

# **2007 NSDL Annual Meeting: Summary of End-of-Meeting Survey Results**

**Prepared by the 2007 NSDL Annual Meeting Planning Committee<sup>1</sup>  
April 2008**

## **Introduction**

This report contains a summary and analysis of the results of the end-of-meeting survey for the 2007 NSDL Annual Meeting (AM). Combined with comments from a post-mortem discussion with the 2007 Annual Meeting Planning Committee (AMPC), the report also provides recommendations for planning the 2008 NSDL Annual Meeting. The report will be available on the meeting website (<http://annualmeeting.nsd.org>); comments may be sent to: [sholsted@gmail.com](mailto:sholsted@gmail.com).

## **Methodology**

The 2007 NSDL Annual Meeting (*Advancing NSDL Networks*) was held at the Westin Arlington Gateway Hotel, Arlington, Virginia, November 6-8. After the meeting, attendees were surveyed about their meeting experience. The 2007 end-of-meeting survey questions were closely based on the 2006 AM survey, though a section was added asking specific questions about planning the 2008 Annual Meeting. The survey was hosted by SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool. At least four invitations to complete the survey, which included an embedded link, were sent via email immediately following the Annual Meeting until December 17. By December 31, a total of 47 responses had been received. Approximately 160 registrants attended the 2007 AM, and so the response rate was 29.4% (2006, 56.6%; 2005, 45.0%; 2004, 35.6%; 2003, 24.8%; 2002, 49.0%). The same protocol was followed in 2007 as was used in 2006 (email reminder with embedded link), though the frequency of reminders was not as strictly followed (once a week for three weeks in 2006). The timing of the AM followed closely by the Thanksgiving holiday and end-of-semester might explain some of the low response rate for 2007. The responses included approximately 86 unstructured comments. 14 people provided names and e-mail addresses for possible follow-up questions.

## **Findings & Analysis**

The overall meeting rating was 4.66/5.00, an increase from previous years (2006=3.99; 2005 = 3.97; 2004 = 3.99; 2003 = 3.50). Table 1 provides ratings for various meeting experiences from 2005 to 2007. Respondents ranked items from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). The rank of each category in each year appears on the right side, and the average of each category appears on the left. The sections below report in detail the results from specific portions of the survey and are followed by a section of recommendations.

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| 2007  | 2006 | 2005   | SURVEY CATEGORY                                 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 |
|-------|------|--------|---|------|------|------|
| 4.86  | 4.52 | 4.60   | Meeting support staff                           | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| 4.69  | NA   | NA     | Timely email updates and reminders              | 2    | NA   | NA   |
| 4.66  | 3.99 | 3.97   | OVERALL MEETING EXPERIENCE                      | 3    | 9    | 12   |
| 4.58  | 4.48 | 4.43   | Online registration                             | 4    | 2    | =2   |
| 4.57  | 4.18 | 4.36   | Poster session and reception                    | 5    | 4    | 4    |
| 4.52  | 4.01 | 4.29   | Share/find new ideas                            | 6    | 8    | 5    |
| 4.51  | 4.12 | 4.05   | Discuss NSDL community issues                   | 7    | 5    | 10   |
| 4.51  | 4.02 | 4.08   | Information about the meeting on nsdl.org       | 7    | 7    | 8    |
| 4.49* | 4.10 | 3.68** | Interact with NSDL staff                        | 8    | 6    | 15*  |
| 4.49  | 3.88 | 4.43   | Information about travel and lodging            | 8    | 12   | =2   |
| 4.44  | 3.91 | 4.06   | Proposal submission, review and acceptance      | 9    | 10   | 9    |
| 4.24  | 3.90 | 4.16   | Find new collaborators                          | 10   | 11   | 6    |
| 4.11  | 3.77 | 3.61   | Interact with NSF staff                         | 11   | 14   | 16   |
| 3.94  | **   | **     | Interact with attendees not funded through NSDL | 12   | **   | 88   |
| 3.47  | 3.84 | 3.54   | Opening session: NSF and CI update              | 13   | 13   | 17   |
| --    | 4.24 | 4.13   | Closing session (Sustainability panel)          | --   | 3    | 7    |
| --    | 3.72 | 3.13   | Opening keynote (Cyber-infrastructure)          | --   | 15   | 19   |

**Table 1. Ranked averages of 2007 Annual Meeting experiences**

\* Average of responses to 'Interact with Core Integration,' 'Interact with Standing Committee,' and 'Interact with Policy Committee'

\*\* Item was included for the first time in 2007

-- Item not included in 2007 survey

### **Survey Section 1: Project Information**

The 2007 meeting opened with a poster reception on November 6, followed by one and a half days of presentations on November 7-8. All of the respondents (n=47) indicated that they attended the second day of the conference. However, attendance by these respondents dropped by 15 percent on the third day of the meeting. This is a similar to the attendance pattern in 2006.

All of the respondents (n=47) described their affiliation with an NSDL project as either a current (53%) or a current project as well as had a past project (34%). Only 6 percent of the respondents indicated that they had a past NSDL project (but not a current NSDL project) and 6 percent were not involved with an NSDL project at all.

Asked which funding track of the NSDL program their projects were funded under, respondents (n=44; 34%) were funded from the Pathways track, 27% from the Core Integration track, 23% from the Collections track, 18% from the Services

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track, and 11% from the Targeted Research track; 7% were not funded through an NSDL project while 5% were not aware of how their project was funded. This trend is also reflected in the 2006 survey results.

Asked when their NSDL-funded project began, 36% of respondents indicated that 2005 was the year their project started, 26% started in 2006, 23% indicated 2002 and 2004, and 32% began in 2006-2007. Cumulatively, 92% of the respondents reported that their projects started between years 2004-2007.

### **Survey Section 2: Meeting Planning and Experience**

The survey asked respondents about their general annual meeting experience as well as several specific questions about the general meeting sessions, meeting planning and organization, opportunities for interaction, and how the meeting compared to previous meetings.

The majority of 42 respondents (95.3%) rated the 2007 annual meeting as “good” or “excellent” (28.6% good, 66.7% excellent). The overall negative comments were mostly related to food (no sodas, no oatmeal) and hotel (expensive, no package deal provided), and the plenary opening session (disappointing NSF speaker, and lack of time for Lee Zia and Kaye Howe to talk about NSDL’s goals and achievements respectively). For more detailed information about the general sessions see the section below. Respondents liked the session schedule, the content of the different sessions and the discussions that went on during the sessions. Judging from the comments, the most popular session appeared to be the poster session followed by the lightning talks. The meeting location was also viewed favorably as well as the food that was provided. Respondents also liked the interaction with people as well as NSF officers, and learning about what is going on with NSDL.

### **General Meeting Sessions**

The majority of the 44 respondents who rated the usefulness of the general sessions, 32.5% were decidedly neutral on the opening plenary session (rating = 3), 25% rated the opening session as good (rating=5), and only 15% gave the sessions an excellent rating (an additional 15% did not provide a rating). Several respondents commented that it was disappointing that “Kay (*sic*) Howe and Lee Zia, both highly effective leaders & speakers, did not have enough time to present their views on NSDL” and expressed concern about “The inability to address projects’ concerns about future funding due to lack of NSF clarity”. Some respondents did not find the plenary speaker particularly interesting.

| 2007 | 2006  | 2005  | SURVEY CATEGORY         | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 |
|------|-------|-------|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| 4.57 | 4.18  | 4.36  | Poster reception        | 1    | 2    | 1    |
| 3.47 | 3.78* | 3.34* | Opening plenary session | 2    | 3    | 3    |
| N.A. | 4.24  | 4.13  | Closing Session         | N.A. | 1    | 2    |

**Table 2. Usefulness of general sessions**

\* Average of ‘Opening session: NSF and CI update’ and ‘Opening Keynote speaker’ responses

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The poster reception is still rated extremely favorably (4.57 out of 5) by meeting attendants, who liked the fact that the posters were left up for an extra day so they had a chance to look at them after the poster reception. Another thing attendees liked about the poster session is that it is a good place to talk to people. One of the more critical comments states the fact that a lot of the posters are very similar to posters of previous years and perhaps a different angle or theme can be introduced for the next annual meeting to shake things up. One of the suggestions for a change was to “implement a 5 minute lighting round talk where each poster could be uploaded to a slide presentation and the presenter could talk about it directly after the plenary session. We could have Hors d'oeuvres in the room to nibble during the session. That way we could find out more about all the posters and connect with the folks you are most interested in collaborating with during the conference.”

Unlike previous meetings there was no general closing session. Several respondents commented on the lack of a general wrap-up session at the end of the meeting, which made the ending seem a bit chaotic for some attendees. Several people lamented the lack of Lee’s final haiku.

### Organizational Support

Forty-four respondents ranked meeting planning and organizational support (both before and during the meeting) on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). On all categories (see Table 3 below) the ratings are in the good to excellent range (the majority rating being excellent), slightly up from 2006. As in previous years, respondents are most pleased with the meeting support staff with an average rating of 4.86.

| 2007 | 2006 | 2005 | SURVEY CATEGORY   | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 |
|------|------|------|---|------|------|------|
| 4.86 | 4.52 | 4.60 | Meeting support staff   | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| 4.69 | N.A. | N.A. | Timely email updates and reminders                            | 2    | N.A. | N.A. |
| 4.58 | 4.48 | 4.43 | Online registration   | 3    | 2    | 2    |
| 4.51 | 4.02 | 4.08 | Information on the Annual Meeting website (nsdl.comm.nsd.org) | 4    | 3    | 3    |
| 4.49 | 3.88 | 4.43 | Information about travel and lodging                          | 5    | 5    | 2    |
| 4.44 | 3.91 | 4.06 | Poster submission, review and acceptance                      | 6    | 4    | 4    |

**Table 3. Meeting planning and organizational support.**

Not surprisingly after giving meeting planning and support top ratings, respondents’ comments about the meeting were overwhelmingly positive: “The committee did an excellent job of developing a well rounded, manageable, and engaging agenda & set of presentations”, “Great meeting!”, “Registration and housing were easily arranged.” Two helpful hints were given for next year’s annual meeting. After the submission deadlines passes, the website needs to be updated to reflect this fact, rather than still leaving the submission instructions up. It would also be helpful if the conference package could contain a map of the area surrounding the conference.

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### Interaction opportunities

Similar positive ratings were found for opportunities to engage with other attendees during the annual meeting. Forty-three respondents ranked these opportunities on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (very important) (see Table 4. below). The opportunity to share and find new ideas has risen again to the number one ranked position with a score of 4.52. The NSDL Annual Meeting is very successful at facilitating interactions between projects, people from NSDL and NSF, as was echoed by a comment from one of the respondents: "As an individual working on a project not currently funded through NSDL, I was impressed how open and easy it was to interact with everyone at the meeting. Members of the CI team assisted in introductions with members of other projects, members of the visiting group were approachable and offered guidance on what directions they'd like to see the NSDL project continue, etc. This was certainly a very valuable experience!" Perhaps we do better at introducing NSDL to new people than new people to NSDL as was pointed out by one correspondent who felt that the meeting lacked structure to meet people new to NSDL. The meeting space certainly helped to facilitate contact between attendees as there was plenty of sit-down space near the session rooms and food was provided to keep people on site.

The interaction with people from NSF, although still ranked fifth in the opportunities and the only opportunity the majority ranked as 4 rather than 5, has gone up in score to a 4.11 (from 3.77 in 2006). One of the reasons might be that attendees were encouraged to invite NSF program officers to the meeting and the fact that the meeting was held within walking distance of NSF itself.

| 2007 | 2006 | 2005 | SURVEY CATEGORY                                     | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 |
|------|------|------|---|------|------|------|
| 4.52 | 4.01 | 4.29 | Share/find new ideas                                | 1    | 3    | 1    |
| 4.51 | 4.12 | 4.05 | Participate in discussions on NSDL community issues | 2    | 1    | 3    |
| 4.49 | 4.10 | 3.68 | Interact with NSDL staff                            | 3    | 2    | 4    |
| 4.24 | 3.90 | 4.16 | Find new collaborators                              | 4    | 4    | 2    |
| 4.11 | 3.77 | 3.61 | Interact with NSF staff                             | 5    | 5    | 5    |
| 3.94 | N.A. | N.A. | Interact with attendees not funded through NSDL     | 6    | N.A. | N.A. |

**Table 4. Opportunities to engage in activities during the meeting.**

### Comparison to Previous Meetings

Seven aspects of the 2007 annual meeting were compared with previous meetings: meeting length, variety of session topics, opportunities for interaction (within sessions), opportunities for interaction (outside sessions), meeting/hotel location, opening plenary session, and poster reception. The rating scale ranged from "not as good" – "about the same", "much better" and "N/A". The majority of respondents thought the length of the annual meeting and poster reception were about the same as previous meetings. The opportunity for interaction (both inside as well as outside of sessions) was considered better than in previous

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meetings. As pointed out previously, we suspect that this improvement was caused in part by the excellent location of the annual meeting. The meeting/hotel location was found to be much better than previous meetings, and the variety of session topics also received a much better rating. The only aspect that did not get a clear rating was the plenary session. The majority of the attendees did not rate the session or thought that it was about the same.

### **Survey Section 3: Keeping in Touch**

Respondents were asked to rate six communication methods on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (very important), according to their importance in helping them know what is happening in NSDL. Personal contacts with other NSDL projects earned the most enthusiastic response, with a 4.57 / 5 average, and 90% of 43 attendees giving this way of keeping in touch an importance of 4 or 5 (see Table 5). The NSDL web site homepage (nsdl.org) was also considered very important, with a 3.88 average, and the NSDL-All email list and Whiteboard Report were not far behind with 3.88 and 3.78 averages, respectively). Fewer respondents felt that NSDL committee communications were an important way to stay current with NSDL, with committee e-mail lists averaging only 3.03. NSDL committee wikis were ranked lowest with an average of only 2.2 / 5. The NSDL Expert Voices blog ranked next to last with a 2.95 average. However, more respondents said they "Don't Know" or didn't answer for the wiki and blog than for other items, suggesting they may not be familiar with either NSDL tool.

| <b>SURVEY CATEGORY</b>                   | <b>07*</b> |
|--|------------|
| Personal contacts in other NSDL projects | 4.57       |
| NSDL.org homepage                        | 3.88       |
| NSDL-All email list                      | 3.78       |
| NSDL Whiteboard Report                   | 3.76       |
| NSDL committee e-mail lists              | 3.03       |
| NSDL Expert Voices blog                  | 2.95       |
| NSDL committee wikis                     | 2.20       |
| Total Respondents                        | 42         |
| (skipped this question)                  | 5          |

**Table 5. Preference of communication methods for NSDL projects**

\* Question not asked in 2005 or 2006

Three comments supported findings about the relative unimportance of committee communications in comparison to most other tools, with one person noting that these wikis and email lists would be more useful if the committees were more active and another calling the wikis difficult to use. In discussing the rapid expansion of Expert Voices blogs, a third respondent raised the issue of potential concern arising from a lack of an overall editorial process and the potential need to balance NSDL community contributions with other posts and resources mentioned in them. Because the latter might lack the quality of NSDL collections but appear to "carry the NSDL" brand, "Some disclaimer or overall introduction to Expert Voices blogs might need to address that discrepancy."

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Six attendees responded when asked what kind of new communication tools that they would like to see added to NSDL. However, one of these simply mentioned maintaining and improving existing tools, and another didn't feel that communication was a serious problem. Specific suggestions included providing tools for projects to set up collaborative web sites and developing and disseminating targeted, mini-collections for K-12 teachers. One person focused on the annual meeting and liked the idea of an associated lightning talk for each poster. One comment addressed both the Expert Voices blog and the wiki, expressing the opinion that both appear to have a strong focus and may exclude some types of discussion. Potential remedies suggested were to open a second wiki, broaden the scope with namespaces, or to let users know that the focus is already broad, depending on the intent of these tools.

### **Survey Section 4: Planning for the 2008 AM**

This section of the survey asked: How important are the following meeting planning and program elements to you and your project(s); Are there specific dates (e.g., Election Day) or meetings that we should plan around?; Please add any comments about suggested changes to the planning process or program for the 2008 NSDL Annual Meeting.

In rating the importance of meeting planning elements, website meeting information (4.74) and website functionality, including proposal and poster submission (4.64) and upload of presentations/ documents associated with posters/presentations (4.48), were among the most highly rated elements (see Table 6). Having meals (breakfast and lunch) provided during the meeting was also highly rated (4.37), perhaps because this convenience allows attendees to stay on site and save time while providing an opportunity to interact with others. Shorter session types were more highly rated than longer session types. Of the shorter session types, the poster session rated highest (4.55) followed by short sessions (30 min-1 hour) (4.03); lightning talks (3.91); project updates (3.76); and birds-of-a-feather (3.62).

Of the longer session types, 2-3 hour one-topic sessions (3.4) rated higher than 1-1.5 hour standing committee meetings (3.22) and 4-6 hour workshop sessions (2.84). The longer sessions may have been rated lower because attendees are reluctant to devote a large percentage of available meeting time to just one topic. One respondent commented that workshop sessions would be of interest if the topic were of high personal relevance. Crit Labs, which tend to be short sessions, rated lower (3.27) than other short session types. The meeting blog and meeting chat services received some of the lowest ratings (3.18 and 2.61 respectively), perhaps because they were not publicized well enough or perhaps because there were too many other competing channels of communication. One respondent thought that the blog would be useful if it was more extensive.

Only two suggestions regarding changes to the planning process or program were provided. It was suggested that all sessions start/stop at the same time to facilitate switching to other sessions. More pre-meeting interaction was also suggested, perhaps using the NSDL Expert Voices blog.

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| <b>SURVEY CATEGORY</b>   | <b>07*</b> |
|--|------------|
| Website with meeting info  | 4.74       |
| Website for proposal and poster submission   | 4.67       |
| Poster session   | 4.58       |
| Website to upload presentations or documents associated with your poster or presentation | 4.58       |
| Meals provided (breakfast and lunch)   | 4.37       |
| Lightning Talks  | 4.26       |
| Short sessions (30 min - 1 hour) covering part of a topic or activity                    | 4.12       |
| Birds-of-a-Feather   | 4.02       |
| Crit Labs  | 3.95       |
| Project Updates  | 3.81       |
| Standing Committee meetings  | 3.56       |
| Long sessions (2-3 hours) with in-depth focus on one topic                               | 3.52       |
| Workshop-type sessions (4-6 hours) that are focused and applied                          | 3.41       |
| Meeting blog   | 3.37       |
| Meeting chat   | 3.00       |
| Total respondents  | 43         |
| (skipped this question)  | 4          |

**Table 6. Elements to include in the 2008 NSDL Annual Meeting**

\* Question not asked in 2005 or 2006

Nineteen responses were provided regarding specific dates to plan the 2008 AM around. Dates to avoid included Election Day, holidays such as Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, and Jewish High Holidays. Several meetings were listed as possible conflicts including National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) regional meetings, Educause, and Digital Library Federation. Other times to avoid were during the beginning of the Fall semester (late August or early September) and in December. Several responses indicated a preference for a late October or November meeting.



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### **Recommendations**

Based on the survey results, we recommend the following when planning and during the 2008 NSDL Annual Meeting. If you have suggestions or further recommendations, please contact Sarah Holsted, 2008 NSDL Annual Meeting Planning Committee Chair ([sholsted@gmail.com](mailto:sholsted@gmail.com)).

#### **Pre-Meeting Planning, Post-Meeting Follow-up**

1. Regarding meeting space, make sure the meeting hotel has space to facilitate impromptu conversation.
2. Continue to include plenty of breaks in the meeting program. 30-minute breaks were liked.
3. Update the meeting website to reflect the most current deadlines or other updates.
4. Provide map of the area surrounding the conference in the conference package.
5. Continue to provide timely updates and reminders via familiar channels (NSDL-All email list; Whiteboard Report), but consider incorporating other sources, such as the Expert Voices blog to facilitate conversations before the meeting.
6. Return to the 2006 protocol for soliciting end-of-meeting survey responses: an email with an embedded link to the survey sent once a week for three weeks following the meeting.

#### **During the Meeting**

1. Find ways to more tightly integrate the short, but informative, Lightning Talks with the poster reception, which allows for in-depth conversations.
2. Include a plenary session for NSF and Core Integration to provide updates about NSDL. This may need to be separate from an opening keynote presentation.
3. If there is going to be a keynote presentation, select a speaker who knows the NSDL audience and can address topics that resonate with the NSDL community.
4. Consider bringing back the closing plenary session to provide a sense of closure.
5. Make sure that shorter sessions end together and provide a way to quickly transition to other short sessions.
6. Continue efforts to introduce NSDL to new people. However, find a way to introduce new people to other new or returning NSDL projects.