider this is currently a substantial problem, but must remain conscious of the need for innovative, in-depth journalism if we are to retain our reputation and subscribers.

- In order to reach out to women in Grid computing, *iSGTW* plans to run a month-long special on women in grid. The next survey will show whether this has raised the proportion of *iSGTW* subscribers who are women.

- *iSGTW* needs to cover a variety of topics ("I like the diversity presented at *iSGTW*"), but also meet what readers say are their central interests.

- We are consistently getting a negative response to interactive features from readers, and must tread carefully in considering how to roll out our proposed new interactive features so they gain acceptance.

- We will try to conduct future surveys with an eye towards keeping the same questions, while being open to rewording or adding new material. However, at the same time, we must also avoid having surveys that are overly long or too demanding of our readers.