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## **AMERICAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY 2016 MEMBERSHIP SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESPONSES**

**June 2016**

In February 2016, the American Folklore Society carried out its fourth survey of its membership (following upon previous surveys in 2002, 2006, and 2011).

526 members responded to the survey, continuing the pattern of increased participation in each successive AFS member survey (2002: 257 participants; 2006: 315; 2011: 410).

This report summarizes the patterns of members' responses to most 2016 survey questions. Its final page contains basic demographic information provided by respondents, compared to similar information provided in our three previous surveys.

A report containing more detailed 2016 data is available on the AFS web site via a link from <http://www.afsnet.org/?page=MemberSurveyReports>.

That more detailed report does not include individual member responses to open-ended questions, because those responses sometimes identify the respondent, making it impossible for us to include those responses without violating our original pledge to members that their responses would remain anonymous.

We appreciate members' belief in our mission and their support of our work.

### **Demographics**

Our membership in 2016 continues to grow more significantly female (63%): the female percentages from previous surveys were 56% (2002), 57% (2006), and 62% (2011). 1% of members identified as Other.

The 2016 percentage of members who identify as White was 78%, down from 89% in our first survey in 2002. Between the time of our last survey in 2011 and the present, the percentage of African American members stayed essentially steady, increasing from 2.5% to 2.6%; the percentage of Asian members rose from 3% to

6%, the percentage of Latino/a or Chicano/a members rose from 3.5% to 4%, and the percentage of Native American members rose from .5% to .7%.

As in our previous three surveys, slightly more than half of those responding (53%) indicated that their employment was primarily academic, and slightly fewer than half (47%) indicated that their employment was primarily outside the academy. The percentage of respondents with academic employment has decreased slightly since our first survey in 2002, when it stood at 56%, and the percentage of respondents with public-sector employment has increased slightly (from 44% to 47%) during the same period.

### **Education and Training**

69% of respondents provided information about their previous education. The institution that awarded the most degrees to respondents was Indiana University, followed by University of California-Berkeley, Western Kentucky University, Utah State University, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and The Ohio State University. The most common departments where these degrees are received are folklore, English, anthropology, and American studies.

20% responded to a question about other certifications and training. The three most common certifications or trainings are equally EFL/ESL/TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language), foreign language instruction, and museum training.

### **Students**

Out of 403 respondents, 15 % are students, and 85% are non-students. The majority of students are working towards their PhD followed by an MA. 85 respondents (16% of all respondents) provided information about the positions they are seeking after their final degree. Most are seeking a tenure-track position followed by public sector work, teaching, research, museums, and archives.

### **Employment**

Out of 362 respondents, 79% are currently employed. Two-thirds of respondents who are not employed are retired and one-third are unemployed. For respondents who are employed, 81% have work related, at least in part, to folklore. For respondents who have folklore-related employment, 67% are employed full-time. The most common academic departments for employment are English, anthropology, folklore, and American studies. The most common academic ranks are associate professor, assistant professor, lecturer, visiting assistant professor, and adjunct.

The top five most common types of non-folklore-related work are teaching, contract work, non-profit work, consulting, and freelance work. The overall average salary for 2015 was \$50,711. The average annual salary for folklore-related work during 2011-2015 was \$46,000.

### **Professional Identification**

Out of 398 respondents, 58% said they identify themselves as a folklorist, while 36% said they sometimes identify themselves as a folklorist, and 6% said they do not identify themselves as a folklorist. Out of 141 respondents, the most common other professional identifications were anthropologists, literary scholar, writer, administrator, and curator.

### **Other Society Memberships**

48% of all respondents provided information about other scholarly or professional societies, associations, or other kinds of groups that are important for their professions. The five most common scholarly societies that AFS members belong to aside from AFS are the American Anthropological Association, Western States Folklore Society, Society for Ethnomusicology, and the International Society for Folk Narrative Research. These are the same top five publications, other annual meetings, and other professional board and committee memberships that respondents participate in.

The AFS is listed as the most important society that respondents belong to, followed by the American Anthropological Association, the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore, the International Society for Folk Narrative Research, the Society for Ethnomusicology, the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research, and the Modern Language Association. Respondents' most important reasons for belonging to the Society center around the belief that personal and professional participation in the AFS community are important elements of being a folklorist.

### **Annual Meeting**

More than three-quarters of respondents have attended an AFS annual meeting within the last five years, and more than 85% of all respondents answered questions about the annual meeting.

Most respondents attend the meeting to participate in the program, but almost a third of respondents have simply attended the meeting within the last five years without being on the program.

As we did in 2011, we asked 2016 respondents to rate how important it is for AFS to make adjustments to the scale of the annual meeting in several specific ways. All in all, the 2016 results were consistent with the 2011 results: the largest share of respondents in 2011 wanted the meeting to stay the same size, while in 2016, the largest share of respondents desired no change in any aspect of meeting scale we asked about: the number of presenters as a whole, the number of presentations per session, the number of concurrent sessions, the number of time slots per day, the number of conference days, or the number of meeting attendees.

Of those who recommended change, some would prefer increases in the number of conference days and the number of attendees, and some would prefer to reduce the number of concurrent sessions. Among those who recommended change, there was no clear consensus about whether to increase or decrease the number of presenters in the meeting as a whole, the number of presentations per session, or the number of time slots per day.

### **Communications**

Online use of the *Journal of American Folklore* has become about equal to hard-copy use: 28% of respondents indicated that they are more likely to use a paper copy of JAF than the online version; just over 29% said they are more likely to use an online version, and just over 42% said they use both about the same.

The data show that all AFS web-based communications tools are used with varying frequency, though no single feature reaches everyone. The AFS web-based resources with the largest overall followings are the “About AFS” section of the web site, the online Calendar, and the *AFS Review*. The top three resources that are used more than once a month are the Facebook pages of AFS sections, the *AFS Review*, and the About AFS section of the web site. The great majority of membership renewals and section dues payments continue to be accomplished online.

Far and away, the most important and popular channel of communication cited was the annual meeting (57%). Sections were also frequently cited as important (27%). The only other channels reported to be important by more than 10% of question respondents were the *AFS Review* and email communications from AFS.

The most valuable non-AFS information sources are Publore (the single most cited resource) followed by H-Folk, various online communities, and Facebook.

### **Priorities for Future AFS Work**

We asked: What activities are most important for the AFS to undertake in the next five years? Respondents’ highest-priority choices were: bringing younger people

into the field, advocacy outside the field concerning the importance and contributions of our field, and increasing the diversity of AFS membership.

We asked: As the AFS Executive Board considers priorities for new work over the next five years, how important do you think it is for the following groups to receive additional investments of AFS financial and human resources? Respondents' highest-priority choices were: early-career folklorists [1-5 years after school], students, and under-waged folklorists.

### **Increasing Participation**

AFS seeks to increase participation (as AFS members and as future leaders in the field and Society) by people of color, differently abled individuals, and members of LGBTQA communities. We asked for feedback about potential new activities the Society might undertake to achieve this goal, understanding that achievement in this matter will require the active participation of many institutions and people from across the field, not just AFS.

189 respondents (36% of all respondents) offered suggestions. The primary suggestion (17%) was to initiate outreach to varying educational institutions including K-12 education, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, community colleges, and other institutions that serve the individuals and groups in question.

The next most popular suggestion (13% of all respondents) was to provide financial support for students and professionals in these groups to attend the annual meeting. For a number of years now, AFS has provided such financial support through the Gerald L. Davis Travel Award program managed by our Cultural Diversity Committee. 129 respondents (25% of all respondents) recommended that AFS provide increased financial resources to this program (which the Board acted to do earlier this year), and that we improve the promotion of this program.

The next most popular suggestion was to support relevant research, including inviting the publication of research articles that are more relevant to targeted groups or to dedicate *JAF* special issues to relevant topics. Finally, respondents made two suggestions: that AFS should partner with like-minded organizations and fields on these matters, and should work to facilitate discussions of inclusion and participation issues at the annual meeting.

**2002-2006-2011-2016 AFS Member Surveys:  
Some Comparative Statistics**

	<u>2002</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2016</u>
				6
<b># of respondents</b>	257	315	410	526
<b>% of members responding</b>	25%	32%	40%	58%
<b>Age</b>				
20-29	no data	10%	12%	7%
30-39		18%	18%	18%
40-49		23%	18%	16%
50-59		26%	22%	21%
60-69		16%	22%	24%
70+		7%	8%	11%
Prefer not to answer				4%
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	56%	57%	62%	63%
Male	44%	43%	38%	33%
Other				1%
Prefer not to answer				4%
<b>Culture/Ethnicity/Race</b>				
White	89%	86.3%	82.5%	78%
African American or Black	1%	1.3%	2.5%	2.60%
Asian	1%	1.6%	3%	6%
Latino/a, Chicano/a, Hispanic	1%	3.5%	3.5%	4%
Native American	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%	0.70%
Other	7%	6.7%	8%	2.60%
Jewish				4%
Mixed				1%
Prefer not to answer				2%
<b>Place of residence</b>				
Top 10 US states	Pennsylvania	California	Indiana	California/Indiana
	California	Indiana	California	New York
	Indiana	New York	Pennsylvania	Ohio
	New York	Pennsylvania	Ohio	Pennsylvania
	Maryland	Ohio	New York	Oregon/Utah
	Ohio	Virginia	Kentucky	Virginia
	Utah	Maryland	North Carolina	Wisconsin
	Virginia	Utah	Texas	Maryland
	DC	DC	Utah	Michigan/Washington
	Florida	North Carolina	Oregon/Virginia	Kentucky/Texas

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				7
<b>Place of residence (cont.)</b>				
Canada	3%	6%	7%	3%
Outside the US and Canada	6%	8%	9%	14%
<b>Academic employment</b>	56%	54%	55%	53%
<b>Public-sector employment</b>	44%	46%	45%	47%
<b>Three most frequent departments of employment</b>				
English	28%	27%	23%	23%
Anthropology	15%	8%	12%	12%
Folklore	7%	16%	13%	11%
Area/language studies				20%
<b>Do you identify yourself as a folklorist?</b>				
Yes	38%	52%	46%	58%
No	10%	8%	6%	6%
Sometimes	49%	43%	33%	36%
<b>How long have you been an AFS member?</b>				
> 1 year	4%	7%	8%	10%
1-5 years	20%	16%	23%	27%
6-10 years	19%	15%	11%	15%
11-20 years	27%	26%	18%	15%
21+ years	30%	36%	40%	see below
21-30 years				12%
31-40 years				15%
41+ years				8%
<b>Top three reasons for belonging to AFS</b>				
Keep abreast of research and methodology	1	1	1	1
Establish and sustain professional relationships	3	2	2	2
Express professional identity and responsibility	2	3	3	3