

TarValon.Net Membership Survey 2011

The Membership Survey is held annually as a way to formally capture the membership's thoughts and ideas on all aspects of the organization in a consistent format to be utilized by Executives and the Board of Directors in making decisions at the Administrative Meeting. It typically runs in the beginning of the year, to reflect thoughts from the prior calendar year; the 2011 Membership Survey was run from February 1st to the 15th 2012.

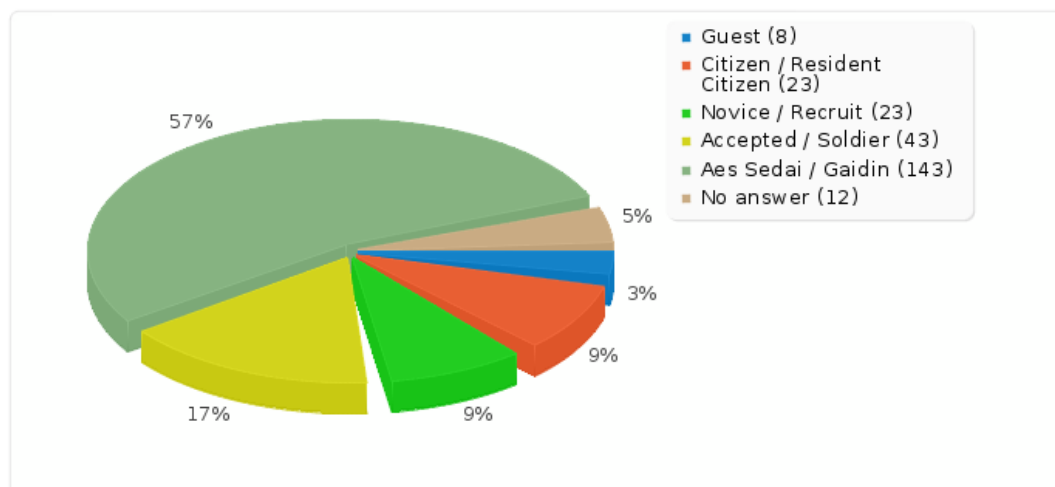
This report is designed to provide an overview of the results of the survey, compare against the previous year results and show how the results were utilized at the Spring Administrative Meeting. For the sake of being thorough and consistent, the survey results will be provided in alphabetical departmental order.

The 2011 Membership Survey had 212 respondents, as there were 571 members of the Tower as of January 1, 2012, this means that the respondents made up 37% of the Tower population. It should be noted that there were 253 respondents; however 41 of those did not complete the survey. Additionally, the Tower population statistic does not include Citizens and guests. In comparison, the 2010 Membership Survey had 208 respondents out of 641 Tower Members or 32% of the Tower population. This shows that we had more people participating in the survey in 2012 than in 2011.

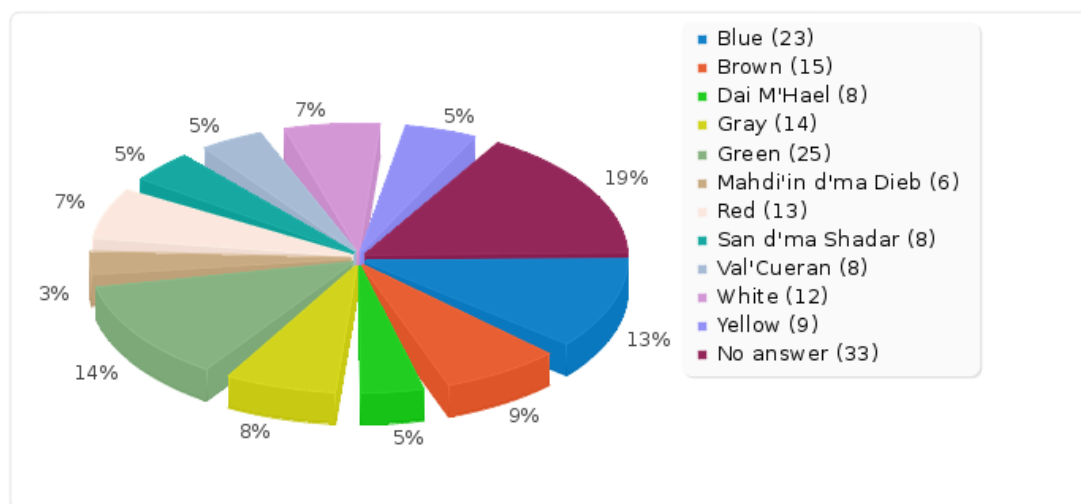
Demographics

The following charts show the breakdown of respondents based on rank, affiliation, age, location, sex, education, and field of work.

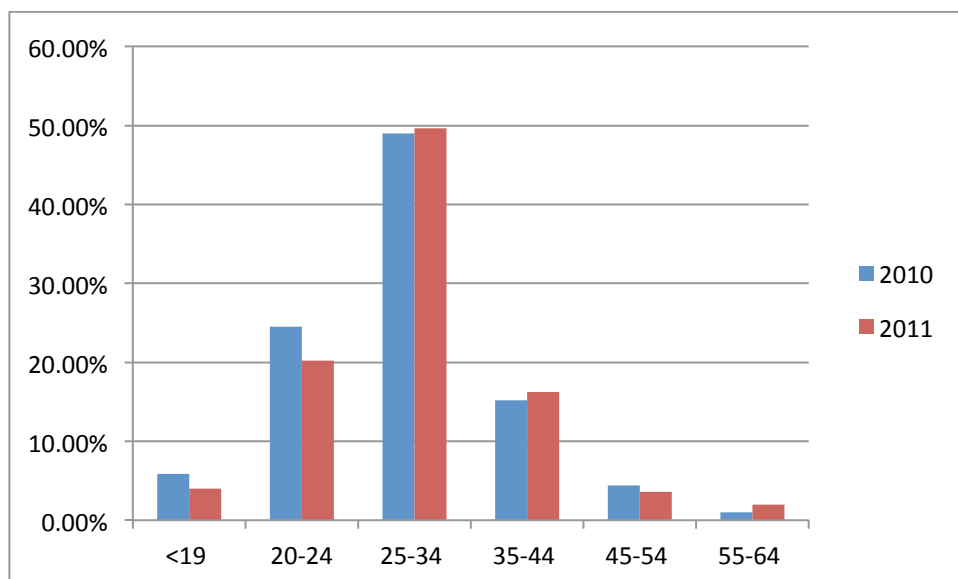
We can see below that the majority of respondents are senior members, which was the case in both 2012 and 2011. This is not surprising as senior members make up the majority of membership.



Both years saw that a large segment of respondents to the survey either chose not to provide their affiliation or did not have one. In 2012 for any respondent that did not self select as a senior member did not have an option to select an affiliation, whereas in 2011 affiliation was an option to all respondents. The drastic decrease from 2011 to 2012 in no affiliation would be due to this change in the survey, so that aspired Accepted and Soldiers would not have this option, nor would a self selected guest. Additionally it can be seen that the ratio of senior member affiliation in respondents reflects that of the Tower.



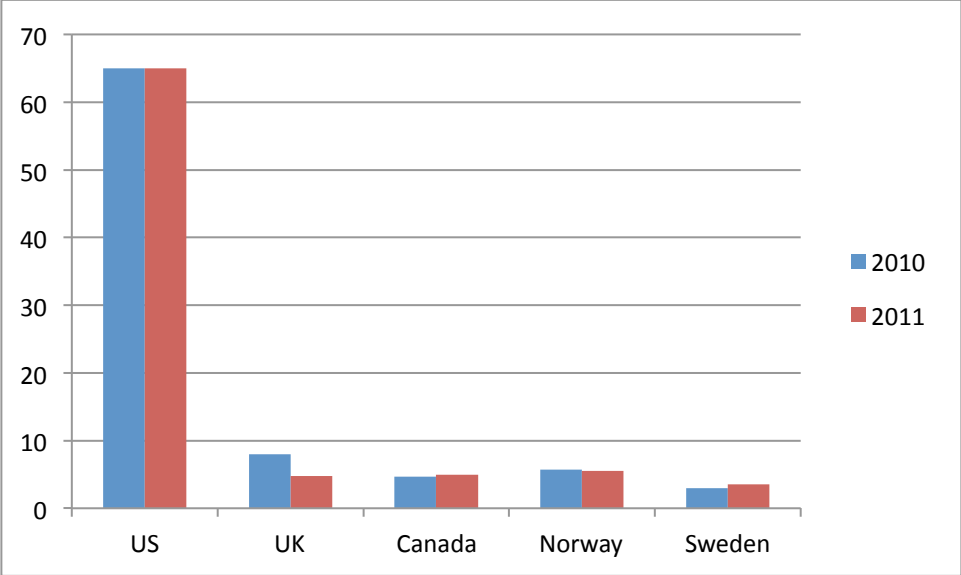
The majority of respondents both years are within the age range of 25 to 34, which accurately reflects Tower membership age spread.



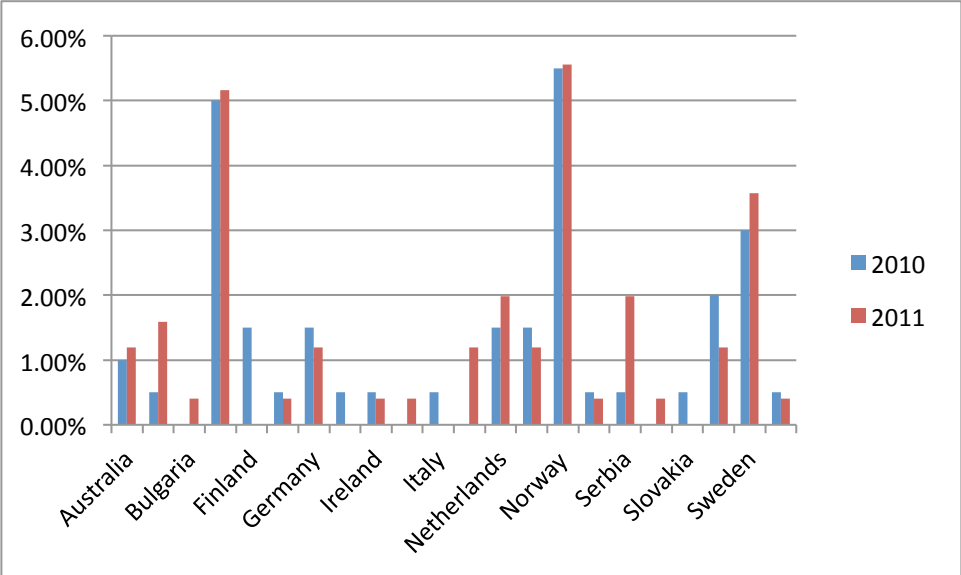
Both years saw that the majority of respondents came from Canada, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

2010: USA 65%, UK 8%, Norway 5.75%, Canada 4.7%, and Sweden 3%

2011: USA 65%, Norway 5.5%, Canada 5%, UK 4.75%, and Sweden 3.5%



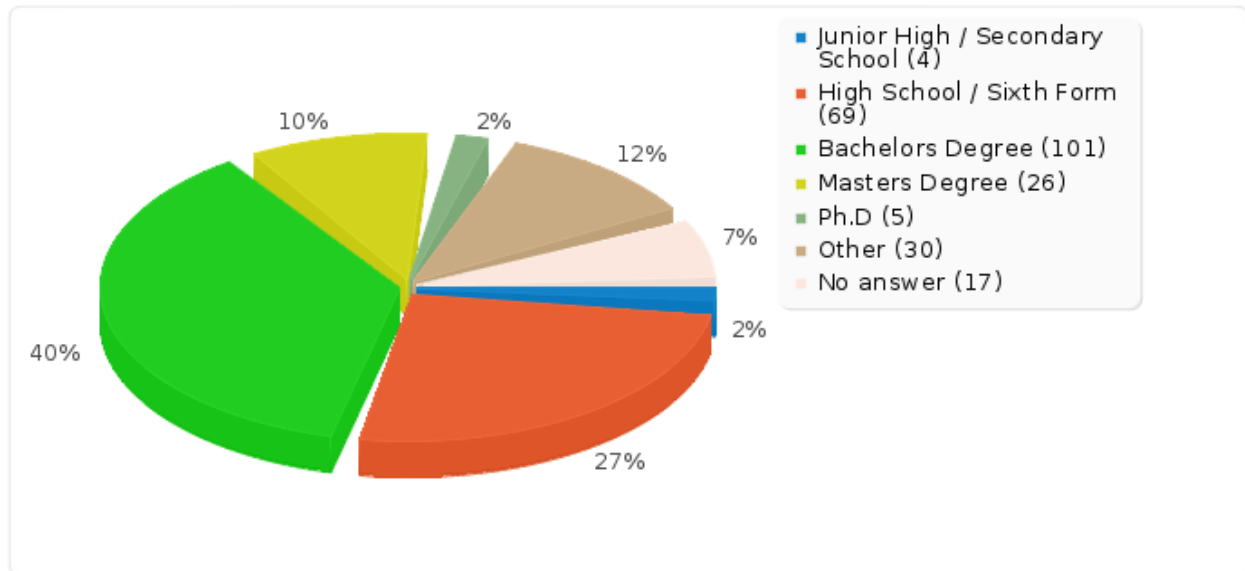
The remaining countries respondent rates from 2010 and 2011 are below. Both years saw a total of twenty countries that had respondents.



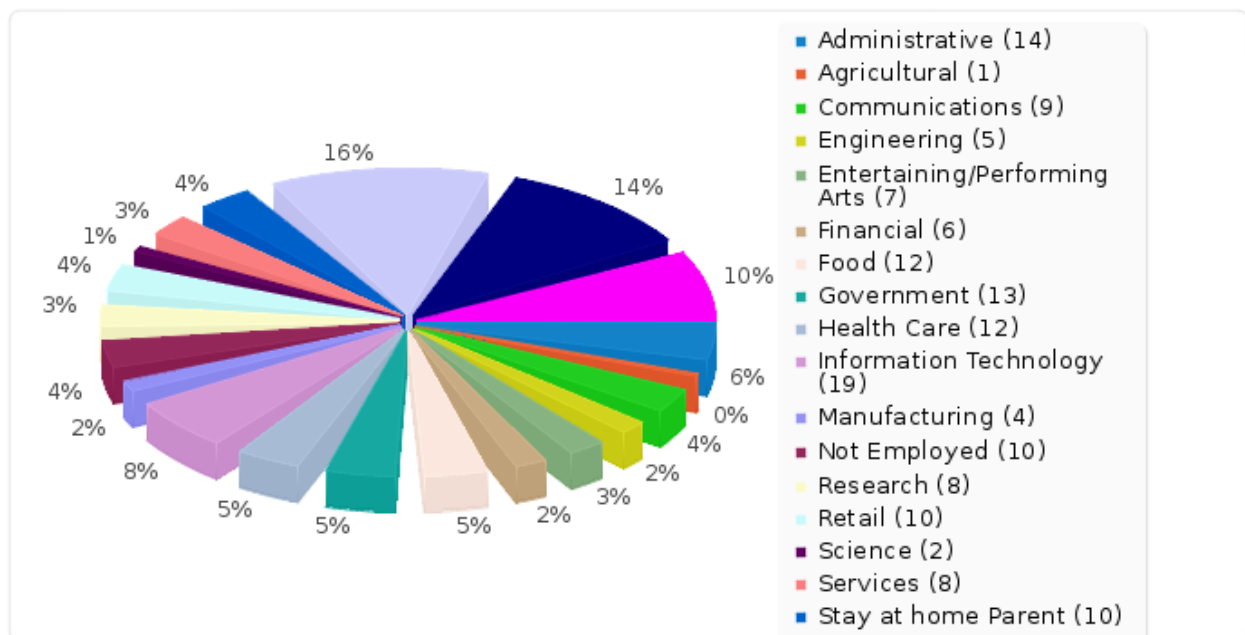
As both years respondents provided rank and sex was not asked, it fell to reviewing data on a line by line basis and comparing provided names against the Who's Who.

This showed that the ratio of male to female respondents in 2010 was 23% to 76%, and in 2011 it was 23% to 61%, with 16% where names were not provided.

Education and professions options were changed and difficult to compare between years. Below is the 2011 data.



The below chart shows field of work, 16% were students, 14% other, and 10% no answer.



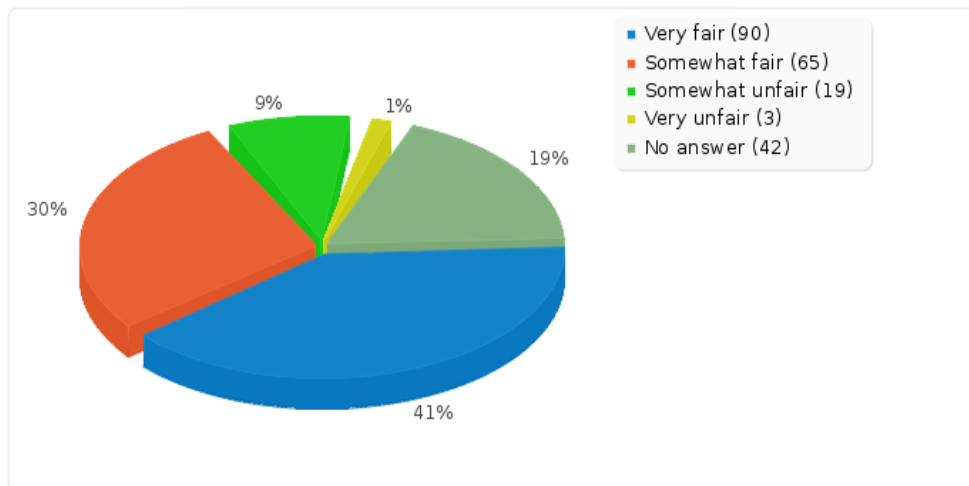
Department of Administration

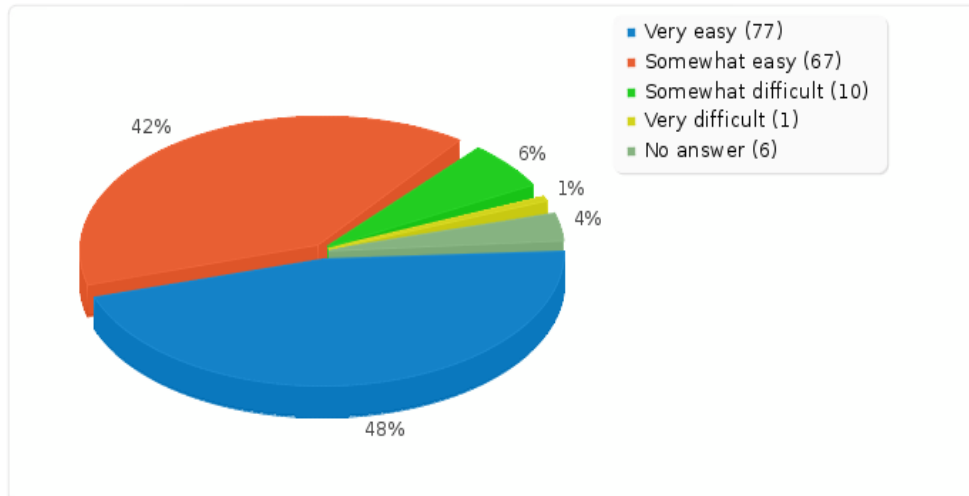
The Department of Administration handles surveys, reporting, and business related items. The survey items that fall within this section are the membership survey and staffing.

Staffing

Several people stated they had not applied for any positions due to not being eligible – mostly by being too new and positions requiring 6 months or being a senior member (9 comments.) The primary reason for not applying would be time due to real life or simply other priorities (23 comments.) The secondary reason given was that people have no interest in serving in positions because they either are not invested enough in the community and/or just want to be here to be here and not put forth any effort in their membership (10 comments.) There was a slight minority that felt they did not have the skills necessary (in some cases wrongly) for positions (3 comments.)

Both 2010 and 2011 saw the majority of respondents state that the application process was fair (35%) and somewhat fair (25%). Similarly, the majority of respondents stated that the application process was very easy (30%) or easy (26%).





Due to the percentages and comments not changing over the years, this question will be temporarily retired, to be brought back if a great concern is expressed by membership.

Membership Survey

Total of 25 comments to why one may not have filled out the survey in the past. Most of those who left comments and not previously completed the survey were new members since the last one (18 comments.) The rest admitted to being lazy (3), technical issues (1), didn't think they were here long enough (1), were inactive at the time (1), and simply didn't know it was going on (4).

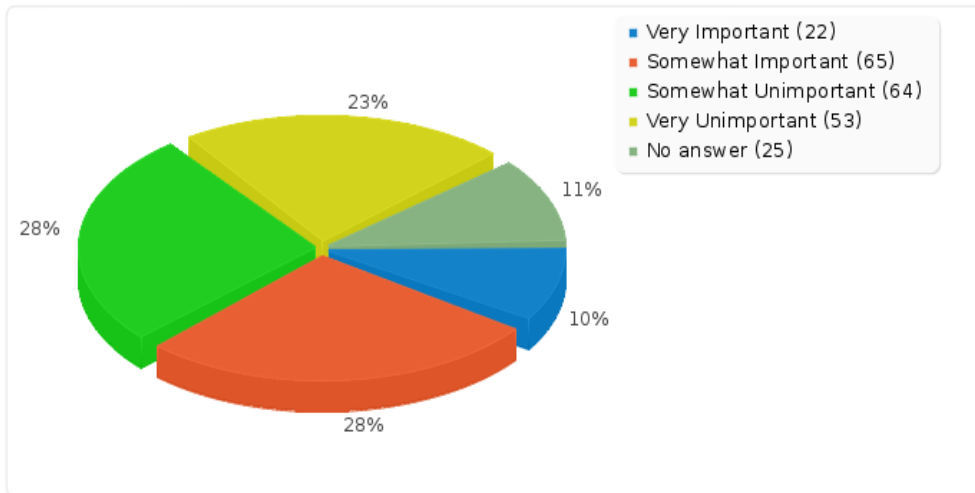
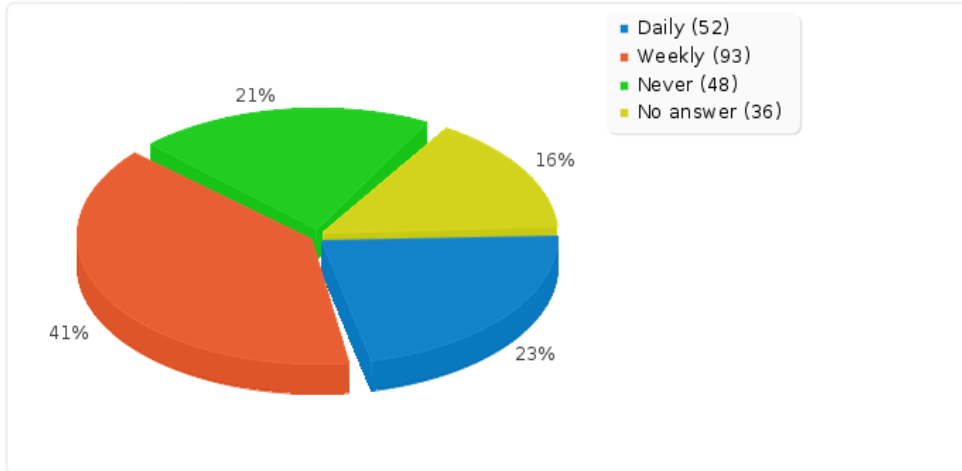
Comments regarding the survey itself, were a total of 58 comments. Most were positive (24 comments.) The perennial complaint that it is long came up a eight times. Two each pointed out spelling/typo errors and wished to provide more comments about Execs, as well as Admins and Staff.

Department of Community Outreach

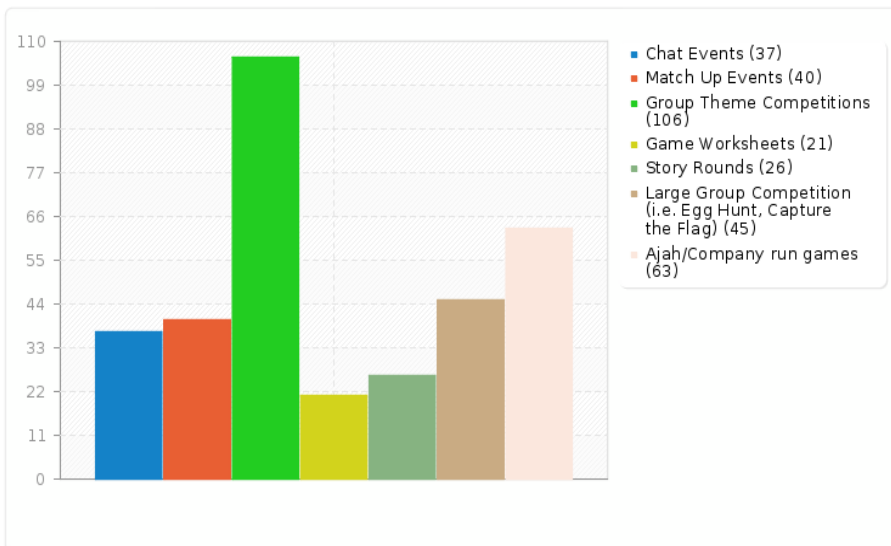
The Department of Community Outreach handles community building and philanthropic activities.

Online Events

Survey respondents participate in Online Freeweeks, with 23% viewing the forum daily, 41% weekly. However, with regards to how important freeweeks are to membership, 38% responded that they were very or somewhat important. Last year the same question and options yielded 52%, indicating that less members hold free weeks as important to their membership now; 28% of respondents visited the forum daily and 38% weekly.



Of events held during free weeks, the most popular by far is affiliate group theme competitions.



Most members (who provided comments on the Membership Survey) love free weeks (32% of comments). The feelings regarding free weeks is spread across the spectrum, with members who hate them (15% of comments), those that understand their community building purpose and chance to be silly but don't participate due to time (31% of 73 comments), and those who enjoy only aspects. The most popular parts of free weeks are avatar changes, RPs, and games – based on the comments. The Seanchan Invasion was mentioned 5 times. The biggest “complaint” examples were that the events are fast paced and some activities have an air of exclusivity.

Membership is split into three groups regarding additional participation in Outreach Activities: things are fine as they are (8% of comments to this question), they just don't have the time (38% of comments), or they just don't care enough to participate more (18% of comments). Additional comments (35% of comments) including a desire for better marketing, innovation and organization – including advanced notice or knowledge of events and knowledge of things provided such as the birthday list. Comments about organizing appeared to be more on the affiliated group level – wishing to be more part of the decision process, wanting others in group to participate more, wanting more cross over of groups (between bonded pairs). Of the 244 members who started the survey, 74 left comments on this question.

The question requested new ideas to hold for events, and most of the suggestions were to bring back in frequently held activities or showing support for current activities. The novel thoughts included mentoring for real life, an Olympics type competition, more events related to being Servants of All, screen caps and gambling. There was also a request for a yearlong celebration for the last book.

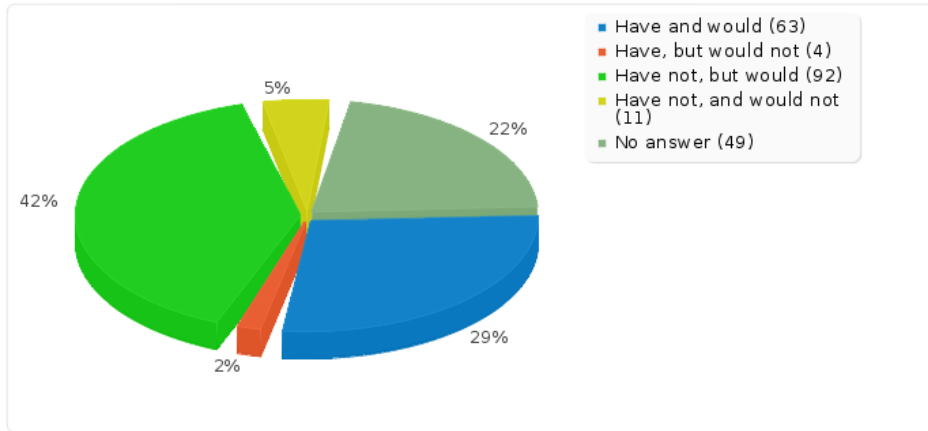
Role play and storytelling topped the suggestions (8 comments), followed by chat games and trivia (7 comments). There were a few requests to innovate the trivia to include WoT trivia and TarValon.net trivia, as opposed to what is currently done in #OWAH.

Philanthropy

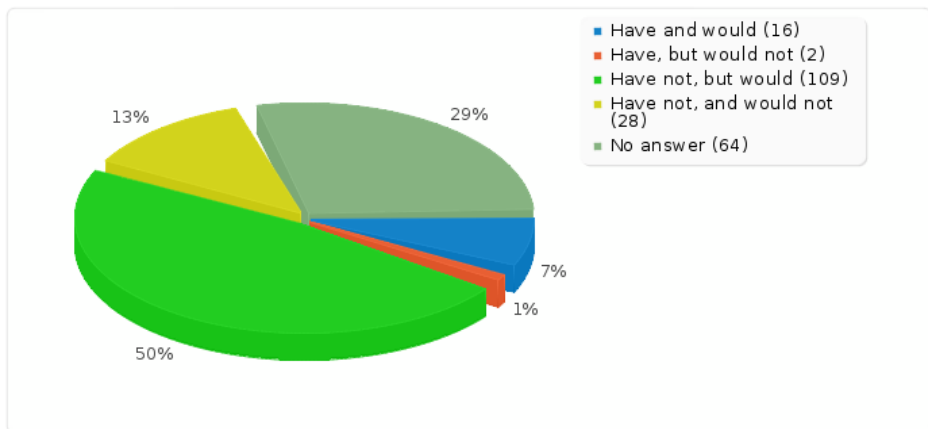
The Spring Administrative Meeting determined that philanthropic activities at real life events will be administered by the Department of Community Outreach; additionally the charity for the Anniversary party will be chosen and static going forward whereas the charity for Fall Balls will rotate. The Feast of Light fundraiser will be pushed back to an earlier date to not interfere with holiday giving as it has in the past. Finally, a number of smaller fundraisers for a variety of charities will be the new norm. All of these decisions are based upon comments from the Membership Survey.

The following charts are related to the question: Have you donated to a specific fund in the past or would you in the future?

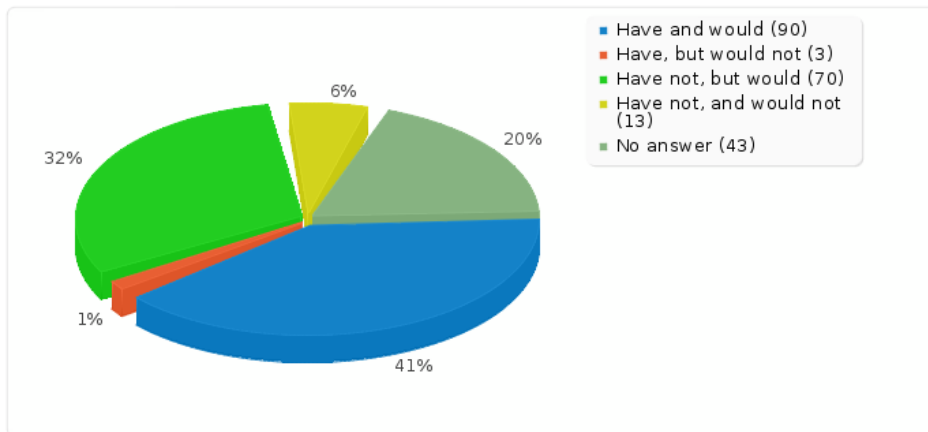
Membership specific assistance:



Scholarship Fund:



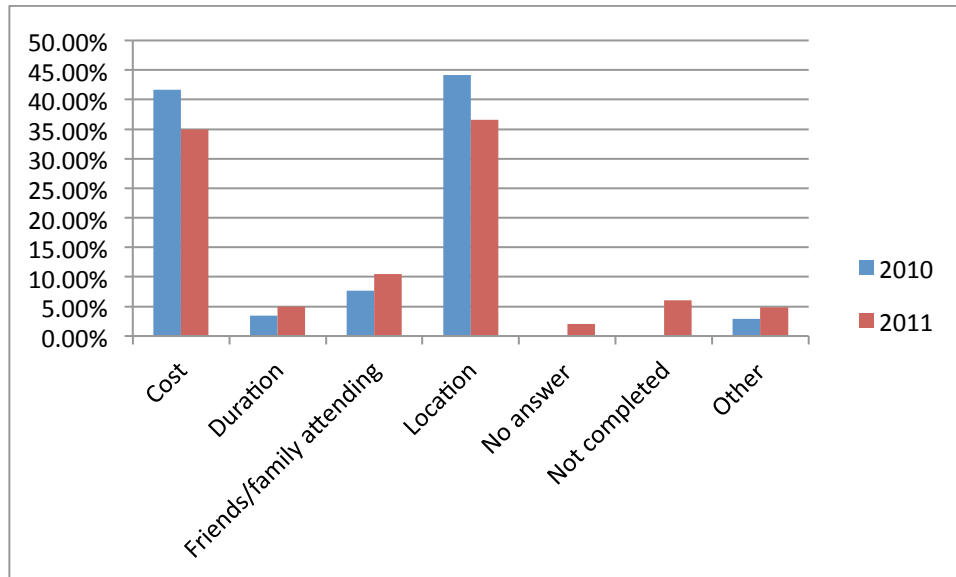
Feast of Lights:



Department of Events and Conferences

The Department of Events and Conferences focuses on developing and producing the real life events of TarValon.Net, as well as any TarValon.Net activity for members at Jordan*Con and Dragon*Con.

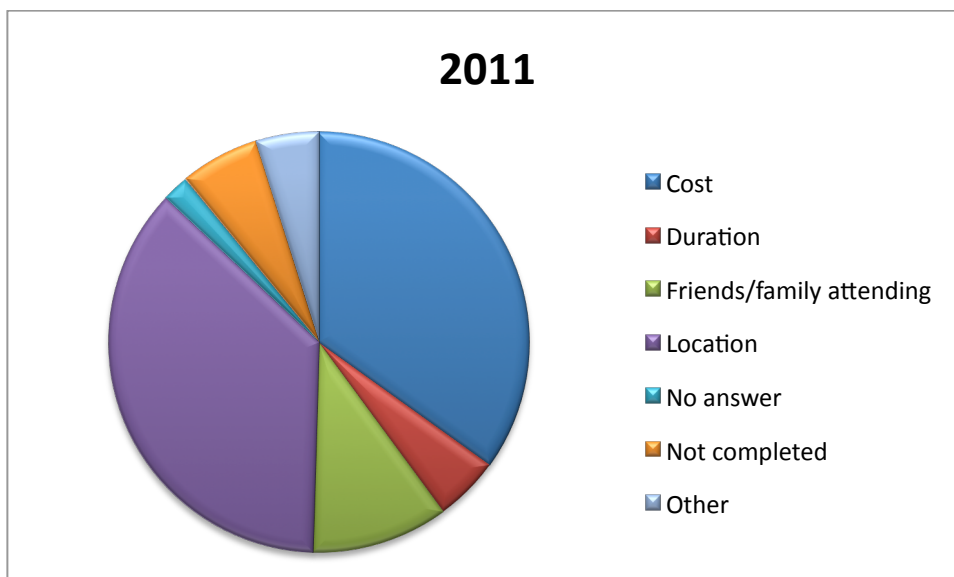
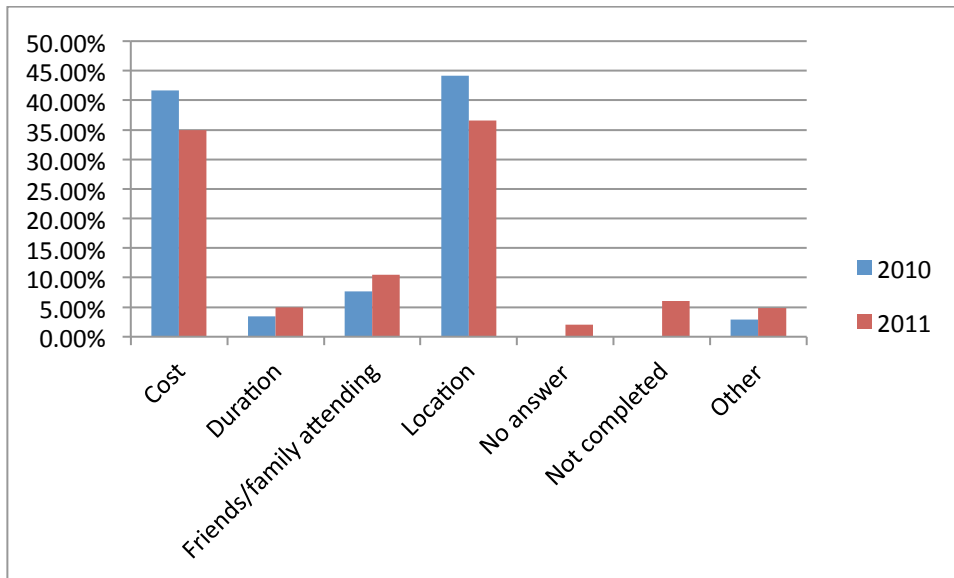
Below is a chart for the number of events that Membership Survey respondents have attended an event.



Comments on the Membership Survey recommend making the Estes Park near Denver, Colorado as a permanent anniversary party location. This was an agenda item on at the Spring Administrative Meeting, and while it suits our needs and we enjoy it, at this time we are not looking to make this decision at this time and anniversary parties will continue to rotate locations.

The Spring Administrative Meeting also discussed Euro events, as there was one comment on the Membership Survey regarding how these events differ from North American Events, as well as from each other. The Spring Administrative Meeting notes reference that this was reinforced by comments made on numerous post event surveys.

Survey comments regarding why one chooses to attend an event the primary reason was dates (10 comments), followed by location (4 comments), and the individual comments of health, cost, and significant other concern over hooking up. The second question for reasons which would lead one to attend an event produced similar results. Date was listed 8 times with transportation (options and time from airport/home) twice, with lodging style commented upon once.



Survey comments regarding activities at events: the most mentioned activity was our ceremonies (raisings, awards, toasts) with 40 comments (50% of comments.) The other popular activities were Trivia (18, 23%, 7% of survey), Amyrlin’s Tournament (14, 18%), dancing (15, 19%), costume contest (12, 15%), and karaoke (11, 14%). Lesser mentioned activities include da’cavole (5, 6%, 2% of survey); general games (5, 6%); dance/sword lessons (3 comments); silent auctions (3 comments); Amyrlin’s Feast and site seeing (2 comments each); murder mystery, Magic The Gathering tournament, Sumo, and guest speakers received 1 comment each. There were seven comments of “Everything!” There were a number of comments that mentioned “pub night” or “game night.”

The survey comments regarding activities not enjoyed at events include: ceremonies (6 comments, 13% of section comments), da'covale(7 comments, 15% of section comments, 3% of whole survey), and trivia (5 comments, 11% of section comments, 2% of whole survey). There were also comments regarding ceremonies being too long, to which Membership is working to streamline while keeping the traditional ceremony atmosphere.

Other activities mentioned as disliked were dancing (4 comments), Amyrlin's court (4 comments), karaoke (3 comments), costume contest (2 comments), panels (1 person), swimming (1 comment), Magic The Gathering (1 comment), Amyrlin's Tournament (1 comment), dishes (1 comment.) Not surprising, there were two comments a piece which were related to the structure or lack thereof at events – 2 felt they were too structured, 2 felt they were too unstructured.

It should be noted that most of the dislike of the da'covale and Amyrlin's court centered on it being too sexual – and it was noted that these commenters tended to leave or avoid them. Additionally, there were four comments specifically aimed at concern and dislike of drunken party games and at those who get excessively drunk/sick.

Department of Marketing

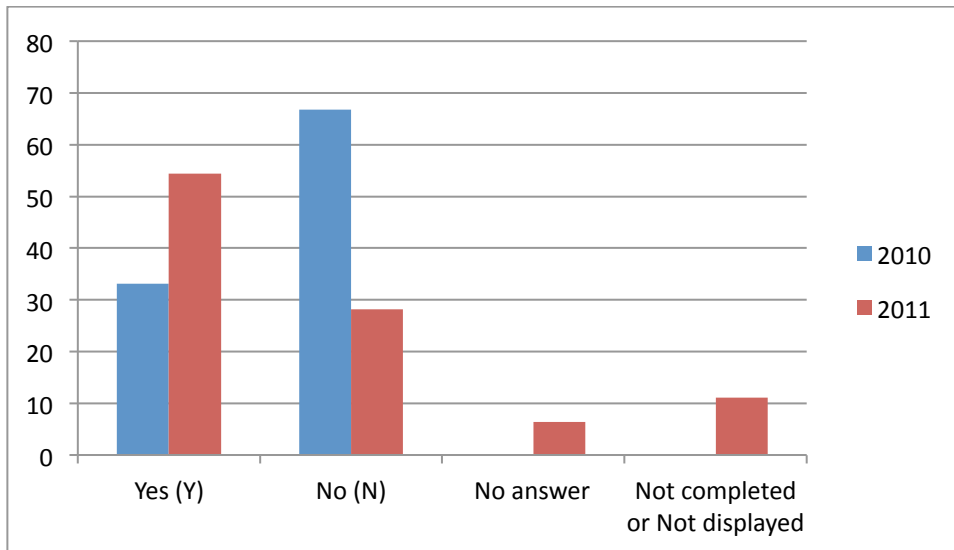
The Department of Marketing works to ensure the visual integrity of the organization.

TarValon Times

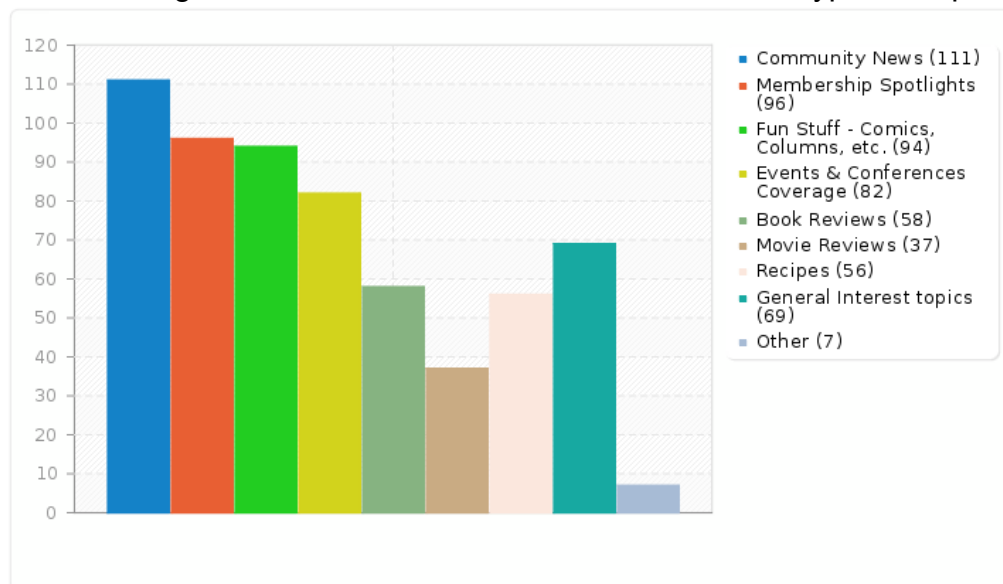
There are a wide variety of comments offered. The ones that stuck out the most were the fact that people did not know we had a TVT or knew when a new one came out. There were a total of 35 comments, and 8 of them were of these concerns. The majority of the rest was positive support for the TVT and/or aspects of it.

Between the comments about not knowing about the TVT or when a new one comes out, in conjunction with a request from the Editor, the planning forum was made public. The Spring Administrative Meeting also decided that additional efforts would be made to inform membership when new TVTs are made available.

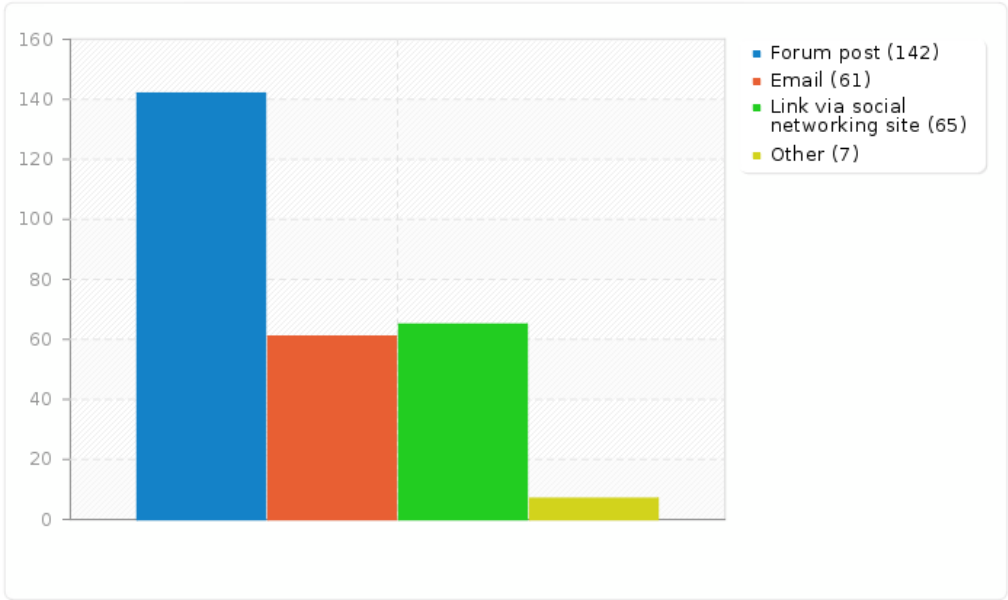
The following chart indicates readership of the TVT.



The following chart shows the level of interest in various types of topics in the TVT.



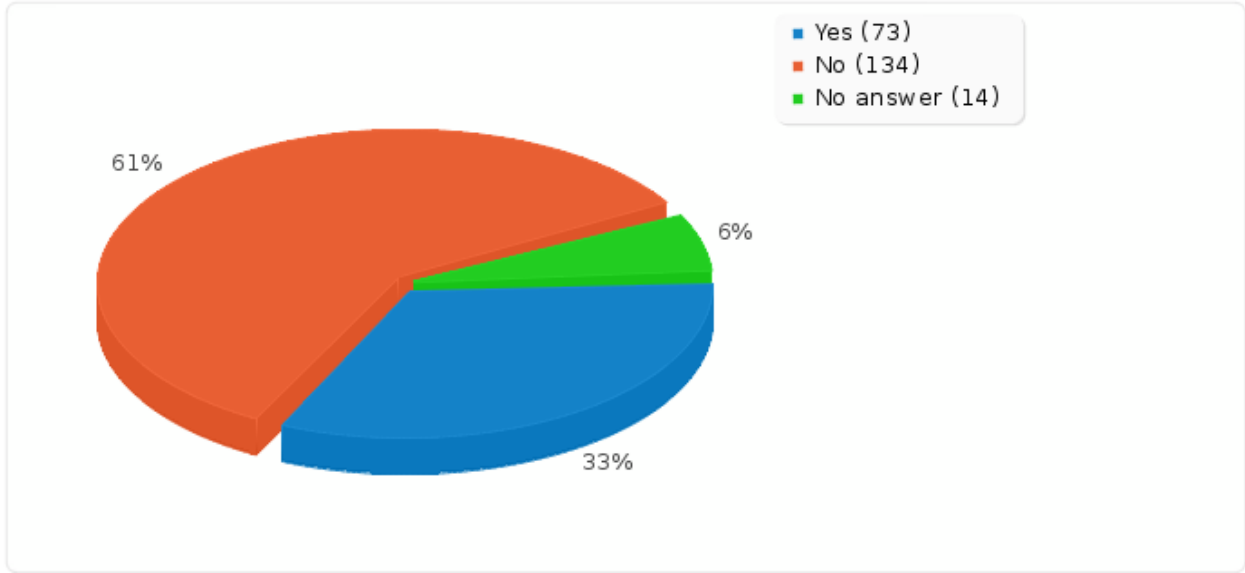
Below shows references for learning when a new edition is available.



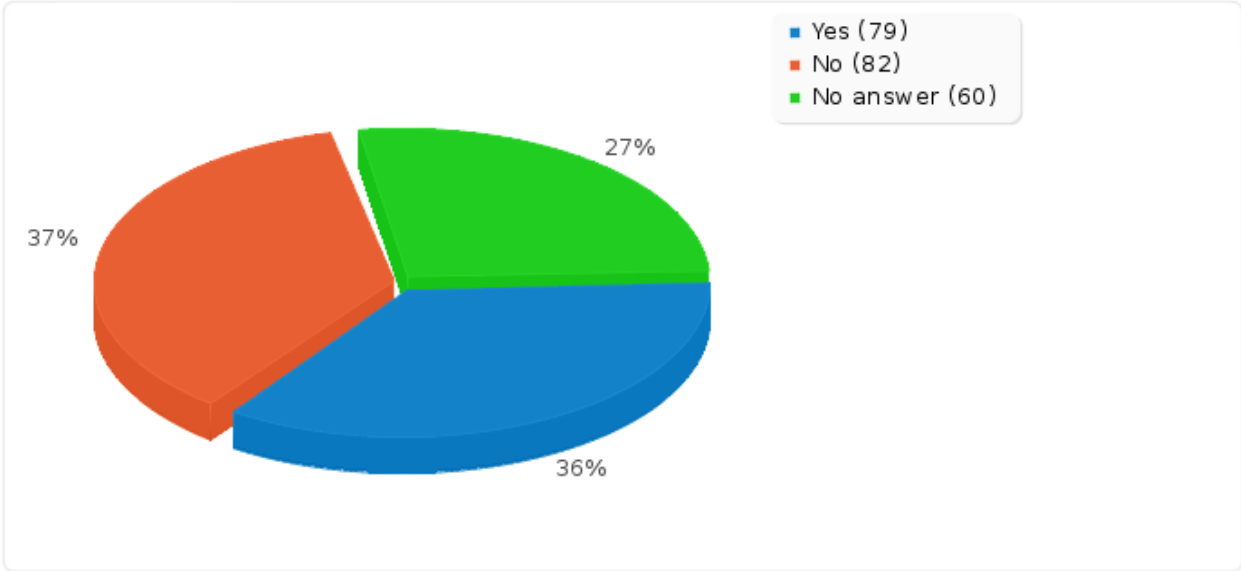
Café Press

Most of the comments were for items we already have, which is why we need to do better about marketing it – and not just for events.

Below shows respondents who browse and/or purchase from our Café Press store.



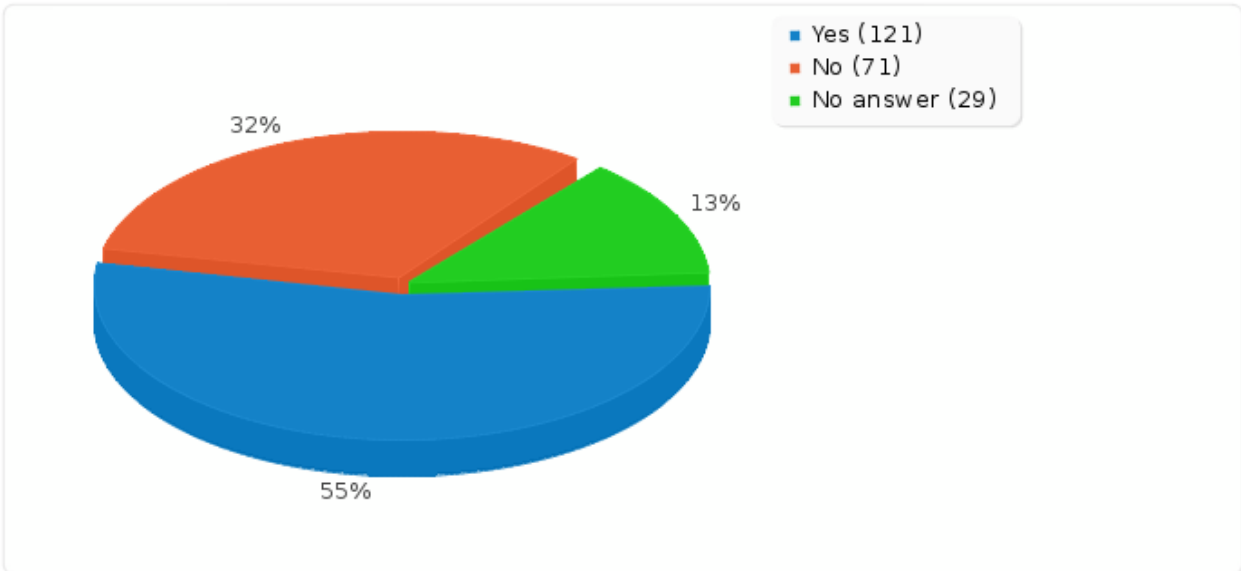
This chart indicates the level of interest by respondents to have more membership create artwork in the Café Press store.

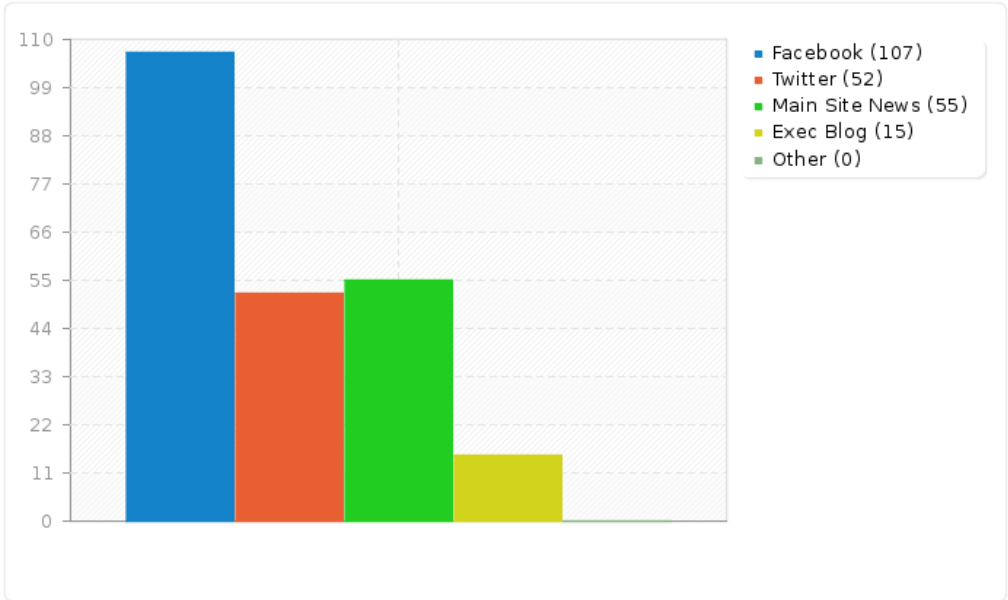


Social Media

There were only 17 comments on this question, or 7% of survey submissions. They boil down to props and requests for additional technology (email list, RSS feed, updating news page to add exec blog).

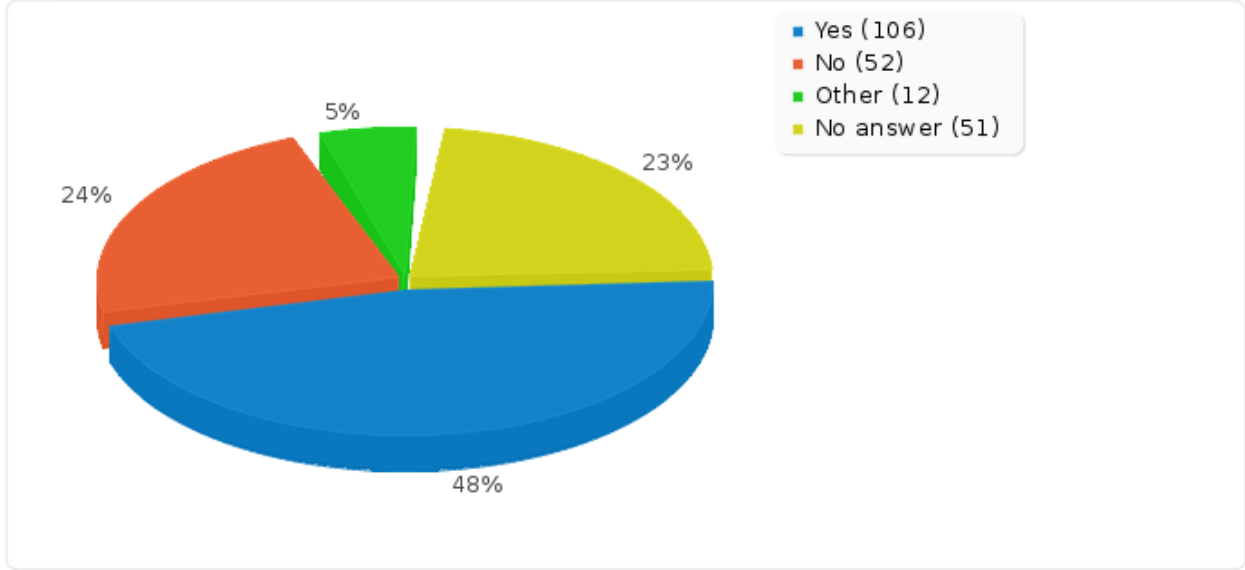
The below chart indicates the breakdown of respondents with regards to participation/following of various TarValon.Net social media channels and a break down as to specifically which channels are followed.





Other

Based on survey comments, it was decided at the Spring Administrative Meeting that Marketing would provide flyers to hand out at conferences. Below shows how respondents answered to if they would like this option or not.



Department of Membership

The Department of Membership primarily utilized the Membership Survey to gather information on the Mentoring process. Other items discussed at the Spring Administrative Meeting under the Membership heading were not related to the Membership Survey.

Mentoring

The feedback from the Membership Survey on mentoring indicated that while a 1:1 relationship worked well for females, it did not for males. As such it was determined that men would be assigned to a mentor squad so that a male member has multiple male senior members to act as mentors.

For those who have started the mentoring program **within the past year**, most found it quick and easy (21 comments out of 30). Five comments indicated that they waited a long time for a mentor, three that on the flip side they have waited a long time for a mentee.

For those who started the mentoring program **1-2 years ago**, the majority felt it was a good process (27 comments.) The following were interesting comments in this cross section:

- Painless. I love that I was put with someone who was very like me in personality and with whom I had a lot in common. I am concerned that element of matching a mentor/mentee has been lost.
- Got one instantly, but we have little to no contact.
- I signed up to be a mentor when I was raised, but haven't received a mentee yet. When I received my mentor it took some time for her to contact me.
- I had some trouble getting a mentor due to a change in CoR. Once I had a mentor, he was not very active.
- Filling in the questions was the easiest part. I did have to wait, and felt that for myself, and others. The wait was a little long when some others had more than one mentee while others had none. But it wasn't overly bad, as it isn't a necessary part of being a part of TarValon.net, but more a bonus to give some of your experiences to younger members.

For those who started the mentoring program **2-4 years ago**, most feel it was quick and/or easy. One commenter felt it was a bumpy process. Two mentioned that it was harder to get a mentee than it had been to get a mentor – one admitted they realized it was due to having more senior members (particularly AS) compared to junior members.

The final category was those who entered the program **4 or more years ago**. Similar to the past two categories, most are pretty happy with the process (21 comments) and a few (5 comments) were frustrated in the time it takes to get a mentee.

- I got a great Mentor, who I was really close to. I think there is a good system though I don't think it works perfectly. I've had 3 mentees - none of which I've really clicked with. It's not a time zone. I think it's that my preferred medium is chat not the boards, even if I am on the boards a good bit
- When I was a mentee, my mentor disappeared. I asked for a new one after some time but I think I was refused a new one, if I remember correctly. So I said "screw

this system" and went and made someone I knew and liked into my pseudo-mentor.

If the mentor was not a good match, here are comments about the **process to get a new mentor**:

There were a total of 19 comments. Five were from those who have joined the program less than a year ago, they ranged from being denied, told to wait a bit, to the mentor disappearing when one reached mid-level. Five from the 1-2 years ago time frame, the thoughts were scattered, the best are below.

- I didn't get a new one. The match wasn't bad on a personal level (my mentor was nice and helpful), but we didn't hang in the same circles, i.e. I spend a lot of time on irc, and my mentor did not. I didn't request a new one, because I really didn't feel a need. I got to know so many other people that I could ask my questions of, so there was no problem at all.
- I didn't complain. Honestly I just kinda accepted the fact that my mentor was around the site but really didn't choose to interact with me despite reaching out to her often.

In the 2-4 year range, the four comments touched on communication and that if a mentor has absent mentees it is difficult to unassign them.

In the 4+ year range, the five comments ranged from "easy" to "not bothering" as the AS went MIA after they were aspired to "sucked, wasn't given one" to "the system was ad hoc."

Mentor used as **recommendation to JM from Citizen**:

Overwhelmingly the mentors were not recommendations for Citizens (79 out of 110 comments, 72%.) A few (17 or 16%) did have their mentors as a recommendation from Citizen to junior member. Less either did not understand the question (5 comments), weren't sure (3 comments), or it was before Citizen was a rank (3 comments.)

Was the mentor still utilized in that capacity once became Accepted/Soldier?

There is a fairly even split between if the mentor is utilized between yes (38), rarely (27), and not at all (25). There were the rare few (4 comments) where the relationship activity stayed the same. I did not quantify the comments where one was a friend prior to the mentor relationship or if their relationship had developed to be one of friendship mostly by that point. Note, there was one comment from a Soldier who had NEVER been assigned a mentor formally. There were a total of 99 comments to this question.

How was the mentor utilized?

There were a total of 134 comments to this question. There were five general categories that comments fell into: they weren't helpful (17 comments, 13%); there was the barest of communication (21 comments, 16%); a happy medium where it was brief questions

and more a sounding board (34 comments, 25%); frequent but still business like communication (21 comments, 16%); and those that felt the relationship and communication went further to friendship (or a friendship previously existed) with 43 comments, 32%. Some respondents mentioned multiple relationships, which had varying degrees of the above which is why the total is more than 100%.

The comments showed that some of the bad pairings were due to one half of the pair going MIA or being unresponsive to the other. Some of this was due to a mismatch of communication styles or expectations of the mentor/mentee relationship. For example, one comment showed that they felt they would have received a better relationship with their mentor if they went into chat more often.

The communication tools mentioned included chat, pms, facebook, etc.

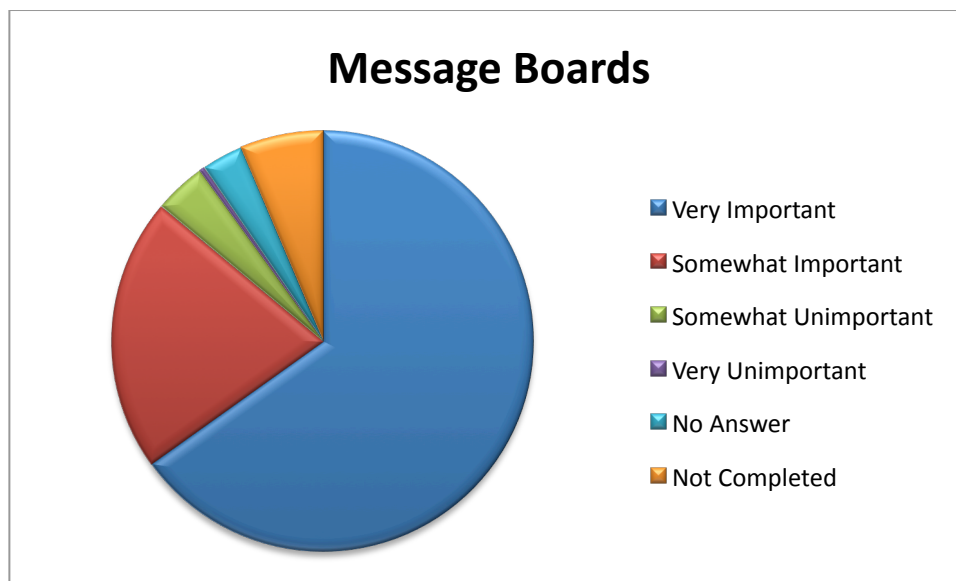
There were comments about the confusion and strain it places on the relationship if the mentor demotes, or the mentee is a demotee. Also it was put forth that mentoring would behoove citizens.

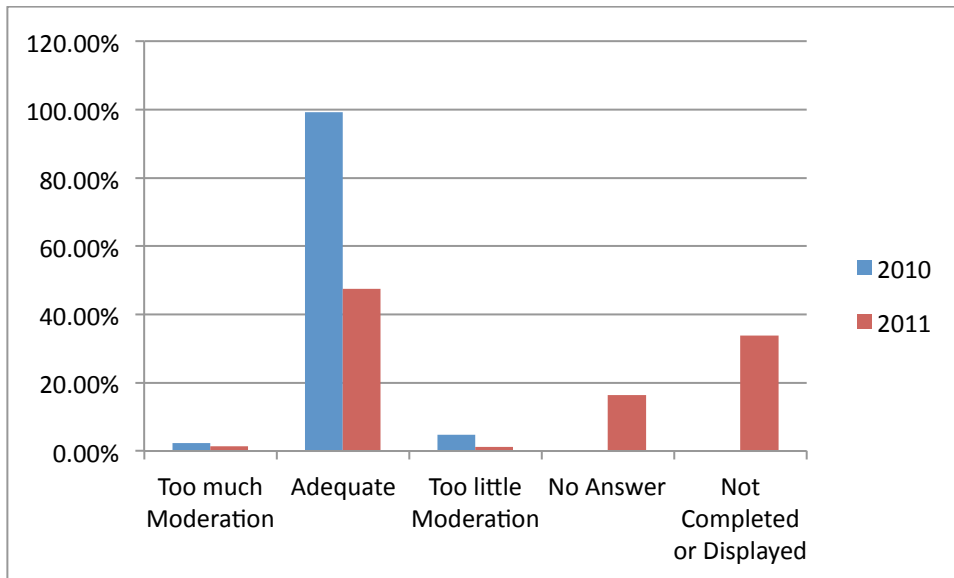
Department of Moderators

The Membership Survey had a lot of direct impact to this department. Examples of this include renaming the Entertainment forum to Entertainment & Tech and the splitting of Creative Endeavors into two forums: Hand Crafts and Fine Arts and Literature.

Comments on the survey requested a parenting forum, which was discussed at the meeting and determined to not occur at this time. For details related to this discussion, please see the admin meeting notes.

It can be shown that over all the message boards are still very important to many members and that moderation is adequate.





There was a question on the Membership Survey to review the change from Guilds to the Discussion forums. The comments reflected that while the Guilds were “more canon,” “had a better sense of community,” and caused “odd divisions” that overall there is more variety and participation without the exclusivity in the Discussion Halls.

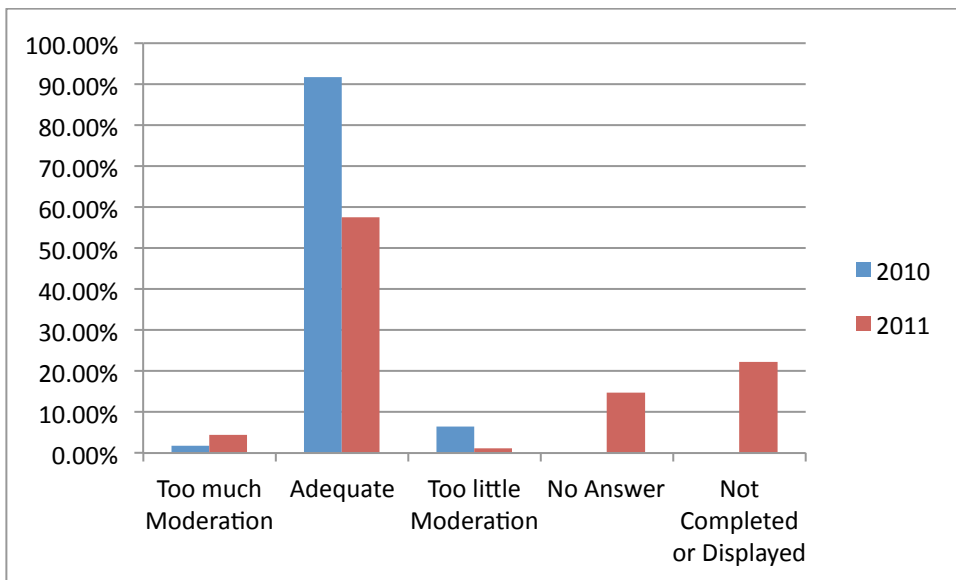
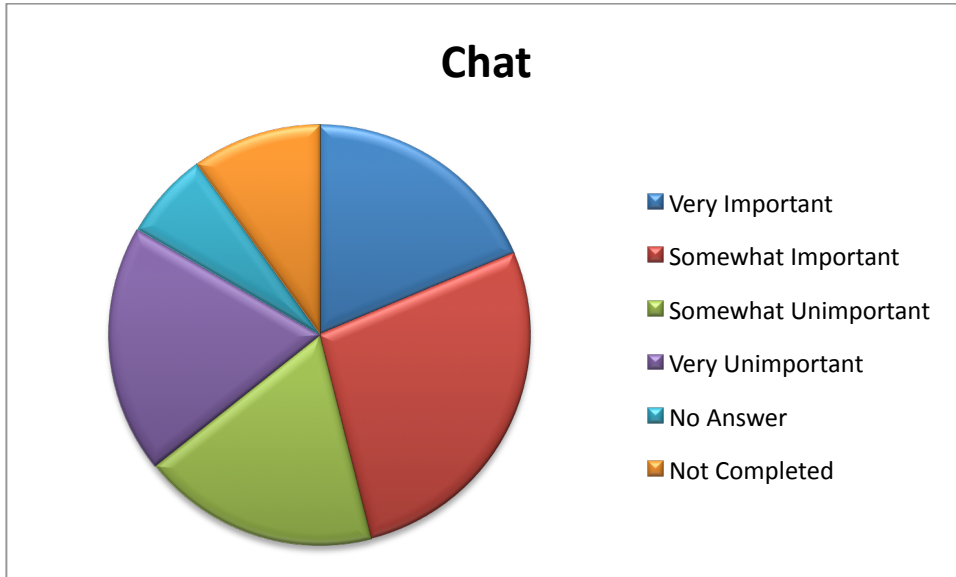
Not much has changed for member with regards to their favorite and least favorite boards.

	2010	2011
1st Fav	Affiliate public room	Affiliate public room
2nd Fav	Affiliate private room	Affiliate private room
3rd Fav	General	General
Least Fav	Current Events	Current Events
2nd Least Fav	Frivolous Fun	Sports Fanatics
3rd Least Fav	Introductions	Frivolous Fun

Chat

There were several comments on the Membership Survey requesting more guidance and consistency in moderation, to this end a manual was created by the Director of Moderators, Karassa Sedai.

Chat continues to be an important to the membership experience and continues to be adequately moderated.

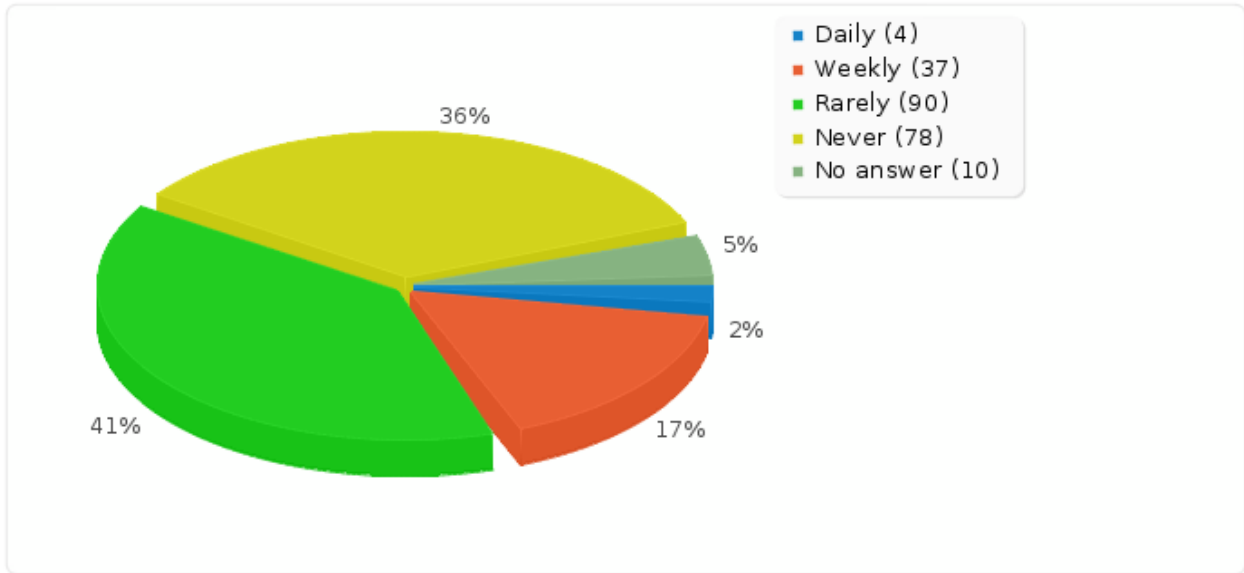


Department of Records and Research

Classroom

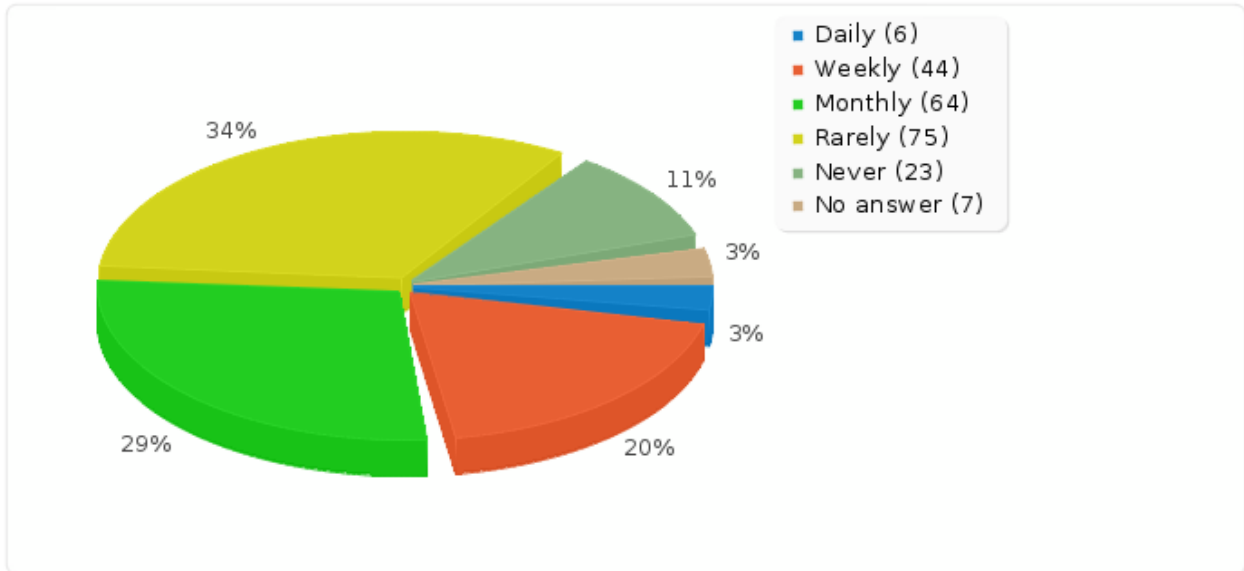
Comments from the Membership Survey provided suggestions that discussion at the Spring Administrative Meeting determined to implement immediately; these suggestions included allowing Citizens to take classes as well as to offer more “real life” applicable courses. It is the hope that more people will use the Classroom more often than they currently do.

This chart demonstrates how often the classroom is used.

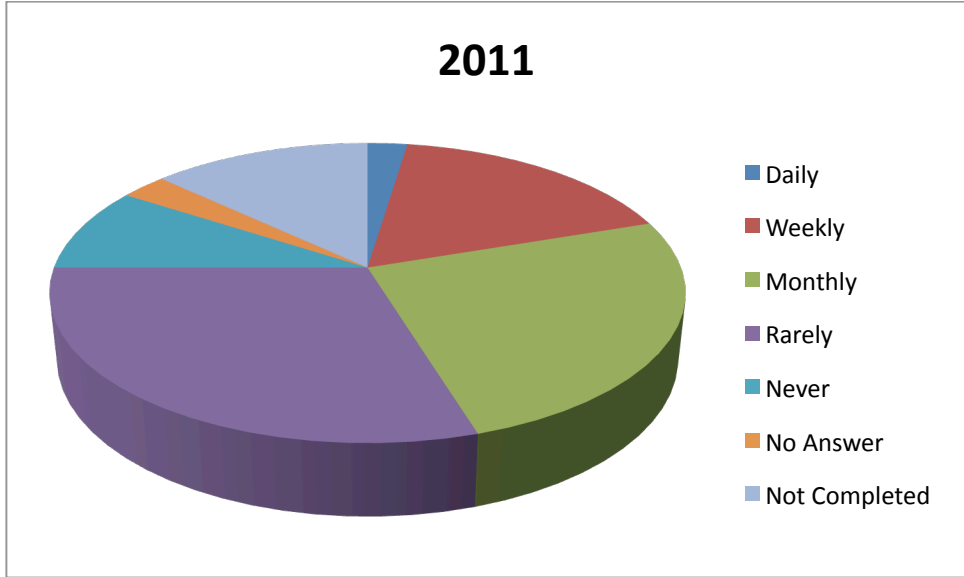


Community Features

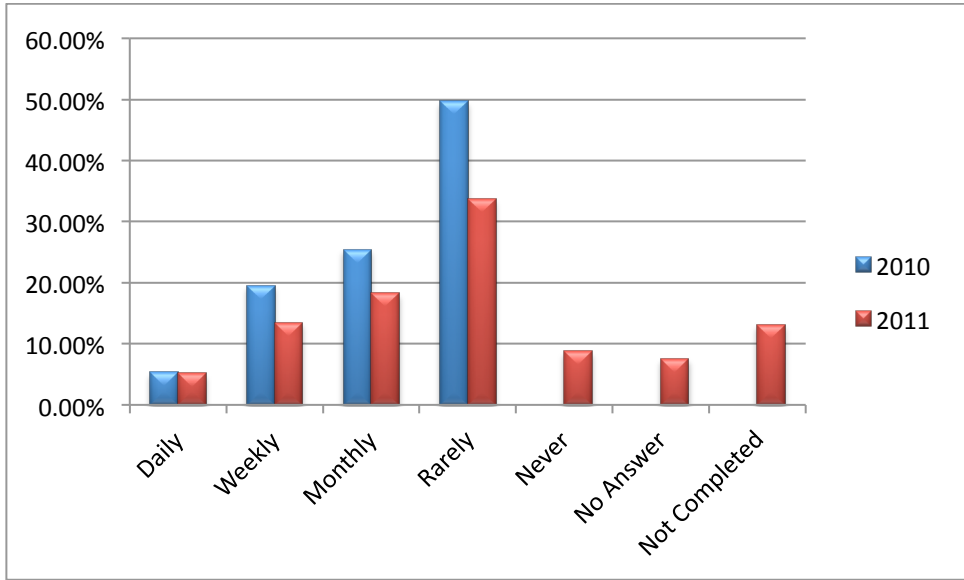
People do use the Who's Who on a regular basis:



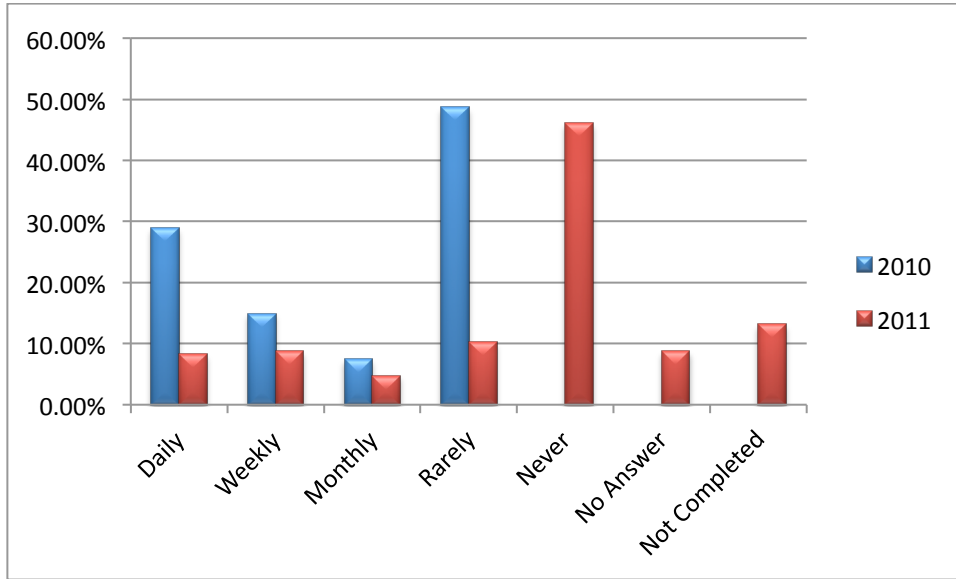
The Library is used by members approximately the same amount as the Who's Who is, although less than it was utilized last year:



Community Group pages are reviewed more than but in the same ratio as in 2010.



Tower email is rarely used:



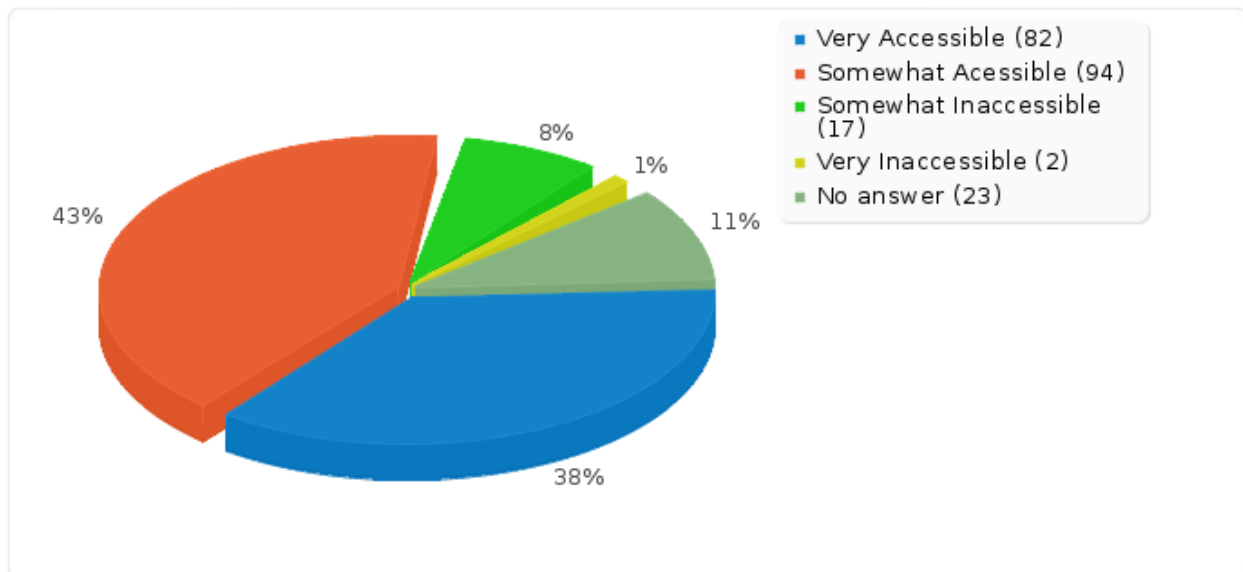
Department of Technology

There were no questions related to the Department of Technology.

Executives

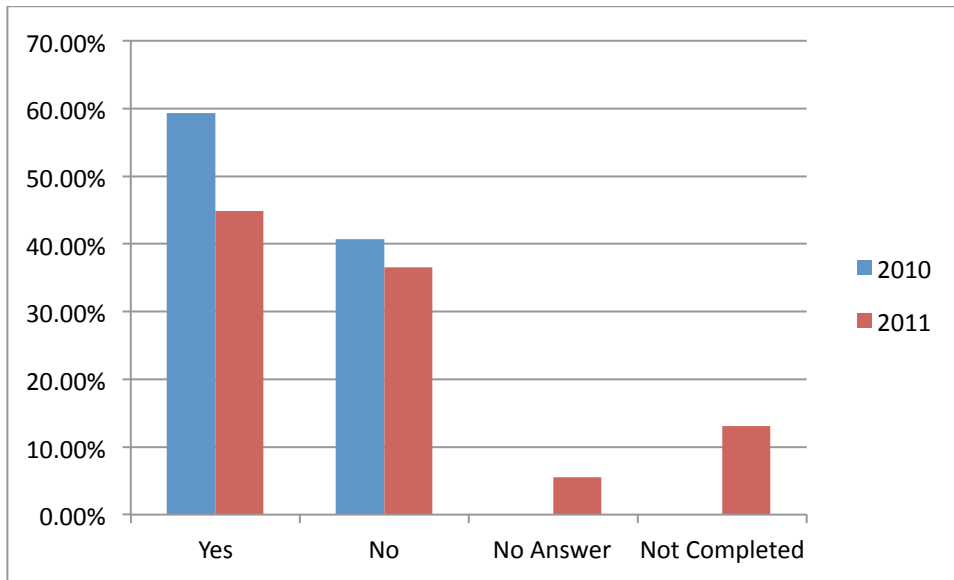
Leadership

Executives continue to meet or exceed expectations of membership and seen as accessible.

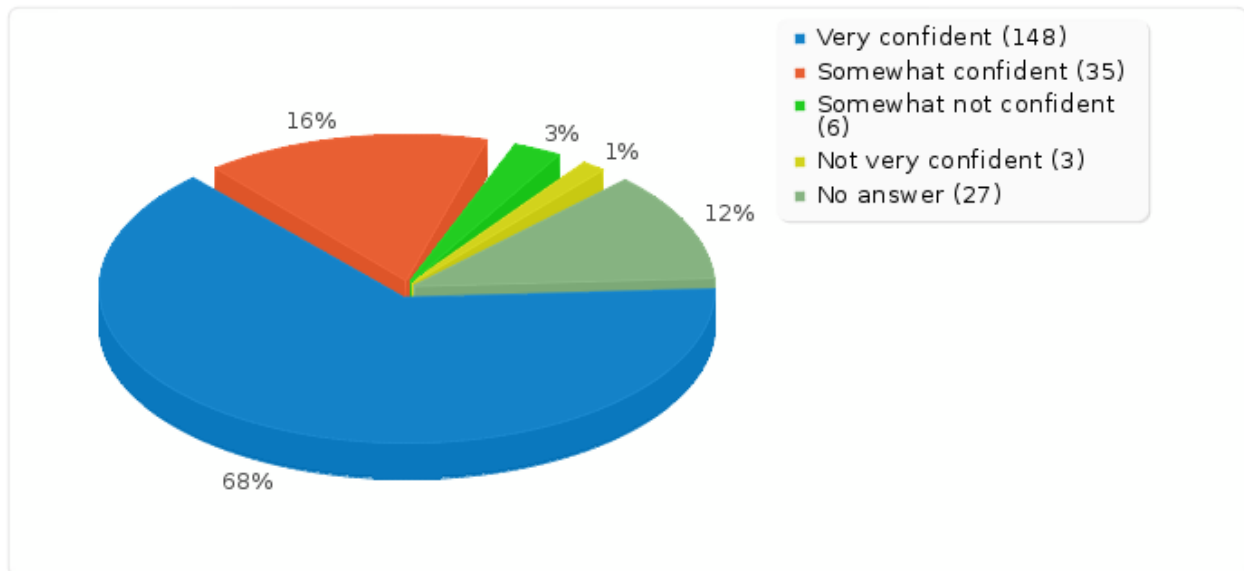


Finance

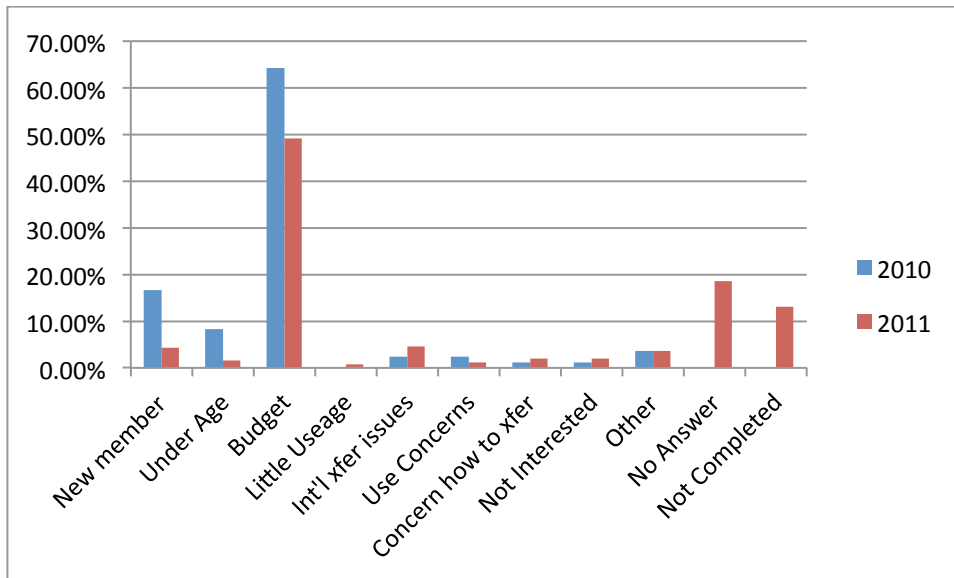
While fewer members have donated in 2011 than in 2010, the ratios have remained similar.



The chart below shows the confidence level of membership regarding the use of donated funds.



In the comment section for asking why people aren't donating, they provided reasons such as can't afford it (4 comments), the fact they won't get a tax receipt for the donation (1 comment), not knowing when/who we are donating to/collecting funds for (1 comment), and not liking whom we are collecting for (1 comment.) There were a total of 9 comments.



Additionally there were more comments about budget (3), and funds that would be donated to that are not currently under Community Outreach (shawl fund, operating costs of the site, JordanCon, general membership emergency fund, disaster funds (like Haiti or Tsunami). There were a few requests to have more frequent charitable fundraisers with more variety and at varying times of the year.

Final Thoughts

Additional Thoughts on TarValon.Net

Comments ranged from discussion on how to use money from fundraisers, activities for members – specifically something to do/strive for once reaching senior membership, concern over extra bonds, more control over internal affairs for community groups, spreading the wealth of work for merits and to have membership investment, concern over hostility and overtones of a dictatorship, and a suggestion to change swap the raising tests.

What is the best/worst thing about your rank?

There were a total of 138 comments to this question, this is 56% of submitted surveys. I thought this question might be best dealt with by rank.

Guest:

- Sharing in the fandom with enthusiastic fans.

Citizen Best:

- “Unilateral welcome.”

Citizen Worst:

- Missing out on forums.
- Can't participate in classroom.
- Citizens being looked down upon.

Novice/Recruit Best:

- Building relationships.
- Feeling more a part of the community.
- Participating in the classes.

Novice/Recruit Worst:

- Feeling cut off from parts of the site.
- Not as much interaction with SMs as desired.
- Feeling one has to act like a Novice at events.
- It took forever to get a response.

Accepted/Soldier Best:

- Feeling more a part of the community than at previous ranks.
- Getting to know SMs through guesing.
- Finding a home with a community group.

Accepted/Soldier Worst:

- Teasing by SMs.
- Trying to decide which group to aspire to.
- The wait to be raised.
- Make pranking an activity only for Novices and Recruits.
- It's too subjective in how to achieve the next rank.
- It's not easy to form a group (of Accepted/Soldiers) when some already have Aspired.
- The necessity of a contribution when ones time is limited.

- Dealing with bullying through the current chain of command.

Senior Member Best:

- It's easier to just stick to private forums.
- Various privileges of the rank such as recommending citizens for the Tower.
- Not feeling obligated to spam or the constant pressure to get to know new people.
- Helping Citizens/JMs.
- The sense of achievement.
- No jumping through hoops.

Senior Member Worst:

- Desire for more even gender ratio and men to be more active.
- More forums to lurk in.
- Nothing to achieve once rank reached.
- Junior Members tend to forget honorifics.
- Looking down upon junior members.
- Most activities are geared to the junior members.
- Too much gossip.
- Some forums at the senior member level have low activity.
- Losing touch with those not in your community group.
- Not being able to send JMs to the MoN any more sucks. It takes a lot of the fun out of interacting with them.

One thing appreciated about the community

There were a total of 147 comments. It should be obvious to most that our biggest assets are our community – both by the people (95 comments, 64%) as well as the atmosphere that we create (36 comments, 25%). Other notable things mentioned include the support we give each other (8 comments, 5%), specifically the global culture (7 comments, 5%), and our real life events (6 comments, 4%).

One thing to improve in the community

There were a total of 77 comments. Of those comments, the most popular with 20 comments was “nothing/ not sure.” The next popular answers were the elitism (6 comments) and United States centrism (4 comments) and revising the mentor system and review bonding at three comments each. The other comments varied across the board.

Two comments a piece:

- The community is too large, it is hard to find things
- more moderation when in public spaces
- Support/Desire for a mobile app
- More role play
- Scaling back, the community is too disparate as opposed to united

One comment a piece:

- Tighter restrictions on avatars and signatures (or more adherence to restrictions in place)
- Having a genderless raising system
- Guests in public affiliate areas
- Concern of the “idol worship”
- Less emphasis on real live events
- Having Executive Members be more present
- Tech improvements
- Improve evaluations of admins, staff, and Execs (quarterly!)
- Increase the Hall term length
- Add more companies
- Organize the library better
- More transparency related to event planning (esp Euro)
- Term limits for Execs
- Make community contributions for raising voluntary

- More financial transparency
- Enhanced group autonomy (choosing own HOA/CC)
- Better moderation as a whole
- Bring back atmosphere of Guilds
- Less moderation in CE
- Hide CE again for those not in the user group