

AATF 2001 MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

The 2001 membership questionnaire dealt with AATF services. We wanted to find out if our members knew about and availed themselves of the many services we offer. Are they useful? Do we need to publicize them more? How can we improve them?

Invoices were mailed to 9026 members, 4670 of whom answered the survey, for an excellent return rate of 52%. The respondents were fairly evenly divided between the categories of length of membership: 19% have been members for more than 25 years; 21% for 16-25 years; 15% for 11-15 years; 17% for 5-10 years; and 20% for less than 5 years. More than half taught at the secondary level (53.7%), 23% at the post-secondary level, and 8.4% at the K-8 level. Nearly 7% of respondents were retired. We did not correlate the responses to length of membership or teaching level.

Publications

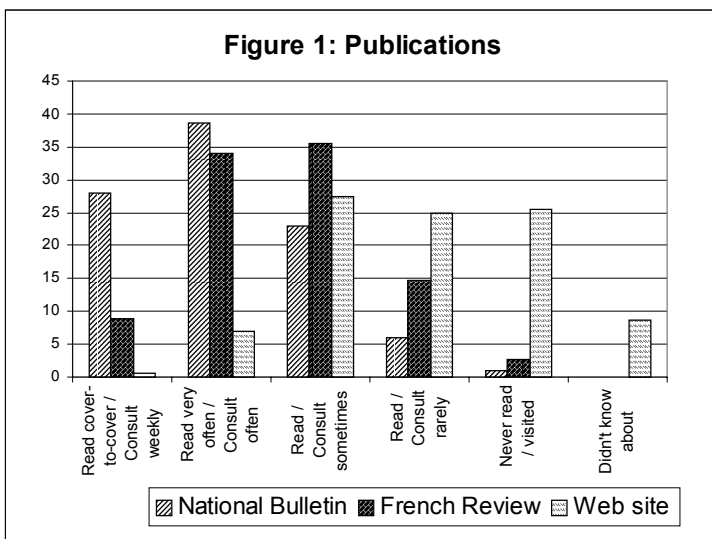
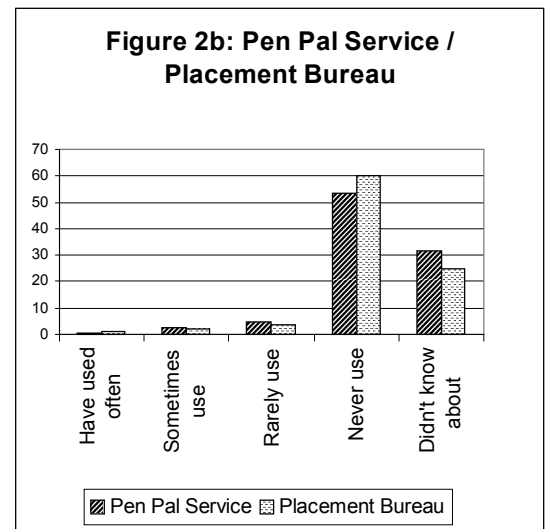
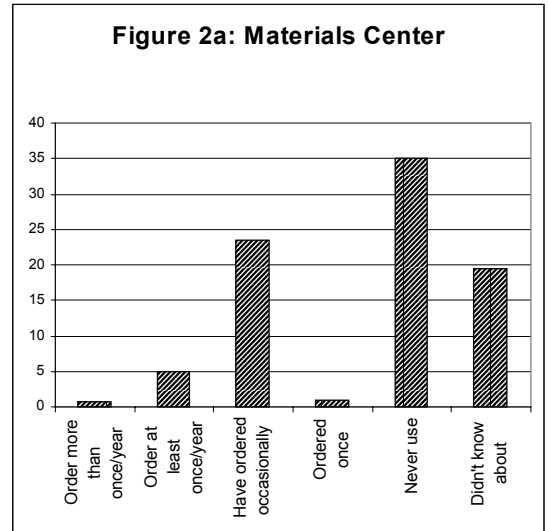
Members' responses indicated that our publications are a very important source of information about our activities and services. Figure 1 shows the frequency with which members consult the various sources of information. In an ongoing effort to improve communication with our members, we will look at the specific features of each publication in a future questionnaire.

Obviously, the *National Bulletin* fulfills its role of providing classroom-ready or date-sensitive materials and news. The scholarly nature of the *French Review* makes it less immediately applicable to the classroom but nonetheless fulfills an important role in examining current issues in the profession. The reviews and advertisements provide useful information for members who are searching for teaching or research materials or specific services

or items offered by our advertisers. We would particularly like to see members consult the AATF Web site at [<http://www.frenchteachers.org>] more regularly. If you have a question, it is very likely that the answer can be found on our Web site. The new hosting company where our Web site is located provides us with many useful statistics about the pages which are consulted most frequently.

Services

The AATF Materials Center is an important service which provides promotional information and some teaching materials to members, yet only a very small percentage take advantage of it regularly (See Figure 2a). We encourage all AATF members to promote the study of French at every opportunity. This includes during parent-teacher conferences, at open-houses, during orientation sessions, to administrators and school board members, and, certainly, to potential members. Our Commissions and a number of committees have produced six promotional flyers highlighting different reasons why the study of French is valuable. These flyers are distributed at about half the cost of producing and mailing them and are advertised in every issue of the *National Bulletin*. During fiscal year 2001, over 125,000 copies of our promotional flyers were distributed via the Materials Center. Likewise, the Pen Pal Bureau and Placement Service are small but important services open to members and used frequently by a small percentage of them (See Figure 2b). The Placement Bureau publishes a monthly job list of university-level positions in French, but any member can take advantage of the dossier service when they need a secure place to maintain a placement file. We encourage schools who contact us about K-12 French teaching positions to post announcements on our Web site *Babillard*. If your

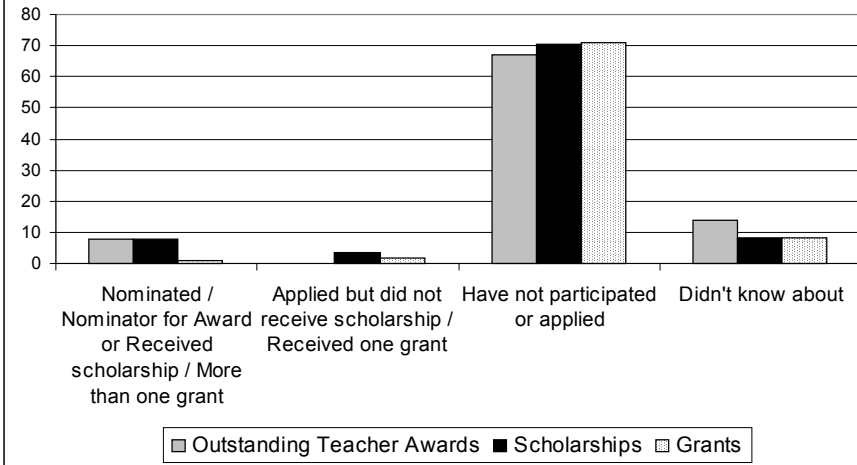


school has openings, please suggest that they post the positions on the *Babillard* at [<http://www.frenchteachers.org>].

Awards and Scholarships

The AATF offers numerous awards and scholarships. One comment that is made from time to time when members are asked what the AATF can do for them is that we should offer more scholarships. However, many times, the number of qualified applicants barely surpasses the number of scholarships. We would encourage all interested members at all teaching levels to apply for summer scholarships. These scholarships offer enriching and rewarding summer immersion experiences in French-speaking countries and are the fruit of much effort on the part of AATF staff and Executive Council members to obtain. We currently have scholarships to France, Quebec, and Belgium. In addition, the AATF offers over \$10,000 per year in Small Grants (\$500 maximum award), and we would like to see many more people apply

Figure 3: Awards & Scholarships



for these grants. Lastly, the AATF sponsors the Dorothy S. Ludwig Outstanding Teacher Awards at four levels. We strongly encourage any chapter or member to nominate deserving colleagues for these annual awards. There are opportunities each year to honor or reward 44 deserving members with scholarships, grants, or awards. All are announced in multiple issues of the *National Bulletin*, and complete information is always available on our Web site at [http://www.frenchteachers.org]. Figure 3 shows the responses of members asked about these opportunities. Since it did not exist at the time the questionnaire was distributed, the Walter Jensen Scholarship for Study Abroad was not included in the survey. This scholarship is an award of \$1500 to a deserving university-level student of an AATF member, enrolled in a program of study to become a French teacher, to help him or her participate in a semester- or year-long study abroad program. The second recipient is spending the the 2002-2003 academic year in Montpellier.

Activities

AATF activities remain an important focus of membership for many individuals. Figures 3a-e show participation in the National French Contest, National French Week, the *Société honoraire de français*, the annual convention, and chapter activities. All these activities provide important venues for recognizing student achievement or for professional development. The fact that over one-quarter of AATF members have never enrolled their students in the National French Contest shows that we have to do more to promote this opportunity for students of French. In 2002, over 94,000 students K-12 participated in the Contest. We would like to see that number go over 100,000 in 2003 or 2004. The Test

Development Committees and the Director and his staff are always interested in your ideas for improving the Contest which is developed and administered by a dedicated cadre of volunteers. In addition, the *Société honoraire de français* provides an important means of recognizing student excellence within the secondary school community. Figure 4c shows that nearly 30% of AATF members do not have a chapter and more than one-quarter did not know about the *Société*. A small initial fee is required to obtain a charter, and then students can be initiated into a school's chapter each year for a nominal charge. The *Société honoraire de français* sponsors an annual creative writing contest as well as small travel awards, and students can get special seals for their diplomas indicating their excellence in French as well as graduation tassels.

Figure 4d shows participation in our annual convention. We were dismayed to discover that 44% of our members have never attended an annual convention. We try to vary the location of the convention, periodically organizing it in a French-speaking country, in order to permit all our members to attend a convention at one time or another or to combine the convention with a visit to a French-speaking area that might be new to them. The advantage of attending an AATF annual convention as opposed to the convention of other associations is that it is the one venue where French is the only focus of the program and where the French language and the French-speaking world is celebrated. We try to offer a wide variety of sessions which target all teaching levels,

Figure 4a: National French Contest

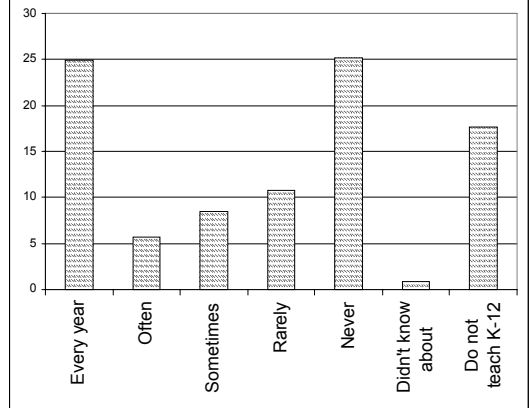


Figure 4b: National French Week

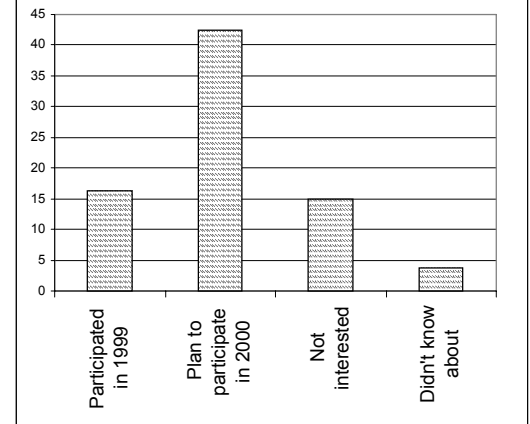
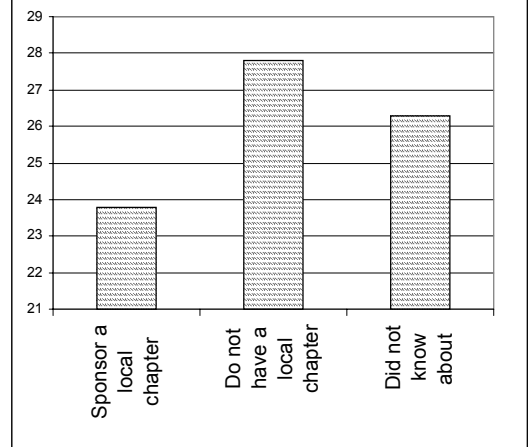
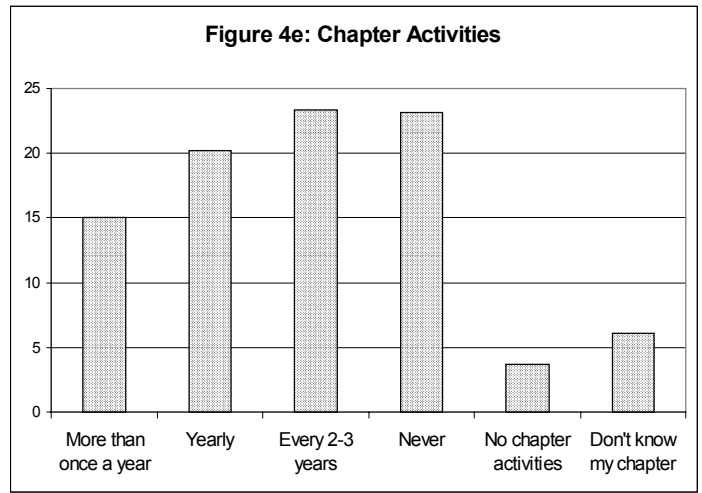
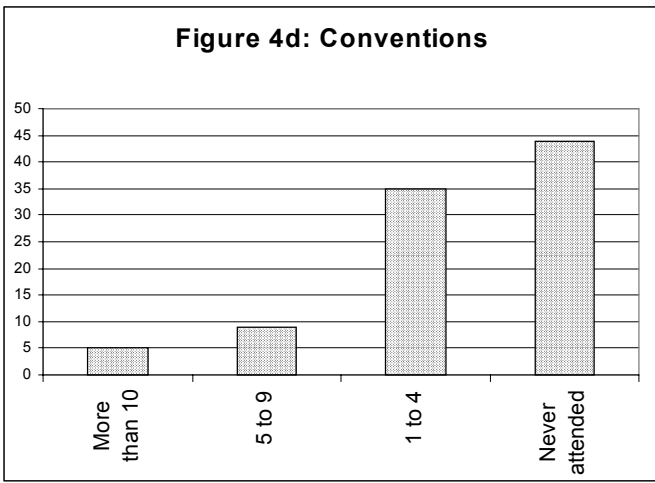


Figure 4c: French Honor Society



which examine literature, culture, linguistics, promotion, and pedagogy, and which address issues of current concern to the profession.

Another important facet of AATF membership is the ability to link with other French teachers at the local level. The AATF has 76 local chapters, ranging in size from under 20 members to over 500. Obviously, a chapter's ability to organize local meetings and professional development activities is somewhat dependent on



its size. However, the primary reason for success in our most active chapters of any size is the presence of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers. Survey responses indicate that 59% of AATF members participate in chapter activities, at least occasionally. Each chapter receives 15% of the national dues payment for every member of the chapter. We encourage them to spend this money on meaningful activities, presentations, performances, or student-focused activities such as festivals or competitions. However, 33% of members have never participated or don't know about local chapter activities. This is the heart of the association. If your local chapter is active, support their efforts by participating in the activities they organize. If your local chapter is not active, get involved and collaborate with interested colleagues to promote the study of French in your area.

The 2003 membership questionnaire which you should have received this fall

concerns National French Week. As we finish our fourth National French Week celebration, we would like to get some feedback on members experiences with it. Please take the time to respond to this survey when you return your dues renewal. When the current questionnaire was distributed, we had not yet celebrated our second National French Week. Nonetheless, it is exciting to see that intended participation in National French Week rose from only 16% in 1999 to over 42% in 2000. We hope that that number has continued to increase in 2001 and 2002.

Figure 5 highlights the diverse reasons respondents gave for belonging to the AATF. Respondents could indicate more than one choice. These statistics confirmed what we know anecdotally to be true about AATF members' interest in the association. Please do not hesitate to contact one of the national officers with comments, questions, or suggestions concerning our activities. There are many

more things we would like to do to serve our membership and to promote the study of French nationwide at all levels. However, lack of funding and personnel prevent us from adding other services or activities at the present time. It is crucial for all AATF members to continue to recruit their colleagues and especially the future teachers with whom they come in contact to become AATF members. We estimate that less than half of French teachers belong to their professional association. That translates into a tremendous pool of talent to contribute to our professional endeavors. Furthermore, a thousand new members means we could add a number of new services, scholarships, Web-based materials or courses, and other activities.

The 2002 membership questionnaire asked about promoting French as a career option. Results are now being tabulated by Susan Colville-Hall, Chair of the AATF Commission on Professional Teaching Standards and will be announced in an upcoming issue of the *National Bulletin*.

