

Online Survey Results

By Sue Ellen Fast
Executive Director/Editor

Interpreters shared their input with colleagues across Canada through the 2008–2009 IC online survey, mostly to describe the current condition of the interpretation field. Other lines of inquiry included the desired condition, and characteristics of today’s interpreters and IC members.

Opened in November 2008, the survey was open until February 2009. It drew a total of 283 responses, of which 147 were complete. (Well done to those intrepid folk who made it all the way to the end!) This far exceeded our target of 50, and is an excellent indicator for the future of our association.

Looked at another way, 283 interpreters together volunteered an estimated 75 hours of their time to provide our IC community with this valuable data. I hope they also enjoyed the professional development that can blossom when people reflect on their work. Some of the more in-depth questions were carefully designed so that participants would come away with new insights and perspectives.

Everyone involved in heritage interpretation was invited to participate, from front-line seasonals and volunteers to managers, instructors and consultants. The survey was designed to accompany the workshops hosted in cities across Canada November 2008 and January 2009 (see previous page).

The information gathered is already being used by the IC board to help shape future programs and the structure of our association. The aim is to better meet the needs of today’s interpreters, to build capacity, and to better reflect the evolution of our profession. Answers to the forty questions add up to a significant and valuable database, especially as the wonderful open-source LimeSurvey software does cross-tabs and most of the math so that the data is easy to use. The survey was part of IC’s Phase 2 Revitalization project funded by the federal department of Canadian Heritage. Many thanks to those who participated! In the spirit of sharing, we are pleased to present the results back to you as promised. I hope you find the results as interesting as I do. Please note that all responses will be kept anonymous—their content may be made public, but will not be attributed.

I designed the survey, with input from the board and technical assistance from IC’s webmaster and board member Chris Mathieson. Please drop me a line if you would like more info at editor@interpca.ca.

Without more ado, here are all of the questions in their original wording, and many of the responses. Detailed results of the questions requiring more analysis, especially the open-ended ones, will be presented in future issues of *InterpScan*. Results below include responses from everyone, even if they only responded to a few questions, and from non-members as well as IC members (except where noted). Totals are the numbers of respondents who clicked a button in that question. You will notice that some questions were easier to answer than others, and that totals diminish towards the end of the survey.

The total column will be most useful for the “choose all that apply” questions. The percentage column is most useful for the “choose only one” questions.

1. What media have you used for any purpose within the past 24 months, either for work or during your own free time? Please choose all that apply:

Responses	Total	%
Online class, session or course	100	11%
Video	199	21%
E-Book (digital media equivalent of a conventional printed book)	66	7%
Tele learning (teleconference seminar)	47	5%
Video conferencing	51	5%
Social networking sites, e.g. Facebook	152	16%
Googling and other online research	265	28%
Other	66	7%
Total	946	100%

2. An audience analysis details the characteristics, interests and needs of the people who visit and might visit a site or area. It is used in planning interpretation and education programs. Have any of the following been conducted for your site? Please choose all that apply:

Responses	Total	%
Formal audience analysis that includes potential audiences that are not currently being served	71	12%
Formal audience analysis report or visitor survey	167	29%
Informal knowledge of site visitors based on long exposure	181	31%
Gut feelings about what site visitors want and need	166	28%
Total	585	100%

3. If applicable, please indicate when the most recent formal audience analysis was conducted. Please choose only one of the following:

Responses	Total	%
No answer	84	34%
Within past 24 months	118	47%
Within past 5 years	36	14%
More than 5 years ago	11	4%
Total	249	100%

4. What resources do you use in planning an interpretive program or project? Please choose all that apply:

Responses	Total	%
Audience analysis	149	7%
Past program notes	190	8%
Site master plan	112	5%
Site interpretive plan	135	6%
Supervisor	158	7%
Local expert (outside your organization)	143	6%
Expert within your organization	188	8%
Site inventory or catalogue	125	5%
External reports (e.g., university research project)	119	5%
Plant or wildlife surveys	104	5%
Historical/cultural reports	175	8%
Academic journals	90	4%
Resources designed for classroom teachers	147	6%
Professional journals, e.g., <i>InterpScan</i>	104	5%
New books	153	7%
Other books	143	6%
Other	38	2%
Total	2273	100%

5. Describe a resource that you wish you had:

216 answers (see future issues)

6. Would you value articles by interpreters about interpretation techniques and approaches used in other countries? Please choose only one of the following:

Responses	Total	%
Yes	123	83%
No	0	0%
Uncertain/Maybe	25	17%
Total	148	100%

7. For each of the following terms, please check the box that best reflects your familiarity:

technical difficulties (see future issues)
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8. Please name another interpretation and/or learning model you often use:

83 answers (see future issues)

9. How are topics for interpretation programs and projects chosen at your site?

198 answers (see future issues)

10. Please list up to seven of the most important steps you take when planning a new interpretive program or project:

1,080 responses (see future issues)

11. When was the last time that a fresh interpretation technique or approach was introduced and applied at your site? (i.e., a technique or approach not known to have been used before at your site) Additional comments welcome in the text box. Please choose only one of the following:

Responses	Total	%
No answer	6	3%
Within past 6 months	79	43%
Within past 24 months	56	31%
Within past 5 years	29	16%
More than 5 years ago	12	7%
Total	182	100%

12. Describe an example of a specific approach or technique that you think should be more widely used (optional):

114 answers (see future issues)
Examples of responses to question 12:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “conversational rather than lecture” • “using capabilities of Web 2.0 and other digital technology” • “a systems approach” • “civic tourism” • “community-based ecological monitoring” “experiential hands-on story-telling imagining!” • “art of asking great questions, experiential, critical thinking challenges” • “participatory programs are vital; I have observed that interpreters are sometimes perceived as either too high and mighty, or too mis-informative, for visitors to reach out and ask a question. Participation helps break down the barrier” • “exposing visitors to a resource first-hand. We seem to have moved away from this ...”

13. Indicate the statement that best describes your current practice. Please choose only one of the following:

Responses	Total	%
No answer	4	2%
I monitor and evaluate the interpretation I deliver or oversee on an on-going basis so that it continues to improve.	92	53%
I occasionally evaluate the interpretation I deliver or oversee and make changes to improve it.	57	33%
I am interested in evaluating the interpretation I deliver or oversee but have not done it yet.	18	10%
I am not aware of ways to evaluate the interpretation I deliver or oversee, or of how evaluation can be used to improve interpretation.	4	2%
Total	175	100%

14. In the following statements, "training" means structured training with exercises specifically about interpretation. Can be in-house, group or one-on-one, but not job-shadowing or self-directed learning. Please indicate which of the following describe your current situation. Please choose all that apply:

Responses	Total	%
I have provided training to university students within the past 24 months.	53	*10%
I have provided training to college students within the past 24 months.	41	*7%
I have provided training to practicing interpreters within the past 24 months.	92	17%
I have provided training, but not within the past 24 months.	17	3%
I help train other interpreters.	86	16%
I wish to become a trainer.	34	6%
My staff and/or volunteers would benefit from training.	82	15%
I would benefit from training.	109	20%
I competently practice interpretation and don't require training.	3	1%
I am not aware of any training that addresses interpretation.	12	2%
Other	20	4%
Total	549	100%

* note data flawed due to error in question. Should have read, "... as or as part of a university/college credit course ..."

15. If training about site interpretation planning were available, would you be interested? Please choose only one of the following:

Responses	Total	%
Yes, for my staff and/or volunteers	18	11%
Yes, for my staff and/or volunteers and myself	88	52%
Yes, for myself	54	32%
No, not interested	8	5%
Total	168	100%

16. If training designed for seasonal interpreters were available, would you be interested? Please choose only one of the following:

Responses	Total	%
Yes, for my staff and/or volunteers	46	27%
Yes, for my staff and/or volunteers and myself	74	44%
Yes, for myself	19	11%
No, not interested	29	17%
Total	168	100%

17. If a professional interpreter certificate were available, would you be interested? Please choose only one of the following:

Responses	Total	%
Yes, for my staff and/or volunteers	20	12%
Yes, for my staff and/or volunteers and myself	77	46%
Yes, for myself	46	27%
No, not interested	25	15%
Total	168	100%

Examples of "other" responses in question 14:

• "we have lots of regular basic training but need more for seasoned interpreters, where we can share our successes and failures and develop a network ..."

- "on-going training is always important; training is never over"
- "have been trained annually"

• "please—more training!"

"I competently practice interpretation AND require ongoing training to challenge myself"

18. Describe training that you wish was available to you and/or others at your site, including main topics (optional):

104 answers (see future issues)

19. Indicate your single greatest need as a professional interpreter. Please choose only one of the following:

Responses	Total	%
Recognition as a professional	33	20%
Something for my resume	1	1%
To learn basic planning and presentation techniques	4	2%
To learn advanced planning and management techniques	35	22%
To learn philosophy and theory	0	0%
Tools to help me train others	11	7%
Authority to back up discussions with my boss	4	2%
Opportunities to share problems and solutions with my peers	11	7%
A sense of belonging	3	2%
A reference by which to assess my abilities and plan skills development	6	4%
New approaches, refreshment and motivation	41	25%
Something so I can keep my current job	3	2%
Other	10	6%
Total	162	100%

20. The benefits of interpretation can be understood from several perspectives. Please indicate how the interpretation you provide contributes:

- a. With regard to your site or area (9 possible responses)
- b. With regard to your agency (7 possible responses)
- c. Beyond your site or area (6 possible responses)
- d. With regard to the visitor (10 possible responses)
- e. With regard to the tourism industry (7 possible responses)
- f. With regard to the local community (9 possible responses)
- g. With regard to democracy or citizenship (5 possible responses)

See future issues.

21. Is interpretation or education included explicitly in your organization's mandate or mission? Please choose only one of the following:

Responses	Total	%
Yes	139	88%
No	10	6%
Uncertain	9	6%
Total	158	100%

What's On?
 Eleven membership programs to participate in!
 See inside front cover.

22. Interpretation Canada offers various programs for members and non-members. Please indicate how often you used or participated in each within the past 24 months. Please choose the appropriate response for each item (first column):

And

23. Please indicate where you would like to see our program offerings increase, stay the same, or decrease (second column):

Responses	% that use sometimes and often	% that would like increase
<i>(In these two questions, only responses from IC members are reported, and most but not all survey respondents are included.)</i>		
InterpScan journal	90%	40%
Online library Of InterpScan articles	40%	30%
Online business/tourism Directory	35%	20%
ICJobs listserve – to post	40%	15%
ICJobs listserve – to find	40%	20%
Annual awards competition	25%	15%
IC_Community listserve	40%	10%
Links to online resources	70%	60%
Professional development events online listing	60%	65%
Regional conferences and workshops	75%	70%
Seasonal IC News emails	60%	20%
Website in general	85%	50%

24. What is your current relationship with Interpretation Canada? Please choose only one of the following:

Responses	Total	%
Current member	64	41%
Past member	22	14%
Never been a member	46	29%
Unsure	24	15%
Total	156	100%

24a. If current member or unsure, please enter your email address here so that we can check to confirm which responses come from members:

78 answers

25. Please indicate which other professional interpretation associations you belong to. Please choose all that apply:

Responses	Total	%
Association Québécoise d'Interprétation du Patrimoine (AQIP)	4	6%
Interpretive Guides Association (IGA aka MPHIA)	14	21%
Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication (EECOM)	12	18%
US National Association for Interpretation (NAI)	24	36%
Other	22	33%
Total	76	100%

25a. Please list informal and smaller professional interpretation networks that you belong to:

51 answers (see future issues)

26. Please indicate the career stage that best describes you currently. Please choose only one of the following:

Responses	Total	%
Consultant	12	8%
Manager	41	26%
Supervisor	34	22%
Front-line	32	21%
Volunteer	3	2%
Seasonal	12	8%
Other	22	14%
Total	156	100%

27a. Where are you located currently? Please choose all that apply:

Responses	Total	%
In a city	91	58%
Within 100 km of a city	33	21%
More than 100 km from a city	32	21%
Total	156	100%

27 b. Where are you located currently? Please choose all that apply:

Responses	Total	%
In Canada	95	99%
Outside Canada	1	1%
Total	96	100%

28. What is your postal code? (optional):

118 answers (see future issues)

29. Are you currently a Parks Canada employee? Please choose only one of the following:

Responses	Total	%
Yes	66	42%
No	90	58%
Total	156	100%

30. Where have you worked over the last 24 months? Please choose all that apply:

Responses	Total	%
Museum	48	16%
Park	58	19%
Aquarium	0	0%
Zoo	4	1%
Tourism industry	22	7%
Nature centre	26	8%
Historic site	61	20%
Cultural centre	8	3%
Art gallery	9	3%
Environmental organization	18	6%
First nations cultural site	7	2%
Other	39	13%
Teaching interpretation	5	2%
Total	*309	100%

* 309 is 9% greater than total number of 283 respondents, and much greater than the 96 respondents who were still answering questions by question 27. So 9–222% had worked in more than one type of organization, which probably means that most had worked in more than two.

31. In which official language do you prefer to communicate? Please choose only one of the following:

Responses	Total	%
French	10	7%
English	142	93%
Total	152	100%

32. Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

33 answers (see future issues)

As you see, Canadian interpreters have generously poured out their thoughtful and sometimes detailed responses to the questions we posed. The sheer unexpected volume of data to crunch, while very welcome, has exceeded our limited resources for the time being. There is a book's worth of current good practice and practical advice here. If anyone can suggest suitable grant programs or foundations please let me know.

Analytical minds who would like to share insights about the above, or to analyze the responses to a question, are invited to contact me at editor@interpca.ca. Thanks!

Online IC Conference

Pilot
Late Fall 2009
Details TBA

IC Update



Sue Ellen Fast
Executive Director

The elected board of Interpretation Canada and I met in person May 8-10 2009

on Vancouver Island. During this retreat we considered key input received from Canadian interpreters and charted a new course for the future of our association. It was a wonderful meeting!

Board members hail from all over Canada (see page 2) and face to face meetings are a rare event for us, usually several years apart. We were able to meet through the grant received from the federal department of Canadian Heritage for our revitalization project. Most board members were able to come. Hobnobbing with members at the BC Spring conference was a definite bonus!

The input from interpreters that the board considered came through the six workshops held across Canada and the online survey (see previous pages), and a questionnaire emailed to a subset of interpretation trainers by board member Peter Pacey.

Outcomes included a new vision and mission, and significant steps towards a strategic action plan. To give you a feel for the new IC that is emerging, I'll report under the priority action areas the board defined. These priorities begin to swing IC onto the new course.

New Vision:

Heritage interpreters across Canada value Interpretation Canada as their link to a diverse and thriving community of professionals.



photo: Pam Murray

Board members Peter Pacey, Cal Martin, David Plouffe, Margot Hervieux, Chris Mathieson and executive director/editor Sue Ellen Fast. Missing from the photo: Pam Murray.

