

RBMS Website Survey Report

Submitted to the RBMS Publications Committee and Web Team

For ALA Midwinter 2011 Meeting

The RBMS Web Team conducted a survey of RBMS members and others who use the RBMS website (“rbms.info”) about their needs for and uses of the website. (The survey instrument can be found at the end of this report, in Appendix A.) The survey was open for four weeks, from 26 August through 24 September 2010 and was advertised on RBMS-L (listserv) and social networking sites Facebook and Twitter. The following report provides and analyzes the data from the survey and offers recommendations for potential next steps with regard to the website.

SUMMARY

The responses highlight three areas for improvement of the website: more regularly updated and additional content, a simplified navigational structure, and an updated site design. To address these concerns, we recommend the following actions be considered:

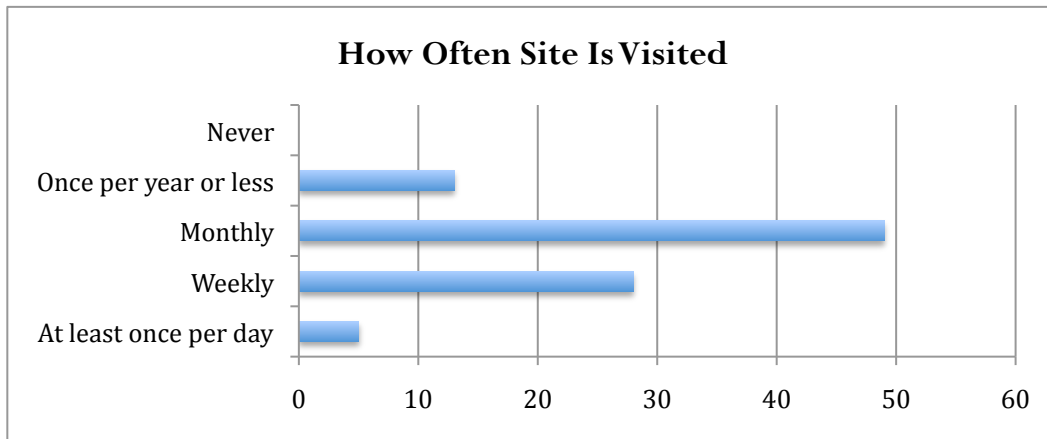
- Determine which RBMS committees own which pages, identify gaps and unclear areas, and make better use of Web Team liaisons to assist in updating content. Clarify respective roles of Web Team and RBMS committees with regard to site content.
- Move entire site to Drupal-based platform to allow for more functionality and member engagement.
- Reorganize site structure in more streamlined manner, removing structural reliance on committee hierarchy.
- Publicize “Share” button features.
- Change print default to main content, but with option to print navigational sidebars as well
- Monitor any increase in use of site on mobile devices for future action.
- Continue seeking member input for website improvements.

SURVEY RESULTS & ANALYSIS

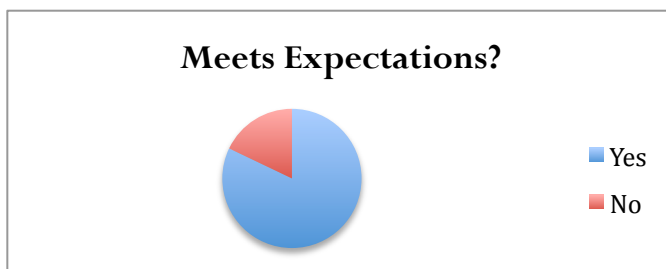
The RBMS Website survey received 95 responses, 89 (94%) of whom are RBMS members and two of whom are members of ALA but not RBMS (2%). The remaining four respondents are not

members of either RBMS or ALA. As of August 2010, the total number of individual members of RBMS is 1699, giving us a lowly member response rate of 5.2%.

Of the survey respondents, 86% use rbms.info at least once per month, with 35% of respondents using the site at least weekly. Most respondents state that they access the site with the Firefox web browser (73%), but Internet Explorer (36%), Chrome (13%), and Safari (5%) are also used. In what we suspect will be a growing trend, 9% of respondents also use a mobile web browser on their smart phones or other mobile devices.

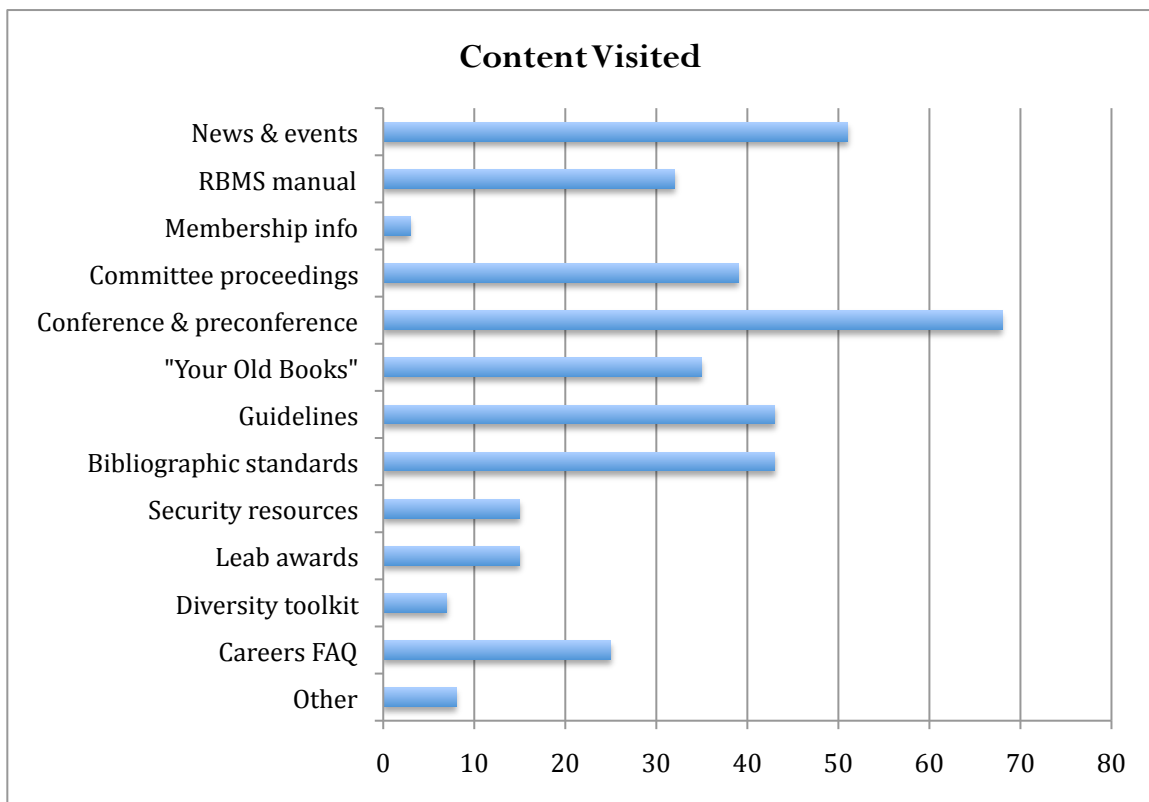


A full 82% of respondents state that the site meets their expectations; though, for 18% (17 people), the site does not. When the latter group was asked why the website does not meet their expectations, nine respondents focused on navigation and the site's directory structure and four respondents commented on the aesthetics of the site. Respondents expressed particular frustration with content being substantially buried in committee hierarchy. An additional five respondents expressed frustration with the content being out-of-date or too infrequently updated.

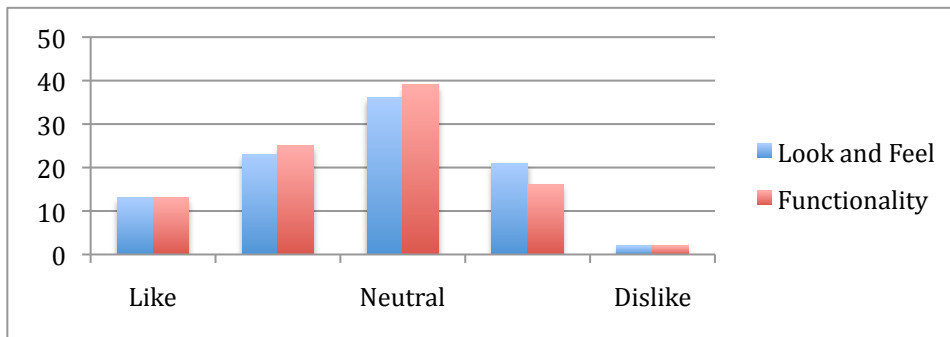


In terms of site content, the majority of respondents consult the site for conference and preconference resources (72%), including for conference planning and for accessing presentation

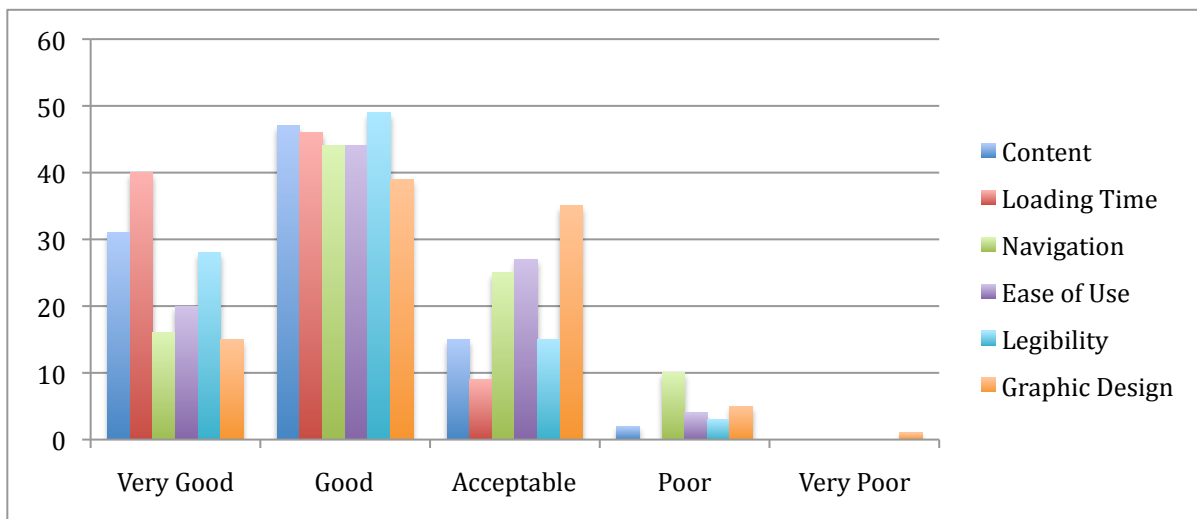
slides and audio files post-conference. News and Events, a section on the rbms.info main page, is consulted by the over half of the respondents as well (54%). RBMS guidelines and bibliographic standards are each consulted by 45% of respondents and committee proceedings, including meeting minutes, are consulted by 41%. These numbers give us a sense of how RBMS members in particular use rbms.info, which is strikingly different than the statistics we pull from Google Analytics, where *Your Old Books* significantly outpaces the rest of our site's content. We see here that RBMS members are planning for preconference and ALA meeting attendance, conducting and reviewing committee work and programming, using our bibliographic resources, and keeping up with the latest RBMS news.



Regarding the look and feel of the site, 38% of responses were favorable, an equal amount of were neutral, while 24% displeased. A similar distribution was obtained when respondents were questioned on the functionalities of rbms.info: 40% approve, 41% are neutral, and 19% disapprove. These numbers reflect some, yet significant, dissatisfaction about the design and organization of the site, though we must look to other responses for more specific information.



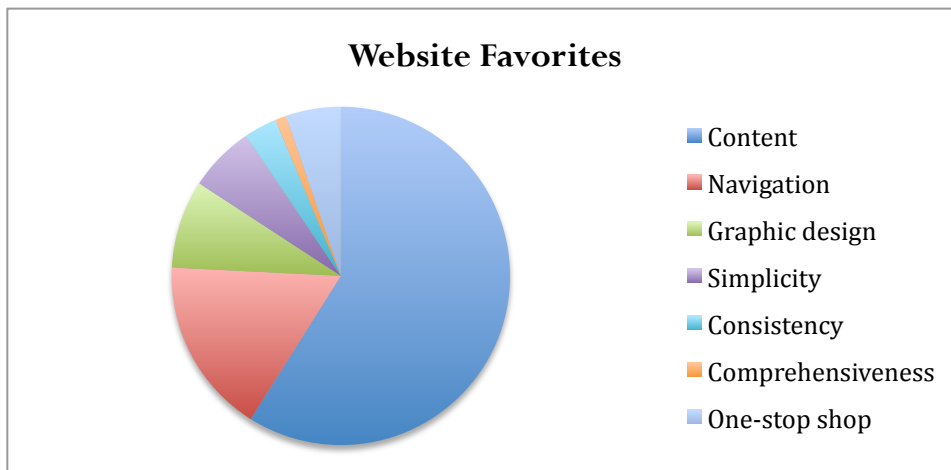
Generally, respondents were pleased with the site’s design, intellectual organization, and content when rating the site on a five-point scale (Very Good --> Good --> Acceptable --> Poor --> Very Poor). In their free-form responses, however, half of respondents commented that the site’s navigation does not meet their expectations. The majority of respondents chose either “Good” or “Very Good” for the following aspects of the site’s design: 91% for load time, 82% for content, 81% for text legibility, 67% for overall ease of use, 63% for navigation, and 57% for graphic design. For the same categories, respondents chose “Poor”: 0% for loading time, 2% for content, 3% for text legibility, 4% for overall ease of use, 5% for graphic design, and 11% for navigation. Only one category, graphic design, was given a rating of “Very Poor,” and this by a single respondent (1%). The remaining respondents rated these features “Acceptable.” Given these responses, we see more specific concerns emerge, particularly with regard to confusing or overly-complex navigation. This issue and others are borne out further in the free-form responses. On the other hand, we also see a high level of satisfaction with site content, load time, and legibility.



When asked about their printing preferences, the majority of respondents (66%) expressed a desire to print only the main content of the web site (without the navigational sidebars), with 37% preferring that alone and 29% preferring that there be an option to print the entire screen, including navigational sidebars. Only 16% of respondents expressed a preference to print the entire screen, with two-thirds of this group preferring an option to print without navigational sidebars. Finally, 18% expressed no desire to print from the site.

When surveyed about the “Share” button,¹ the vast majority of respondents (97%) have not used the feature, though 56% of respondents indicated that they intend to use the feature in the future. Of the respondents that have used the feature (3%), all have indicated finding it helpful.

When asked what they like most about the website, 56% of responses focused on the site’s content. Other favorites include navigation and directory structure (16%), primarily indicating their ease in locating content and navigating the site, and the site’s design aesthetic (8%). The remaining responses concerned the simplicity of the site (6%), the speed of updated information (4%), consistency (3%), comprehensiveness (1%), and the function of the site as a clearinghouse for RBMS (5%). Over half of the respondents stated that their favorite aspect of the site is the content, a credit to the work of RBMS committee members, past and present.

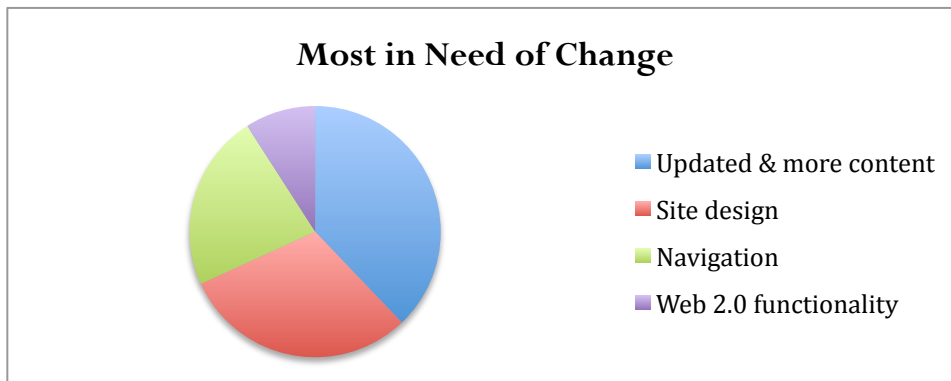


When asked what additional functions they would like to see at rbms.info, 68% of respondents

¹ The “Share” button allows website visitors to share a page via email or various social media tools. It also gives the visitor an option to print.

focused on content issues, such as a need for more rapid content updates and access to committee meeting minutes, the archives of *RBM* and *RBM-L*, conference & preconference proceedings, general resources on rare books and the profession, a job board, further cross-linking to ALA & ALAConnect, and a member directory. An additional 19% of respondents requested more web 2.0 functionality, such as spaces for dialogue, Twitter feeds, and RSS feeds. While one in five respondents desired more web 2.0 functionality, one respondent specifically requested that none be added. Other responses included suggestions for simpler navigation (5%), more images (3%), further committee control over content (2%), a simpler search (2%), and an updated look (2%).

Similarly, when asked what aspects of the website they feel should be changed, 25% of the respondents indicated content, primarily focused on out-of-date information and a desire to provide additional content and resources. Another 20% of respondents focused on the site's aesthetics and 15%, on general navigation and site structure, including too complex a route to RBMS standards, publications, and committee work. A lack of web 2.0 functionality was a concern for 6% of respondents.



Responses overall suggest a desire for change in three areas: content more regularly updated and additional content added, a simplified navigational structure, and an updated site design.

Respondents like the site's content but want to see it updated more often and more useful information added. Though some respondents expressed concerns about navigation, others like the navigational structure. We suspect that two factors play a significant role -- the extent to which respondents are familiar with RBMS committee hierarchy and how much they use *rbms.info* over time, enabling them to learn where specific content can be found. Finally, some respondents want to see the site's design updated, though others appreciate its simplicity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are potential methods of addressing some of the concerns expressed in the survey responses. We recommend only that the following actions be considered; in no way should these recommendations be construed as guaranteed projects.

While the web team has less control over content issues, we believe that we can work with RBMS committees to improve content updates if

- we determine which RBMS committees own which web pages and identify any gaps or unclear areas in the process, and
- we make better use of our liaisons to encourage and assist committees with updating the content within their purview and to fix broken links more often.

To this end, the web team may wish to clarify our respective roles with regard to the site's content with the help of the Publications and Executive Committees. The web team believes that the content of rbms.info is under the purview of the respective committees involved and that the web team's role is to receive and post content provided by RBMS committee members. Clarification of roles can help to alleviate confusion resulting in content not getting updated. The web team could also emphasize that it is available to work with committees interested in posting more content online and continue to promote the site as a module for interactive committee work, such as the DCRM groups' use of digress.it. In addition, updating the "News and Events" section of the site will happen in a more regular and streamlined manner once the News Editor has a new structure to control that space, which is already in process.

We recommend that the web team consider moving the website to a Drupal-based platform. Drupal's functionalities allow for more interaction and member engagement. This is a large-scale project, however, that will take a lot of work and would likely require us to hire a designer to build the back-end of the site. There are also a few site design tweaks suggested by survey respondents that the web team may consider in the interim, even without the Drupal redesign, such as using a rotating selection of images in the header of the site, emphasizing that we are not rare books alone.

With regard to buried or confusing site navigation, we recommend that the web team consider

organizing content in a more streamlined and logical manner that does not rely so extensively on a knowledge of RBMS committee hierarchy. We believe, however, that if we decide to move the website to Drupal, changing navigational structure should happen at that time.

As the overwhelming majority of respondents have not used the “Share” button, we recommend that the web team further publicize its features.

Given the printing preferences expressed in the survey, we recommend that the default printing style be only the main content, without the navigational sidebars, but that there be an option to print with the navigational sidebars for those who prefer that style. An additional option is to implement a print style sheet, as is currently the case for *Your Old Books*.

As only 9% of respondents indicated use mobile browsers for accessing rbms.info, we do not recommend prioritizing the creation of a mobile site at this time. However, the web team will monitor the use of mobile devices via Google Analytics and revisit this potential project when the share of mobile browsers increases to some point of critical mass.

Finally, the web team wishes to thank all of those who took their time to respond to our survey. Website user input is valuable and we believe it should be more regularly sought.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Supple, RBMS Web Editor (2010-2011), and
Jason Kovari, RBMS Assistant Web Editor (2010-2011),

On behalf of the RBMS Web Team

APPENDIX A: RBMS WEB SURVEY INSTRUMENT

1. Are you a member of RBMS?
 - Yes
 - No

2. Are you a member of ALA?
 - Yes
 - No

3. How often, on average, do you use the RBMS website (<http://rbms.info>)? (Pick one)
 - At least once per day
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Once per year or less
 - Never

4. Which web browser(s) do you typically use? (Check all that apply)
 - Internet Explorer
 - Firefox
 - Safari
 - Chrome
 - Mobile browser (via smart phones, etc.)
 - Other

5. Which web content do you consult when you use the website? (Check all that apply)
 - News and Events
 - RBMS Manual
 - Information on becoming a member of RBMS
 - RBMS committee proceedings (including committee meeting minutes)
 - RBMS conference and/or preconference resources (including meeting times and presentation slides/audio)
 - "Your Old Books" and/or other publications
 - RBMS guidelines and non-bibliographic standards (<http://rbms.info/standards/index.shtml>)
 - RBMS bibliographic standards, including controlled vocabularies (http://rbms.info/committees/bibliographic_standards/index.shtml)
 - Theft reports and/or other security resources
 - Leab exhibition awards information
 - RBMS diversity toolkit
 - "Careers in Rare Books and Manuscripts: Frequently Asked Questions"
 - Other

6. What additional functions would you like to see in the RBMS website? (Text box)

7. Do you like the look and feel of the website? (Range 1-5)
1. Like
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 5. Dislike
8. Do you like the functionalities offered by the website? (Range 1-5)
1. Like
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 5. Dislike
- 9a. Does the website meet your expectations?
- Yes
 - No
- 9b. If the website does not meet your expectations, why not? (Text box)
10. Please rate the following aspects of the website's design. - Content (Range 1-5)
1. Very good
 2. Good
 3. Acceptable
 4. Poor
 5. Very poor
11. Please rate the following aspects of the website's design. - Loading time (Range 1-5)
1. Very good
 2. Good
 3. Acceptable
 4. Poor
 5. Very poor
12. Please rate the following aspects of the website's design. - Navigation (Range 1-5)
1. Very good
 2. Good
 3. Acceptable
 4. Poor
 5. Very poor
13. Please rate the following aspects of the website's design. - Overall ease of use (Range 1-5)
1. Very good
 2. Good
 3. Acceptable
 4. Poor
 5. Very poor

14. Please rate the following aspects of the website's design. - Text legibility (e.g., font, size)

(Range 1-5)

1. Very good
2. Good
3. Acceptable
4. Poor
5. Very poor

15. Please rate the following aspects of the website's design. - Graphic design (e.g., colors, images)

(Range 1-5)

1. Very good
2. Good
3. Acceptable
4. Poor
5. Very poor

16. What are your preferences when printing from the website? (Pick one)

- I want to print only the main content (without navigational sidebars)
- I want to print the screen as I see it (including navigational sidebars)
- I would like the default to be that the whole page prints, and have an option to print just the main content (without navigational sidebars)
- I would like the default to be that just the main content (without navigational sidebars) prints, and have an option to print the whole page as I see it on the screen
- I do not want to print from the website

17. What do you think of the "Share" button in the upper right-hand corner of the website's navigation bar? (Pick one)

- I have used it and found it helpful.
- I have used it and did not find it helpful.
- I have not yet used it, but will try it at some point.
- I have not yet used it and probably won't.

18. What do you like most about the website? (Text box)

19. What aspect(s) of the website do you feel should be changed? (Text box)

20. Please share any additional comments you have about the website here. (Text box)