

AATF 1999 MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

INTERNET ACCESS

When the AATF dues renewal invoice changed in 1999 from a small form to a full-page form, we were able to place a questionnaire on the back to gather data which will be useful to the Association as we seek external funding, as we work with our partners in France and Quebec, and as we seek to serve our members more effectively. The first questionnaire was on Internet access. We are just beginning to tabulate the results from the 2000 questionnaire on enrollment trends which you will read about in a future issue of the *National Bulletin*. The 2001 questionnaire pertains to AATF services, and we hope members will take time to answer it as they return their invoice.

The AATF has long been in the forefront of developments in teaching with Internet, and our Web site is regarded world wide as an excellent source of information and advice for teachers of French. Nearly all funding agencies now want an Internet component to a proposal to ensure maximum dissemination of the materials or results. It is important for us to know how our members use the Internet.

While the results of the survey are not scientifically precise, the overwhelming number of questionnaires which were returned give us a very good snapshot of the situation. Out of renewal invoices mailed to 9214 individuals in 1999, 5652 completed questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 57%. In terms of surveys, this response rate is astounding.

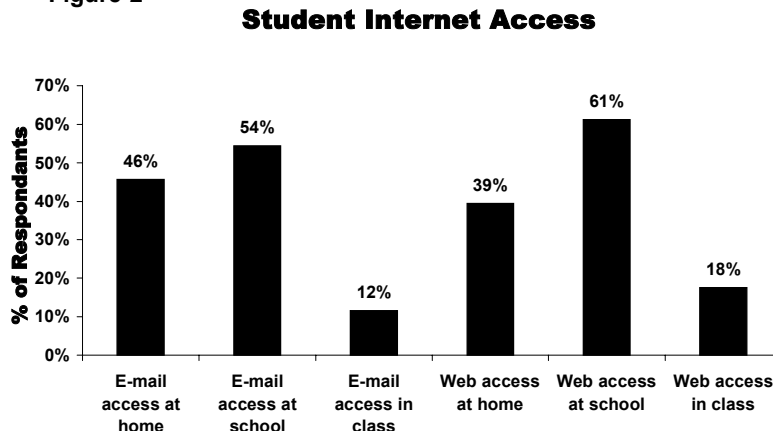
AATF members who responded to the questionnaire are *branchés*. 73% of respondents use e-mail on a regular basis, while 56% use the Web regularly. However, when we look more closely at their responses to ascertain where and how they get their Internet access, the results are more varied. The first series of questions asked about teacher access to Internet technology—e-mail and the World Wide Web. Figure 1 shows that nearly 2/3 of

respondants had e-mail access both at home and at school as well as Web access at school, while slightly fewer, 57%, had Web access at home. The percentages dropped when the question applied to e-mail access (24%) and Web access (25%) in the classroom. This low response rate suggests that if teachers generally do not have access to the Internet in the classroom, neither do students.

The second series of questions, shown in Figure 2, refers to student access to the same Internet technology. The highest percentage, 61%, indicated that students had Web access at school, while 54% reported students having E-mail access at school. Percentages dropped significantly when the questions pertained to home access—46% e-mail and 39% Web and even more precipitously as regards classroom access—12% e-mail and 18% Web. This final statistic reinforces the previously-mentioned low teacher-access to the Internet in the classroom. Of course, the home-access responses are less reliable because teachers are answering overall for their students who live in many different situations, and, furthermore, the teacher has little direct knowledge of what students are able to do outside of school.

Nationally, the U.S. Department of Education reports that nearly all American schools have Internet access. This figure does not tell the whole story, since it does

Figure 2



rate the ease with which teachers and students could access the Internet in general as well as specific classroom and in-school access (Figure 3). The more obstacles which teachers, in particular, encounter as they try to use new technologies the more it affects their willingness to proceed and to use those technologies with their students. 69% of respondents said that student access to the Internet was "very easy" (42%) or "somewhat easy" (27%), while 76% rated their own access positively, saying it was "very easy" (57%) or "somewhat easy" (19%). Still an important minority in both cases had difficulty getting access to the Internet—15% of students and 13% of faculty saying "somewhat" or "very difficult."

For teachers to be able to incorporate the Internet into their teaching, it is important to have access to the technology, preferably in the classroom or elsewhere in the school. The ease of access in the classroom is fairly evenly divided among "very easy" (14%), "somewhat easy" (16%), "neither easy nor difficult" (17%), and "somewhat difficult" (17%), but a significant number of respondents (34%) found classroom Internet access "very difficult." The responses were considerably more favorable when out-of-class in-school access was rated (library, computer lab, etc.) with 72% rating access "very easy" (49%) or "somewhat easy" (23%) and only 4% rating it "very difficult."

Equally important to access is support for learning about and using Internet technology. Two-thirds of responding teachers reported that their schools promoted Internet use by students and faculty, although a surprising 18% said they did not do so. Nonetheless, "promoting" access is easy, but if it does not extend into more material support, teachers will still have difficulty incorporating the technology into their teaching. Therefore, we asked for more

Figure 1

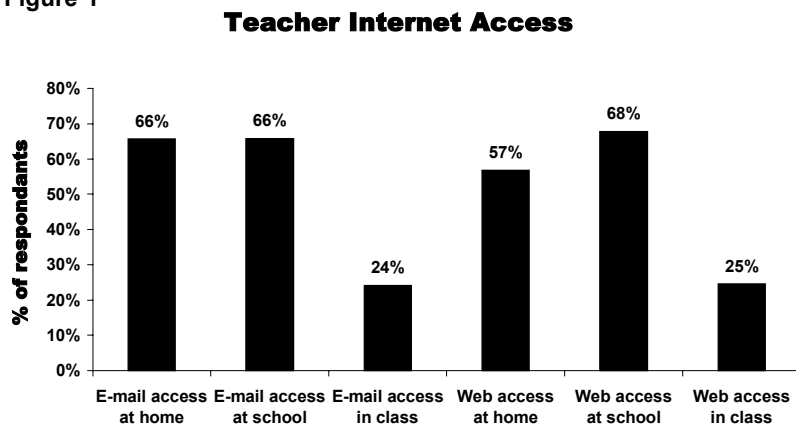
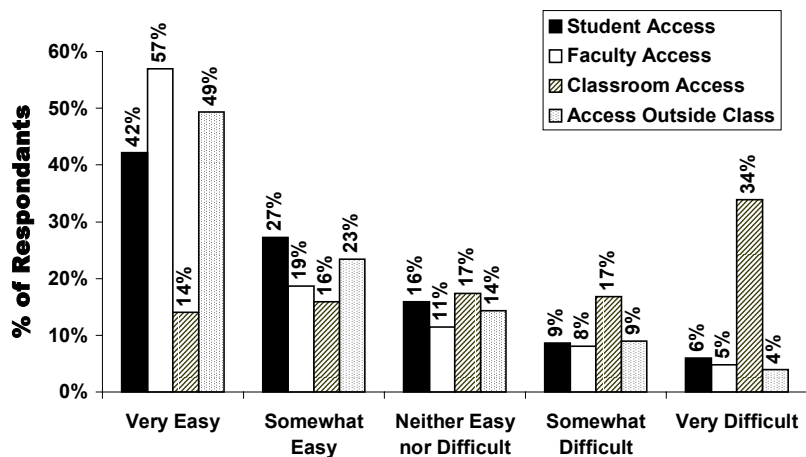


Figure 3

Ease of Internet Access



specific details about how schools supported Internet use. 69% of schools offered on-site training for teachers. This percentage should be of concern to language teachers, since in-school training is most often generic to all disciplines. However, the use of the Internet in foreign language classrooms requires more specialized knowledge to judge the quality of information, to take full advantage of the communicative capabilities of the technology, and to deal efficiently with the language-related difficulties of using Internet resources or the Internet in class. 35% of schools provided travel funds for teachers to obtain training elsewhere, while 32% provided funds for materials. Other types of support mentioned included providing teachers with laptop computers (usually from technology grants obtained by the school), district-level workshops, on-line training, grants, and “philosophical support.”

Another area of concern is that only 69% of teachers responding indicated that their institution has an Internet Use Policy for students. The presence of a policy protects teachers who use the Internet in the classroom and places responsibility for appropriate use on students as well as the teacher. While instructors dealing with adult students do not have to worry about access to inappropriate materials, an Internet Use Policy signed by teacher, student, and parents is a must for K-12 teachers. 41% of respondents also indicated that their school has a faculty Internet Use Policy.

Finally, we wanted to learn how AATF members used the Internet. 70% reported using the Internet for personal research, 61% use it for communication purposes, 53% surf the Web to find documents for the classroom, and 41% use it for student projects. Other uses cited were for travel purposes, to consult news and current events information, for Web publishing or Web design, for shopping, and for distance

learning or Web courses. Another crucial question was to ask those who did not use the Internet why they did not. Among the responses given were lack of time and experience using the technology, no access, no need, dislike, as well as more professionally troubling reasons such as the “school doesn’t believe in computers,” “the faculty is discouraged from using the Internet,” or lab scheduling problems.

The respondents hailed from all fifty states, with 1% from U.S. territories and other countries. On the whole, they were very experienced teachers with 1/3 having taught for 20-30 years (see Figure 4). In general, they came from larger schools with nearly half reporting school enrollments of 1000-4000 students.

The results show that AATF members are quite proficient in using the Internet, but the facilities and support available for in-class use are still lacking. If we want to transform language teaching in the 21st century to take full advantage of the communicative capabilities of the Internet and its potential to revolutionize language teaching and learning—“to open the world” with French—

Respondants: Years Teaching

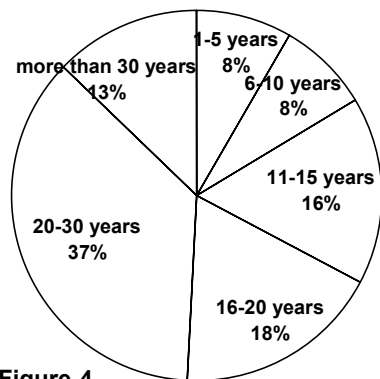


Figure 4

we need to lobby for more classroom access for languages (see the AATF Position Statement on Internet Use on the AATF Web site at [http://aatf.utsa.edu]). These figures provide important supporting data as we strive to develop programs that meet the needs of our members with regard to Internet training and as we continue to develop our Web site to provide useful information to teachers of French.

Jayne Abrate
 Executive Director
 E-mail: [abrate@siu.edu]