ACUTA eNews January 1999, Vol.28, No. 1

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/acutanews

Part of the Higher Education Commons, and the Operations Research, Systems Engineering and Industrial Engineering Commons

http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/acutanews/187

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the ACUTA: Association for College and University Technology Advancement at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in ACUTA Newsletters by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
Traditionally, the new year is regarded as a time of fresh starts. Many of us come back from the holidays motivated and inspired, ready to make the months ahead better than the months just past. The challenge is to sustain the enthusiasm through December to accomplish the goals we set in January. Keeping up with innovations in technology, staying abreast of changes in the legislative and regulatory arena, and resolving financial dilemmas make managing a campus telecommunications department a constant challenge.

Here's what some ACUTA members say is high on their list of priorities this year:

**Dave Barta (Univ. of Oregon):** Our biggest project will be an evaluation of the voice network among Oregon schools to determine if we are ready to make a transition to VoIP.

**Bob Hopper (Purdue University at Calumet):** The first thing that comes to my mind is distance learning. More of our course offerings are via the Internet and we are upgrading the infrastructure to handle the demands. Another project is upgrading both hardware and software on the student information system. We're putting in a remote building which will require computer servers, networks, and phone connections. Plus we've got a couple of new labs going in. Our payphone contract is up and I'm working on an RFP for that right now. With another 75 smaller projects on the list, we don't expect to have any trouble staying busy!

**Sandy Fischer (So. Dakota School of Mines & Technology):** We have determined to make significant improvements in our relations with our vendors this year. We've set up a number of meetings for the explicit purpose of improving communications between our vendors and the school.

**Barb Fugo (Kent State Univ.):** We don't know if we are going PBX or Centrex yet, but we will be getting a new telephone system this year. We've been in the process for two years and are now close to writing our RFP.

**Dwight Snethen (Butler Univ.):** Our two biggest priorities this coming year are Y2K concerns for all of our voice, video, and data hardware and software and the purchase of a new campuswide administrative software system.

**Linda Levenhagen (Univ. of Wisc, Milwaukee) Administrative systems (Peoplesoft);** Web-based distance learning (course management systems like WebCT, Web Course in a Box vs outsourcing like Real Education); Help Desk for data; future VoIP, cable modem, and ADSL access for students, and Internet 2 development have some interest as emerging technologies. Voice-only issues have no priority on campus. Data, data networking are extremely important. Video has some level of importance.
Making Choices: ATM vs. Gigabit Ethernet

Dave Lewis
University of Rochester

Are you struggling with decisions around cost and strategy for Internet II, your next-generation communication networks, and delivering high speed connections to departmental data networks? Are vendors beating down your door with promises of ATM (Asynchronous Transfer Mode) and QoS (Quality of Service)? You may want to consider a cost/benefit comparison of ATM versus gigabit ethernet.

Clearly, quality of service, switched virtual circuits, and bandwidth on demand are today’s bleeding edge technologies. Before writing out the check, technology services managers need to be sure that today’s investment will not be thrown away but will be integrated into future convergence. Startup costs for delivering departmental data network connections in ATM at OC-3 (155mb per second) can run approximately $7-9k per port for a backbone connection as opposed to approximately $5K for a gigabit (1000 mb per second) ethernet connection—and that doesn’t include desktop connections.

If all you can invest in today is an oversized transmission path to ensure quality of service and network reliability, why not get the most for your money? In academic arenas ethernet is an accepted technology. If you purchase the right chassis, the gigabit strategy will not prohibit you from growing multiple network infrastructures for at least voice and data within the same chassis. Furthermore, this strategy supports the belief that convergence on large campus backbones will happen cost- and service-effectively over common electronics before it happens over common pipes (transmission paths). This strategy also enables you to implement voice over IP as a niche where it will occur at end locations (probably remote sites) of your electronically integrated infrastructure.

As an example, by June 1999 at the University of Rochester we will have three separate high speed networks: (1) our new PBX transmission network utilizing Cisco 8500 switches from our PBX system replacement project; (2) our legacy router-based campus data backbone with a sprinkling of switches; and (3) our 100/1000 mbps Internet II network with an outbound IP over ATM connection to our ISP.

Over the next three years we have a five-stage plan to integrate on common electronics to switch-based networks with different transports for voice, video, and data. There definitely will be advocacy for more aggressive integration approaches, but from an investment perspective, three years from now we are planning to still be utilizing the same boxes we purchased for Internet II delivering high speed connections with effective throughput to departmental networks as part of our integrated electronic infrastructure.
Voice over IP may be suitable for some long distance traffic. I don’t feel that it is a replacement for the PSTN at this time, particularly for local access. You still need phone numbers from the LEC. You still need a gateway from the IP provider to the LEC.

If you buy a decent PBX, the vendor will provide IP connectivity in the future, if they don’t already. You also need to ask yourself the following questions: Can I afford to be leading/bleeding edge? Do I have the internal and external resources to make this work, since I am betting the existence of the institution on it?

Tom Walsh, Miami University: Right now, when you use the term voice over IP, you generally are referring to some type of packet switching of voice calls rather than the “PBX” type environment of handling telephone service (stations, class of service, features like call pickup, call forwarding, etc.). It may be more correct to refer to that as a “LAN PBX.” These do exist, but I’m not sure I’d bother at this point as they will be expensive, of questionable reliability, and may well be totally different in a year. Small office home office, fine; large system, I’d be scared. Just make sure you want to be a pioneer, and remember, you can identify the pioneers by the arrows in their backs.

John Meickle, Yale Univ.: All the responses are accurate about the current state of VoIP technology. There really aren’t any commercial products out there that will deliver the services and reliability that people expect of a PBX. You might, however, want to take a slightly different perspective as you formulate your project. The key question to ask both your organization and your vendors is “What infrastructure can we build at this point in time that will improve our existing environment and position us for the future?”

Some things that come to mind that you might want to incorporate into your project are:

- Station rewiring to Category 5 Enhanced
- Overhaul/expansion of switchrooms and closets to support growth in data and video
- Establishment of fiber backbone or fiber rings for reliability
- Improvement in documentation, backoffice systems, and processes
- Video or audio/visual infrastructure improvements
- Organizational structure changes and goal definition
- Modification or improvement of existing data network to expand bandwidth or improve reliability
- Addition of new services or support

When it comes to PBXs themselves, I’d suggest that you try to get the best information possible—either through non-disclosure sessions from the vendors, organizations like ACUTA, or at seminars on where the vendors are going with PBXs. Chances are, most telecom managers will be faced with an eventual transition to IP telephony. You’ll want to understand how graceful your vendor will make that transition for you.

The key item to keep in mind regarding evolving PBX architecture is the separation between the switching matrix and common control. Eventually you want a “server” (common control) that can coordinate and control voice sessions whether they are transported via TDM, frame, packet, or cell, whether they are simply encoded, compressed or encrypted for security, or if they originate or end on a PC, a 2500 set, or if they flow off the Internet. Nobody, as far as I know, does this yet but several vendors have indicated that it is a strategic direction.
Laptops Funded by Corporate Partnerships

Clayton College and State University and Floyd College, two of Georgia’s smallest public colleges, have formed a partnership with a computer manufacturer, networking company, telephone company, Internet service provider, two banks, and several software vendors. The arrangement enables the schools to offer students a package which includes a laptop computer, unlimited Internet access, and a student I.D. card that serves as a bank card, phone card, and credit card. The upside (keeping the cost to students as low as possible while giving them the workplace skills they’ll need upon graduation) outweighs the downside (increased presence of corporate logos on campus), presidents at both schools told the Chronicle of Higher Education (11/6/98).

N.S.F. Grants Link Schools to High-Speed Network

A new round of National Science Foundation grants will help 36 more institutions connect to the foundation’s high-speed computer network.

That network is intended to allow researchers to transmit data at speeds 100 to 1,000 times as fast as those of today’s Internet. Called the very-high-performance backbone network service, or vBNS, the network is part of the Next Generation Internet plan, or N.G.I. It is also closely related to the Internet 2 project, whose members are major research universities.

The “high-performance connection” grants provide each institution with $350,000 over two years to help pay for the hardware and wiring required to connect to the vBNS. The foundation has now awarded 128 such grants, and it plans to give out a total of about 150. Fifty-six institutions are connected to the vBNS so far, and 24 more are scheduled to be hooked up in the next month, said William F. Decker, program director for advanced network infrastructure at the foundation.

The ACUTA member committees and office staff have hit the ground running after a busy holiday season, looking forward to a successful final year in the current millennium (depending upon how you count!). We have a number of projects underway that are designed to benefit our member institutions, by providing educational opportunities on the topics you’ve identified as the most pressing.

If you didn’t have an opportunity to participate in the December 4 Audio Conference or the New Orleans workshop on voice over IP, you missed out on up-to-the-minute information and analysis of this emerging technology. Audio tapes of both these sessions are available at a moderate price from the ACUTA office, and I would encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity for you and your staff to learn about the specific applications of this technology in higher education.

Regulatory affairs continues to be a major concern for our members, as the 1998 Member Needs Assessment survey results showed it as one of the top reasons for membership in ACUTA. We are very excited that FCC Commissioner Harold Furchtgott-Roth has accepted an invitation to present at the Spring Seminars in Alexandria, April 18–21. This will be a great opportunity to hear first-hand from a sitting FCC Commissioner, and it will be your chance for discussion with one of the top policy-makers in the field of telecommunications. The program will be arranged so that attendees in both tracks will be able to hear the Commissioner’s presentation.

In addition to the Commissioner, we have lined up an outstanding group of presenters on the critical issues of the Convergence of Voice, Data, and Video, and How You Can Thrive in the Competitive Telecom Marketplace. April may seem far away, but it will be here before we know it, so mark your calendar today for what is sure to be a memorable ACUTA Seminar.

At the same time, the Program Committee is busy working on finalizing program details for the 1999 Annual Conference in Nashville. An array of in-depth pre-conference sessions, outstanding keynote presentations, sessions presented by your peers in higher education, and user group meetings has been planned. If you think you might be interested in presenting in Nashville, I encourage you to respond to the Call for Presentations right away—January 15 is the deadline. You may send proposals via e-mail or fax, and you can also submit them via a new on-line form on the ACUTA Web site. For more information, check the Web at http://www.acuta.org/html/call99.html.

There are many more exciting projects underway at ACUTA to introduce new and re-designed programs to keep up with your changing world. Many of these are described in the new strategic plan approved by the Board of Directors in December, also available on the Web for your information at www.acuta.org/html/planning.html.

I hope to see you in Alexandria, and as always we encourage your participation in ACUTA.

From ACUTA Headquarters

Jeri A. Semer, CAE
Executive Director

1999 ACUTA Events

Spring Seminars • Alexandria, VA • April 18–21
I. Convergence of Voice, Data & Video
II. How You Can Thrive in the Competitive Telecom Marketplace

28TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE • Nashville, TN • July 18–22
Fall Seminars • Denver, CO • October 10–13
I. Customer Service
II. New Telecom Technologies

January 1999
Congress to Look at the FCC

EE Times (12/23) reports that the FCC will come under increased congressional scrutiny in 1999, as it faces criticism for its implementation of the 1996 telecommunications deregulation law, which many say has failed to foster competition. The Senate Commerce Committee has announced it will hold hearings beginning in January on possible changes to the law, to FCC rules, and to the role of the FCC itself.

Interesting Library Survey

According to a recent survey of public libraries conducted by the American Library Association (ALA), 73% of the public libraries currently allow the public basic Internet access. (In 1996 only about 28% offered public access.) An additional 10% have Internet access but do not provide public access. Only about one-third of the libraries are connected to the Internet at speeds of 56 kb/sec or faster.

The ALA President commented that "the survey's findings underscore the importance of 'e-rate' telecom service discounts for public libraries and schools." These discounts will be part of the Universal Services Fund (USF) currently being collected. (Telecommunications Reports 11/23)

AT&T and IBM

Since the early 1980s, IBM has been developing a broad global network for internal communications. IBM built its own network due to lack of interest by carriers to deploy "the infrastructure to transmit customers' data traffic across national borders," according to IBM. The current network has more than 1300 dial-up points of presence and dedicated access from more than 850 cities in 59 countries.

Now, AT&T has paid $5 billion for access to and use of IBM's global network facilities. The move appears to be a continuation of AT&T's new, more outward-looking strategy—one that emphasizes IP technology—which crystallized earlier this year in AT&T's proposed joint venture with British Telecommunications. (TR 12/14)

Microsoft and Qwest

On December 14 these two companies announced that Microsoft was purchasing $200 million worth of Qwest stock and providing a broad range of software for Qwest to use. Qwest is pledging to use the funds to develop a "next generation" of IP-based, bandwidth-hungry applications for businesses. Qwest plans to create a new operating division for the services in January 1999 and will start offering products commercially during the second quarter. (TR 12/21)

Cellphone Use in a Car

Legislation underway in New Jersey and Utah may have a big impact on the use of a cellphone while driving a motor vehicle. A New Jersey bill states that "a driver shall not operate a telephone in a motor vehicle that is in motion" and carries fines of $100 to $250 per violation. In Utah the language will most likely be about the same but may have a lower penalty. As might be expected, the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association opposes the legislation. (TR 12/14)

Prepaid Calling Cards

Another item to watch: The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) has proposed a slew of rules to stem the growth of 'fly-by-night' prepaid calling card operations that take consumers' money but don't deliver services. Card providers would have to obtain WUTC approval before offering services in the state and prove to the commission that they are a solid company and that they have sufficient escrow to make refunds to customers if the company were to go out of business. The rules would also require that the customers be charged for conversation time only. (TR 11-30)

I have not personally seen a card where the company has gone out of business before I fully used the card. I have seen several where the company deducted two minutes in addition to the call duration if the call was placed from a payphone. In fact, I had one card (free from a vendor) where 2-5 minutes were deducted from the card every time it was used on a private residence telephone, even though there was no answer to the call.

Disaster Plans

Two recent issues of 411 Newsletter (now The Telecom Managers Voice Report) discussed the need for disaster recovery planning. (411, 11/23, 12/7) While development of such a plan is both difficult and time consuming, ACUTA members in North Dakota, Colorado, St. Louis, and the Virgin Islands will also attest to its importance.

I was glad I had a disaster plan developed for the computer center where I worked when a water main broke one winter about a hundred yards away from any building on campus, filling up some of the steam tunnels. Before the water got to the computer center, our alarm went off. The center was able to keep most of the water out of the computer room but the system was shut down for a few hours. I went to my boss and asked why there were no sensors in the steam tunnels. Within two or three days, sensors were installed. It is important to make management aware of what could happen on your campus and who will be in charge in the event of a disaster.
Positions Available
For complete details of positions available, access the ACUTA Web site. If you do not have
Internet access, call Pat Scott at the ACUTA office (606/278-3338) to receive a printout of
current listings. Please submit position-available information electronically to Aaron Fuehrer
at afuehrer@acuta.org or to ACUTA's homepage: http://www.acuta.org. If you post a posi-
tion, please notify Aaron when the position is filled.
• Manager, Campus Card Office, Mississippi State University
  Contact: Thomas R. Lindsay, Dir. of Telecommunications, Information Technology Ser-
tices, Mississippi State Univ., P. O. Box 9507, Mississippi State, MS 39762.
lindsay@its.msstate.edu

Welcome New Members
Institutional Member
• Friends University, Wichita, KS. Barbara Parks, 316/295-5670. T2
• Luther College, Decorah, IA. Steve Arneson, 319/387-1146. T1
• The University Center, Conroe, TX. Eric Gerlach, 409/273-7217. T1

Corporate Affiliates
Copper Level
• Genesis Cable Systems, Pleasant Prairie, WI. John Pryma, 414/947-0720

Universal Translation Service
According to Information Week (11/30/98), researchers at the United Nations University
in Tokyo are developing a Universal Networking Language (UNL) that would take text in
any language and translate it into any other language. The university is working with
U.N. governments and companies to make UNL modules to support the languages of all
U.N. member countries by 2005.

Use Telephone Wires to Create a Household Network
With Tut Systems' "Home Run," you can use telephone wires to create a household
network. The technology, built into phone-networking modems, is priced at less than
$100. Other technologies, such as electrical power lines and radio waves, are also
expected to accommodate the home-networking market, but Home Run got a head start—
the first modems were due on shelves in time for Christmas. "For the next three to five
years, the phone line is the way to go in terms of price and functionality," says the
business development manager for Lucent Microelectronics, who adds: "Wireless in the
long term may be the big winner." (Wall Street Journal 11/6/98)

Information, Please
According to Information Week (11/2/98), Bell Atlantic is rolling out a new information
service, pending tariff approval. In early January callers will be able to dial 411, the
traditional information number, and get directory information for any city in any state.
Charges will be based on whether the listing is local or long distance, but callers will
not need to know the area code of the party they're trying to reach.

High Speed Networking
Internet 2's leaders say they have forged an agreement to connect the Abilene network
to Canada's high-speed-research network. The agreement is an extension of a previous
cooperative agreement with an organization called the Canadian Network for the Ad-
vancement of Research, Industry and Education, or CANARIE. The organization runs
the high-speed network called CA*net. Data will begin to flow between the two networks
as early as spring '99, and officials say that the networks will connect more than 70 U.S.
universities and 45 Canadian institutions by the end of the year. (From the Chronicle of
Higher Education Web site, 12/16/98)
Message from the President

ACUTA Member Needs Assessment:
Members are Highly Satisfied with ACUTA Services

In the Spring of 1998, ACUTA contracted with the Washington, D.C. research firm of Fetzer Kraus, Inc., to conduct the second comprehensive survey of ACUTA institutional members. (The first survey was also conducted by Fetzer Kraus in 1994.) The purpose of the survey was to explore the primary reasons for membership, the perceived effectiveness of current membership benefits and services, and the usefulness of ACUTA’s on-line resources.

The survey also assessed the continuing education and training needs of ACUTA members and their employees, and the usefulness of the ACUTA News and the Journal of Telecommunications in Higher Education. The survey also explored ACUTA’s strength relative to other higher education associations, and the perceived value of membership including the institution’s return on investment for membership in ACUTA. Finally, the survey provided information on the experience and education levels of responding members as well as their job responsibilities.

All of the voting institutional representatives were surveyed, and 46% responded. (The length of the six-page survey was probably a deterrent to a greater response.) The survey firm conducted some additional research on non-respondents, and concluded that the survey results can be considered valid.

So, to those of you who participated in the survey, thanks! The Board of Directors and Committee Chairs have already used the results in the strategic planning process, to make sure that the association’s resources are directed in areas that meet your needs. The information you provided will help shape the services offered by ACUTA over the next few years.

Buck Bayliff, Wake Forest University
ACUTA President 1998-99

[Signature]
Comparison with the 1994 Survey

ACUTA conducted a similar membership survey four years ago. Here are the highlights of comparison between the 1994 and 1998 results:

- Institutions responding in 1998 are larger (average 9,537 in 1994, 10,357 in 1998.) Interestingly, more respondents operated a hospital in 1994 (14%) than in 1998 (9%).
- Institutions responding in 1994 had been ACUTA members for an average of seven years; in 1998 the average is six years.
- The number of full time telecom staff is significantly larger in 1998 (average 21) compared to 1994 (average 14).
- Several departmental responsibilities have increased significantly. Departmental responsibilities for interactive video/distancing learning have more than doubled to 45% in 1998 from 22% in 1994. Responsibility for custom-built or private networks increased from 27% to 38%. Cable TV responsibilities increased from 25% to 34%. And student resale responsibilities increased from 66% to 72%.
- Similar proportions of respondents reported that they are responsible for campus LANs, multi-location WANs, and interactive voice response systems.
- The percentages of ACUTA members who responded to the survey in 1994 and 1998 were almost identical in terms of titles, educational attainments, and gender.
- It appears that there has been a slight decrease in the proportion of members whose responsibilities include data services, but this result must be viewed with caution because the questions were worded differently in 1994 and 1998.
- Two of the three most important reasons for the institution's ACUTA membership in 1994 are still the two most important reasons in 1998: networking with other telecom professionals and access to timely information on regulatory changes. The third reason cited in 1994, access to the latest technical information, is still important in 1998 but not among the highest-rated reasons for membership. In 1998, a newly articulated reason, ACUTA provides information not obtainable elsewhere, was among the highest. Also, the results indicate that having a voice in influencing telecommunications regulations is significantly more important in 1998.
- The senior administration view of the telecommunications/IT infrastructure as a strategic asset does not appear to have changed significantly in the past four years. In the opinion of ACUTA respondents, 57% view telecom as strategic, and approximately 30% view it as necessary but not strategic.

Conclusions to be Drawn

According to the survey firm, "The survey response makes it obvious that ACUTA is highly valued for the specific functionality of its membership. ACUTA keeps member institutions up-to-date on regulatory changes that affect their telecommunications infrastructure, and telecommunications staff have an opportunity to network with their peers in other institutions. These are the compelling reasons for membership in ACUTA."

The firm also reported that, "As respondent after respondent noted, ACUTA is the single best source for telecommunications information and advice pertaining to colleges and universities, especially regulatory information, and that is primarily why their institutions are members. ACUTA, to these representatives, is the locus and incomparable facilitator of the peer networking essential to the effective functioning of college and university staff responsible for telecommunications."
Demographics and Job Responsibilities

About one-half of ACUTA representatives have the title of Director. Another 29% have the title of Manager. Other prevalent titles are Assistant Director, Assistant Manager, and Supervisor. The Manager title is more common among institutions with enrollments of 6000 or fewer students, and Director is more common at larger institutions.

Among the respondents, 62% are the senior person at their institution responsible for these functions.

All respondents are responsible for voice communications. Half are also responsible for data activities, 40% for video activities, and 20% for one-card activities.

In terms of their highest level of education completed, 32% of respondents have an advanced degree; 41% have a bachelor's degree; 22% have completed an associate degree or graduated from high school.

Male representatives are twice as likely to have data and video responsibilities than female representatives, and are also more likely to have the title of Director while females are more likely to have the title of Manager. Male respondents are more likely to have a four-year degree or an advanced degree, and have several more years of telecommunications experience on average than female respondents.

Education and Training

Members look to ACUTA primarily for training and education for middle management and supervisory staff.

Over half of the members also look to ACUTA to provide continuing education for top management and administrative and support staff.

In general, ACUTA is expected to provide overviews and operations information, rather than technical details.

The topics of Voice over IP and Legislative/regulatory issues stood out as the most frequently cited continuing education needs of the majority of members. Other topic areas that represent the needs of about 45% of the members include introduction to telecommunications/networking, disaster recovery and preparation, local and long distance competition, voice/data integration, and network backbone technologies. In general, except for introduction to telecommunications, members want operating detail rather than introduction and overview material.

Although ACUTA representatives prefer to receive their continuing education via workshops and seminars, they are also comfortable with self-study materials, and would prefer to receive those materials on-line.

On-Line Resources

The most useful information on the Web site included access to information on U.S. regulatory issues and the resource library. Other information that was considered very useful was on-line conference and seminar information and schedules, the listserv archive, and access to the membership and facilities and services databases.

E-mail is the preferred method for members to receive information from ACUTA. 75% of members prefer e-mail over other methods.

Emerging Technologies

Members identified voice over the Internet and voice, data and video using ATM as the emerging technologies that will have the greatest impact on their institutions. Voice over IP was the most frequently mentioned among dozens of emerging technologies.

Members identified the integration of voice, video and data on one network as having the most impact on their future operations. The opportunities presented by greater transmission speeds and larger bandwidths, and wireless technologies, were also viewed as having a major impact.

Publications

Both the ACUTA News and the Journal are well read by the majority of members. Nearly two-thirds of respondents read every issue of both publications.

While 13% report that they read the Journal cover to cover, another two-thirds read articles of interest and skim the rest of the publication. 90% of members report that they find the information in the Journal always or usually interesting.
Membership Benefits

The two most compelling reasons for membership in ACUTA are access to timely updates on regulatory changes and networking with other telecommunications professionals. There are a number of other important reasons, including to have a voice in influencing telecommunications regulations, and the fact that ACUTA provides information not obtainable elsewhere.

ACUTA is highly effective in updating our members on regulatory changes. The other most highly rated benefits of membership were the ACUTA Web site, the ACUTA News, networking opportunities, the journal, the annual conference, and access to technical information.

The most popular content of the Journal is feature articles on technology applications and member-written articles on their difficulties and successes in implementing various technologies.

More than 25% of respondents read the ACUTA News from cover to cover, and most others report reading articles of interest and skimming the rest of the publication. Nearly 93% of members find the content always or usually interesting.

Members are most likely to read hot topic updates on regulatory issues, products and services. The DC at a Glance column is also well read, as are member-written articles on technology implementations.

Return on Investment

On a scale of 1 (low return) to 5 (high return), almost half of respondents rate the return on investment for their institution’s dues as 5—the highest possible rating. Another 27% rate the value as 4, for a total of 73% that rate their return on investment in ACUTA membership as above-average. Another 17% rate it as average and only 3% below average.

Nearly all survey respondents report that their senior administrators are aware of ACUTA and consider the membership useful. Only 2 out of 367 respondents indicate their senior administrators question the value of ACUTA membership.

Among respondents, 46% report that ACUTA has played a role in advancing their individual careers.

Membership in Other Associations

Some 80% of ACUTA representatives are also members of other associations. Representatives who have other memberships (in addition to ACUTA) are likely to hold senior positions, have advanced degrees, and/or be from large institutions.

More than 60% of the representatives responding to the survey, including 60% of those who also hold other memberships, consider ACUTA their primary association membership. The researchers found that “The proportion of representatives who think of ACUTA as their primary membership may be remarkably high for an organization whose members are institutions.”

Of the 106 respondents who listed another association as their “primary” membership, 20 cited CAUSE or EDUCOM (pre-merger) and 8 listed ISLUA (a user group for certain Nortel customers). No other association was listed more than five times as the primary membership.

Survey Validity

Because of the 46% response rate, the research firm tested the results with non-respondents by sending them a shorter faxed survey. The purpose of this additional research was to determine whether the results could be generalized.

They concluded that survey results on reasons for membership, effectiveness of membership benefits, usefulness of on-line tools and resources, and continuing education needs and preferences can probably be generalized to all members without qualification.

They also found that those who did not respond to the survey are less likely to consider ACUTA as their primary association membership, and they are less likely to have telecommunications or communications in their job titles. However, they value ACUTA’s benefits and services highly, and their under-representation in the response had no significant impact on the overall results of the survey.