

WMA 2019 Annual Meeting Report

32% (126) of the 400 attendees responded to the Survey.

Brief Comparison to the 2018 Survey

The data for overall, top-line satisfaction was similar between 2018 and 2019. This year, 32% of the attendees responded to this survey while last year, in 2018, 33% responded.

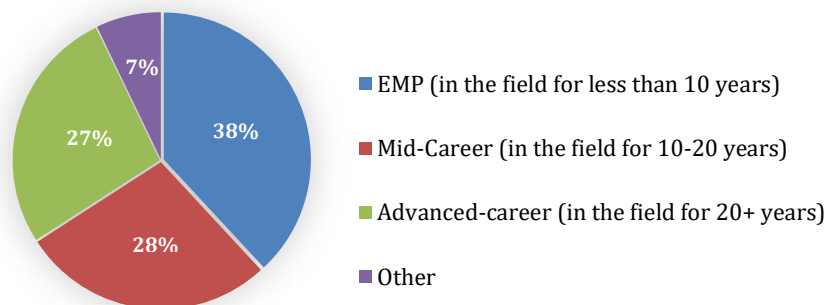
Just as in 2018, in 2019, Emerging Museum Professionals represented the largest group of attendees in terms of career level. In 2018, they represented 45% of the attendees, and this year in 2019 they represented 38%.

Of the 2018 respondents, 53% said the Annual Meeting met their expectations, and 15% said it exceeded their expectations. Similarly, of the 2019 respondents, 59% said their expectations were met and 13% said their expectations were exceeded.

Attendees both years felt the conference was well-organized, useful, fun, had plenty of networking opportunities, and found the material to be presented an appropriate level.

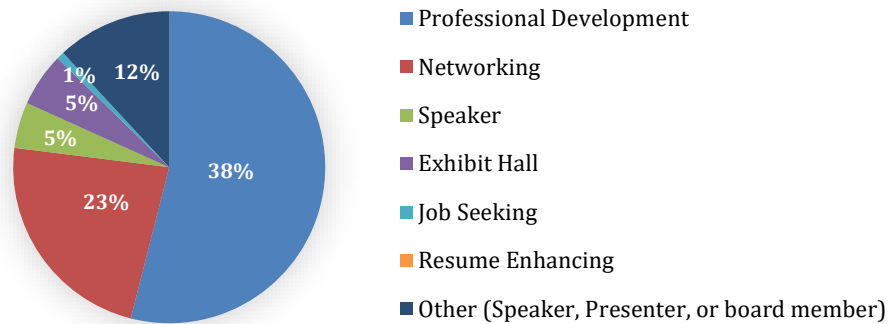
Data Collected From the 2019 Survey

Emerging Museum Professionals represented the largest group of attendees.



Western Museums Association

Majority of the attendees attended the Annual Meeting for professional development. Other's attended for networking purposes, were an exhibitor and a presenter/speaker, wanted to attend the exhibit hall, or were seeking a job.



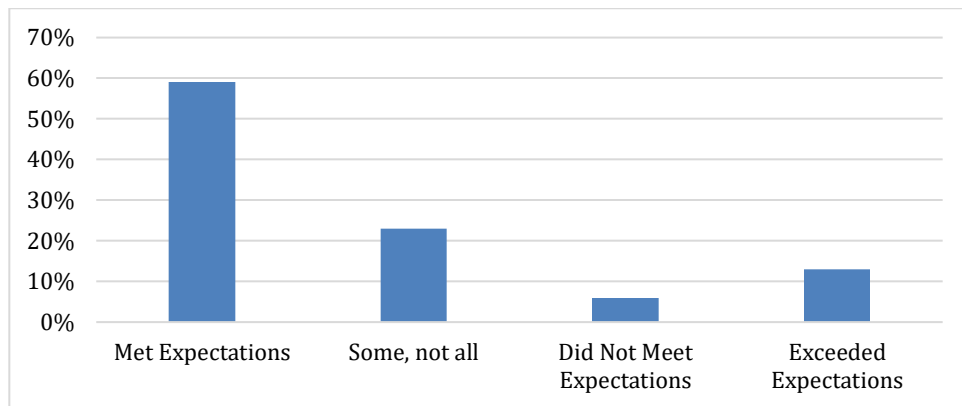
72% of 2019 respondents said the Annual Meeting met or exceeded their expectations. (59% said it met their expectations; 13% said it exceeded their expectations). Some responses from attendees whose expectations were met or were exceeded:

- "This was the most well-rounded and welcoming regional or national conference I've ever been to. Seriously."
- "The high level of discourse on big issues was unexpected!"
- "I learned something new at each session, and usually more than one thing. I made many connections."
- "WMA always excels at creating memorable experiences that we talk about for years to come. This year's conference had many of those."
- "Lots of opportunities to re-connect with colleagues & meet new folks; also, good sessions that got me thinking."
- "Museum conferences are WAY better than academic conferences--panels had more of a workshop feel, in the audience I felt more engaged and took more away than I do just sitting and being lectured by people with niche interests..."
- "This was my first time and I felt truly welcomed in this conference. It was very immersive and a smaller conference. I loved it!"
- "It seemed smaller this year and more intimate, didn't get lost in the crowds and had more meaningful conversations. Would like more nuts and bolts and how to for us old folks."
- "WMA was a career highlight for me. Networking, developing professional skills, and sparking ideas for our institution were the highlights."
- "I am very impressed with the high quality of the WMA conference/programming - especially in comparison to other regional groups I've been a part of."

Western Museums Association

Additionally, 23% said the Annual Meeting met some of their expectations and 6% said their expectations were not met. Some responses from attendees whose expectations were somewhat met or not at all:

- “Being from a small museum (less than 8 staff members), we were expecting some of the sessions to be applicable to us. Most of the suggestions given during the sessions were tailored more to larger museums. We were able to pull only a few things that we could use for our museum.”
- “There were very few sessions for registrars and collection managers.”
- “Some of the presenters were a bit disorganized in their presentation. In addition, it would have been more helpful if there had been more take-away materials and/or online resources.”
- “There weren't a lot of takeaways. This year's sessions were more about sharing what people did, rather than sharing how they did it and what they learned. Furthermore, session descriptions were a bit misleading.”
- “I was hoping for more exciting forward-thinking content.”
- “...the meeting didn't meet my expectations. I was disappointed with the flow of attendees through the exhibit hall”



Majority of respondents preferred the interactive, discussion-based session format where there was a panel followed by a breakout group exercise or Q&A. The most popular or valuable sessions of the 2019 Annual Meeting were:

1. Opening General Session & Keynote (7 votes)
2. Museums are Places that are Quietly Subversive (6 votes)
3. Ida-Horror Stories (4 votes)

Although majority of the respondents stated that they found something valuable out of all the sessions they attended, the least effective or valuable sessions of the 2019 Annual Meeting were:

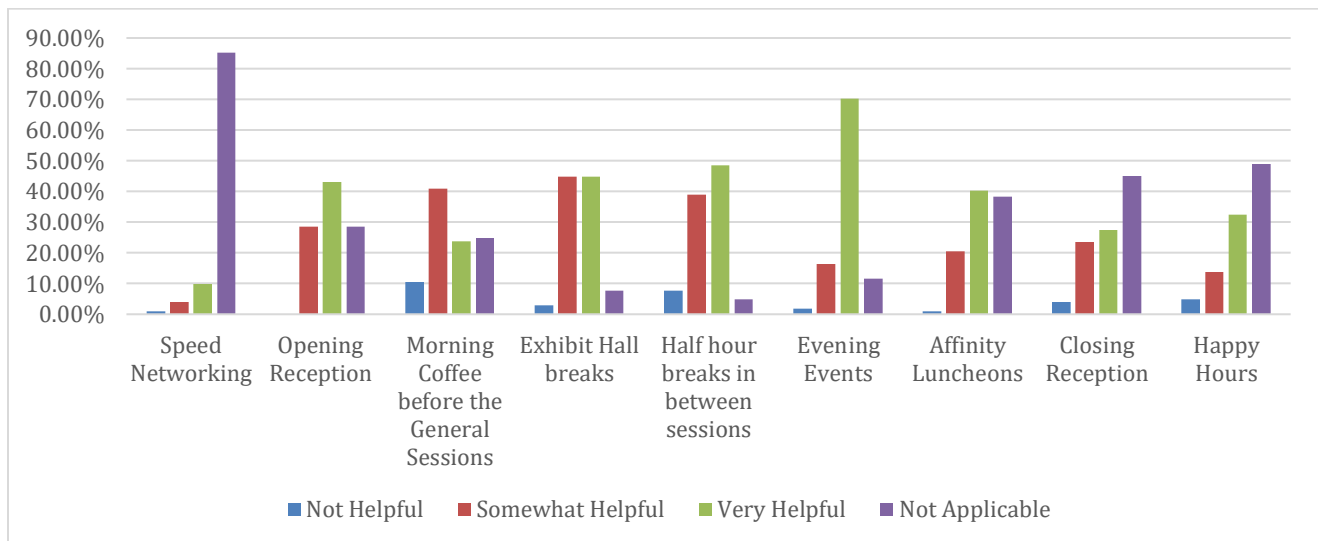
1. Conservation DIY(ish) (3 votes)
2. Inclusivity, Difficult History, and the Modern Museum Audience (3 votes)
3. Planned Giving Opportunities with the Upcoming Transfer of Wealth (3 votes)

Western Museums Association

77% of respondents found the Opening General Session & Keynote to be valuable, while 55% found the Closing General Session & Panel to be valuable. 18% did not attend the Keynote and 34% did not attend the Closing Panel.

Majority found value in most of the networking opportunities.

- 85% did not attend the Speed Networking
- 43% found the Opening Reception to be helpful for networking
- 10% found the Morning Coffee to not be helpful for networking
- 44% found the Exhibit Hall breaks to be helpful for networking
- 48% found the Half Hour breaks to be helpful for networking
- 70% found the Evening Events to be very helpful but the cost was an issue
- 40% found the Affinity Lunches to be helpful for networking
- 45% didn't attend the Closing Reception.
- 49% did not attend the Happy Hours. Those who did attend found them unorganized, confining and loud (being inside of a restaurant).



28 survey respondents suggested ideas for other networking opportunities at the Annual Meetings. These include:

- Physical activities or excursions during the Annual Meeting like a hike, walking tour or yoga.
- Opportunities for EMP or new attendees to meet a mentor
- Providing more informal, relaxed ways for people to meet like playing games or getting drinks as a downtime.

Western Museums Association

Rather than going to the Exhibit Hall to meet with Vendors, 54% use the Exhibit Hall to network with other attendees and 51% just go for free lunch and snacks. Majority of respondents would like to have some sort of activity or game incorporated into the Exhibit Hall where attendees will be prompted to interact with the Vendors and visa versa. Also, respondents would like to see more vendors and more diversity.

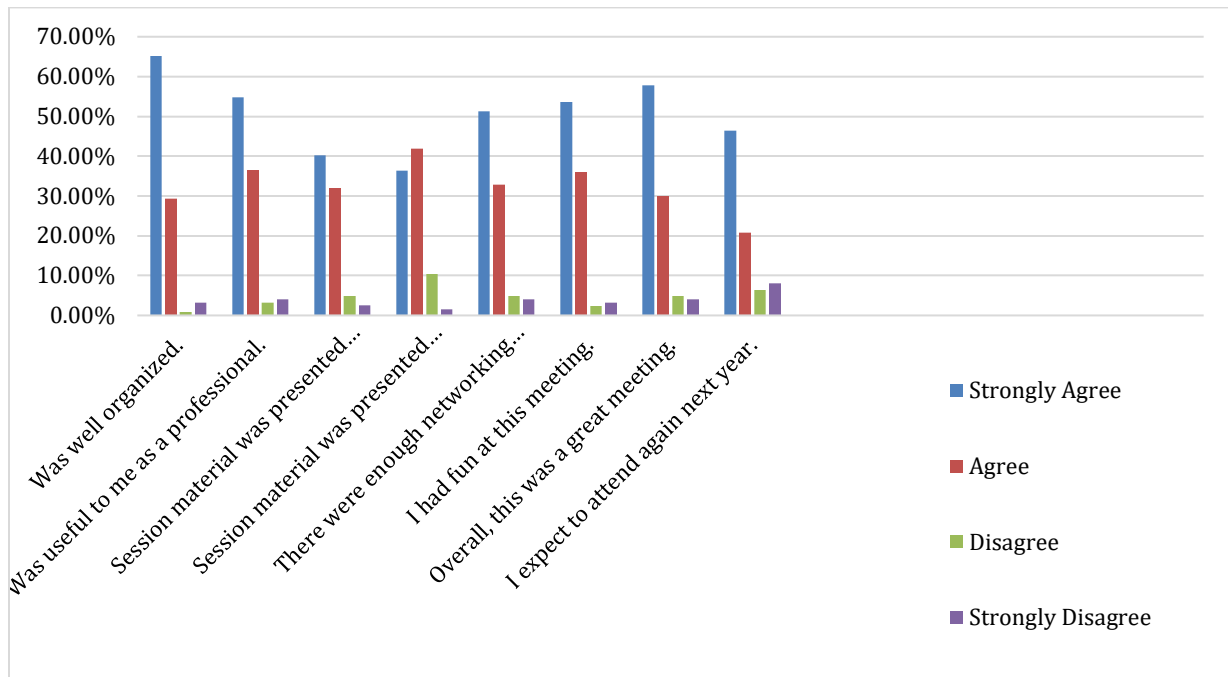
Next year, majority of attendees would like to see more discussion topics on Leadership (47%), Community Engagement (45%), and Visitor Experience (43%), while 6% would like to see less discussion around Indigenous topics.

A few respondents mentioned that discussion on Marketing and Communications and working with/managing volunteers among other topics, were not adequately addressed this year.

Overall, the 2019 survey respondents thought the 2019 Annual Meeting was well organized, useful as a professional, presented enough networking opportunities, and was fun.

- The respondents thought the session material was presented at both an appropriate introductory and appropriate advanced level.
- 86% found the Annual Meeting to be diverse and inclusive.
- 21% agree and 46% strongly agree that they will attend next year's 2020 Annual Meeting.
- 62% would like to participate in year-round programming (quarterly)

Western Museums Association



Actionable Items & Logistics for Program Committee:

Conference Space & Location

- Make sure there is a large enough, quality map of the conference space including the location of bathrooms
- Include gender-neutral bathrooms
- More structure & physical space for discussion-based sessions & breakout groups
- Make sure there is water, coffee and tea in a centralized location at all times
- Offer a conference schedule app as an alternative to the printed Program
- Provide a printed map or list of local museums and attractions for people to visit when not participating at the conference
- Provide more free food and healthier options (veggies and protein)

Sessions, Workshops & Events

- Offer more participatory / interactive sessions in general
- Make sure the session descriptions truly represent what the session will offer or keep the session content from drifting away from published session title and description
- Have speakers appear on only one panel to represent more people in the field
- Present more hands-on learning opportunities and make sure each session offers practical skills for the attendees to take home
- Seek out proposals from people doing out of the box or collaborative programming in the museum field
- Make sure the events offer what was advertised like “heavy hor d’oeuvres”

Western Museums Association

- Make the Live Auction more audible and visible
- Schedule time to engage with the general session panel members
- Give more time to get places, like the Evening Events
- Have fun (play music at auction, do a yoga event, hands-on activities, etc.)
- Start later on the final day of the conference
- Provide more outdoor networking activities

Accessibility & Inclusion

- Continued focus on diversity/equity/access/inclusion
- Include closed-captioning or sign language where applicable and design a larger font on the name tags and signage
- Provide more content, activities and networking opportunities for EMPS, students and first-time attendees
- Encourage interactions between attendees and exhibitors by offering enticements, better advertising, moving the food around the space, playing a scavenger hunt, having a raffle, playing music, etc.
- Offer a chance for new attendees to meet WMA Board Members

What should the Annual Meeting organizers know as they plan for WMA 2020 in Portland, Oregon?

- Include food trucks
- Take advantage of the “vegan” food culture
- Invite local native artists/vendors sell their wares
- Present more on sustainability, reducing, reusing, & recycling, all the way from big picture down to nitty-gritty step-by-step solutions.
- Create new professional development experiences
- Consider an evening cultural event or other programming related to the Japanese American community in Oregon. There is the Japanese American Historical Plaza and there will be a new Japanese American Museum of Oregon opening spring 2020.
- Incorporate more Black/Indigenous/People of color participation
- Should include Portland Chinatown and indigenous partners as well

Additional Positive Quotes / Comments from Attendees:

“One of the best museum conferences in the country! Engaging, helpful, and inspiring. Highly recommended.”

Western Museums Association

"WMA consistently delivers incredible content--it's the best museum conference in the USA!"

"This is an amazing opportunity to meet colleagues from other Museums like mine and learn about how we're doing our jobs both the same and differently. I get to think big when I'm at this conference!"

"If you want to get to know some of the most amazing museum people and learn about the work they are doing, WMA is the place for you."

"Attending WMA feels like returning to summer camp each year - you see old friends, make new connections, and learn useful skills. It truly is a joy."

"Such an inspiring conference! I connected with people and left feeling great about our field. And, a huge shout-out to whoever chose the music that played after Sina Bahram's keynote- Heroes by Bowie was perfect!"

"WMA Boise conference was well planned, well run, and in a fun city."

"The WMA Community is not interested in what was, but rather what Museums can be."

"WMA hit that sweet spot between smaller local conferences and large national conferences!"

"The 2019 WMA Annual Meeting was filled with energy and creativity, leaving me inspired to go back to work and apply what I learned."