Academy of Human Resource Development

Journal Task Force Report

Laura Bierema
University of Georgia (Chair)

Michael Leimbach
Wilson Learning

Victoria Marsick
Columbia University

David McGuire
Queen Margaret University

NOTICE: The attached report is an excerpt from the full report and recommendations that the AHRD Board voted to share with members. This report serves as an update from the Board as they work with the recommendations set forth by the committee.

Executive Summary

In April, 2010, AHRD President, Darlene Russ-Eft charged the task force to examine the AHRD journal strategy, the relationship between AHRD and the journals, and the relationship between the journals and AHRD members. The Task Force collected data from multiple stakeholders including AHRD members, journal editors and associate editors, publishers, journal advisory board members, UFHRD executives and members, and the Executive Director. This report describes the Task Force's data collection and analysis, and presents recommendations for the AHRD. Recommendations are summarized in the report followed by appendices detailing the data analysis.

Academy of Human Resource Development

Journal Task Force Recommendations

June 2011

Laura Bierema
University of Georgia (Chair)

Michael Leimbach
Wilson Learning

Victoria Marsick
Columbia University

David McGuire
Queen Margaret University

Introduction

In April, 2010, AHRD President, Darlene Russ-Eft charged the task force as follows:

AHRD Journal Taskforce Charge

April 2010

The AHRD Journal Task Force (JTF) was formed under the AHRD Presidency of Lane Morris and is being commissioned under the Presidency of Darlene Russ-Eft. The Taskforce is being asked to examine the AHRD journal strategy, the relationship between AHRD and the journals, and the relationship between the journals and AHRD members. Several questions have arisen over the past few years within each of these categories, and these are listed below. The Taskforce is being asked to contact whatever parties seem appropriate, such as the journal editors and associate editors, publishers, journal advisory board members, UFHRD executives and members, and AHRD members. The Journal Taskforce should provide a report addressing the issues and their recommendations to the AHRD Board by September 1, 2010. Furthermore, the chair of the Taskforce and the Vice President for Research, Laura Bierema, should present this

report and recommendations to the Fall meeting of the AHRD Board, scheduled for October 2, 3, 4, 2010 in Chicago, IL.

It should be noted that dates were renegotiated to allow data collection at the Conference in the Americas in February 2011 and time for the survey and journal editors data collection. The following bullets were suggested data points for the JTF work in the original charge.

AHRD Journal Strategy

- What strategic role should journals play in supporting AHRD to achieve its vision?
- How well do the AHRD journals currently achieve their strategic role?
- How well do the current publisher contracts support or hinder the journals in supporting the AHRD vision?
- What actions does the Taskforce recommend AHRD or the journals take to better support AHRD in achieving its vision?

Relationship between AHRD and the Journals

- What should be the nature of the relationship between AHRD and the journals?
- How does the current relationship compare against the ideal state?
- What actions does the Taskforce recommend AHRD or the journals take to close the gap between the current and ideal states of relationship between AHRD and the journals

AHRD Journals and Membership

- Does AHRD offer the right number of journals to members? Should it offer more journals or fewer journals?
- Which journals, if any, should AHRD members receive as part of their base membership package?
- What format (online access or paper-based) should AHRD members receive the journals?
- What choices, if any, should AHRD members have in determining the journals they receive and the format?
- What changes, if any, does the Taskforce recommend AHRD make to its membership package and dues relative to journals?

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected via several strategies:

- Journal editors and/or associate editors were interviewed by committee members
    - *HRDQ—Human Resource Development Quarterly*
        - Baiyin Yang, Editor
        - Andrea Ellinger, Associate Editor
    - *HRDI—Human Resource Development International*
        - Rob Poel, Editor
        - Sally Sambrook, Associate Editor
        - Alexander Ardichvili (Sasha)

- *HRDR—Human Resource Development Review*
  - Thomas Reio, Editor
  - Jamie Callahan, Associate Editor
- *ADHR—Advances in Developing Human Resources*
  - Suzanne Lynham, Editor
- *JEIT—Journal of European Industrial Training*
  - Thomas Garavan, Editor
- *New Horizons in Adult Education*
  - Tonette Rocco, Editor

- Focus groups were held during the 2011 AHRD Conference in the Americas. A total of 19 members participated in four separate focus groups. Each focus group lasted for between 60 and 90 minutes (Appendix B, p. 15).
- A survey was administered to AHRD and UFHRD membership (Appendix C, p. 29). There were a total of 188 responses, 97 percent were AHRD members (N = 183), 17 UFHRD members and 13 members of the AHRD-Asian Chapter.
- The UFHRD group was interviewed.
- The Management Board of HRDI was consulted.

Qualitative data were analyzed using the constant comparative method. Individual task force members assumed the initial task of data analysis and then the analysis was shared with and refined by other task force members.

AHRD Journal Taskforce Survey 2011

Introduction

The AHRD Journal Taskforce was formed under the AHRD Presidency of Lane Morris in April 2010 to examine the AHRD journal strategy, the relationship between AHRD and the journals, and the relationship between the journals and AHRD members.

The AHRD Journal Taskforce is comprised of Laura Bierema (Leader of Taskforce), David McGuire, Victoria Marsick and Michael Leimbach.

As part of its work, the AHRD journal taskforce developed an online survey to ascertain members views on issues of interest. The survey was circulated to the AHRD board and was approved prior to publication. Data collection began on the 25th March 2011 for a 6 week period.

A copy of the survey is included in Appendix 3. In terms of this report, the word "members" is used to describe those who responded to the survey. The survey was open to members of AHRD and UFHRD.

Key Findings

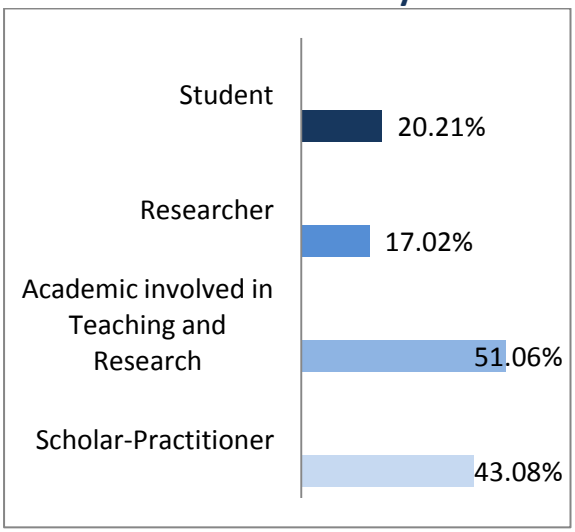
In the AHRD Journal Taskforce Survey, we collected information which can be categorised within the four subsections of Member Identity, AHRD benefits, AHRD Perceptions and Journal issues.

Member Identity

- A total of 188 members responded to the survey. The survey was open to AHRD and UFHRD members to respond to. 183 individuals were members of AHRD. 17 individuals were members of UFHRD and 13 individuals were members of the AHRD (Asian Chapter).

- Over half of the members who responded considered their primary identity to be academics involved in teaching and research. 43% of members considered themselves to be scholar-practitioners. Students and researchers were also well represented in the sample.

Member Identity



AHRD Benefits

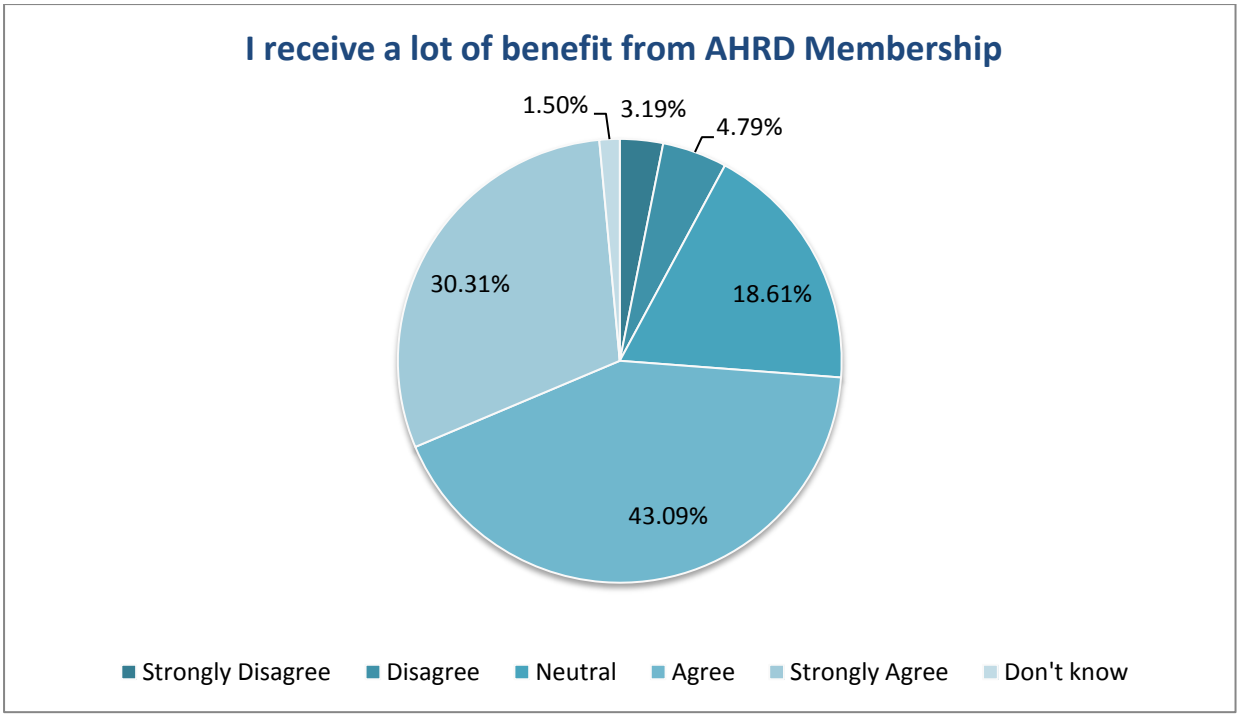
- 73% of members agreed or strongly agreed that they received a lot of benefit from AHRD membership.

- To ascertain the importance of receipt of hard-copy journals to AHRD membership, members were asked whether they would leave AHRD if receipt of hard-copy journals was withdrawn. The results show a strong spread across the categories – however, 47% stated that they would remain with AHRD.

If hardcopy journals were withdrawn, I would leave AHRD	
Strongly Disagree	20%
Disagree	27%
Neutral	20%
Agree	23%
Strongly Agree	10%

- 66% of members (124 out of 188) either agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to be able to customise their membership of AHRD.

- 63% of members placed a high or very high emphasis on receipt of hard copy journals



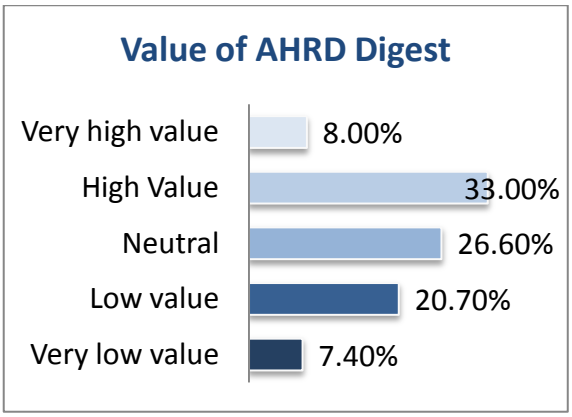
- 57% of members believe that AHRD did not have too many journals. Interestingly, a further 22% of members answered "neutral" to this question.

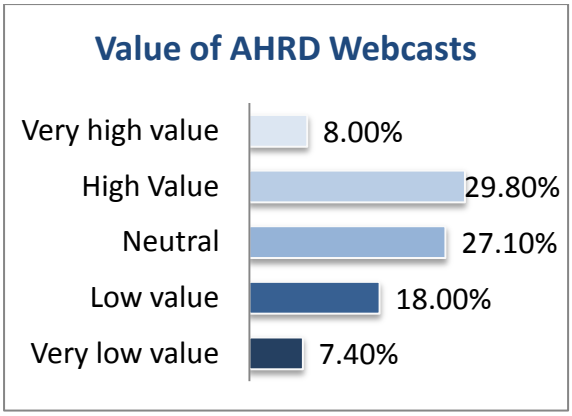
- 44% of members said that they would be interested in replacing hard copy access with electronic access.

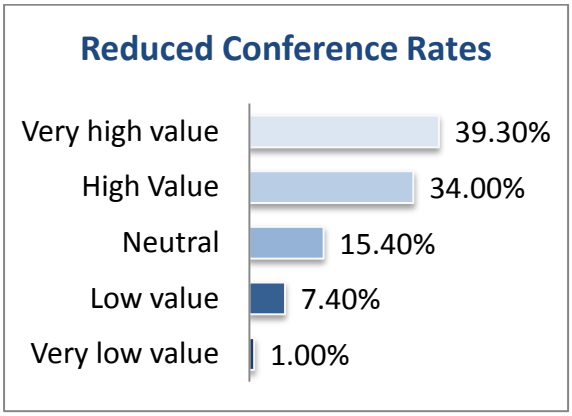
I am <u>not</u> interested in electronic access as my institution already has electronic access to journals	
Strongly Disagree	24%
Disagree	26%
Neutral	13%
Agree	20%
Strongly Agree	13%
I would be interesting in replacing hard copy journals with electronic access to journals	
Strongly Disagree	19%
Disagree	21%
Neutral	15%
Agree	26%
Strongly Agree	18%

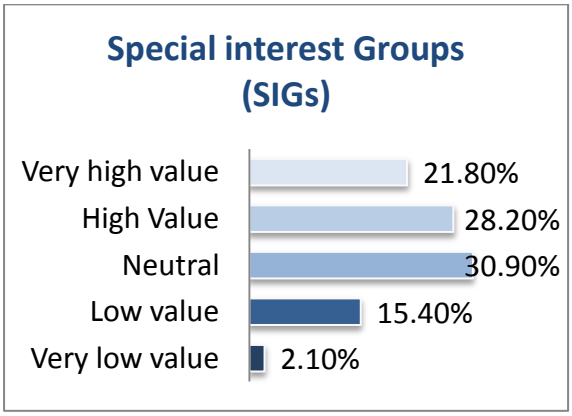
- Members rated receipt of hard copies of the four HRD journals as part of their membership as either of high or very high value in 68% of cases. The importance of hard copy journals is only surpassed by reduced conference rates.

- The following four graphs show the value attributed by members to the AHRD digest, Webcasts reduced conference rates and participation in special interest groups (SIGs).







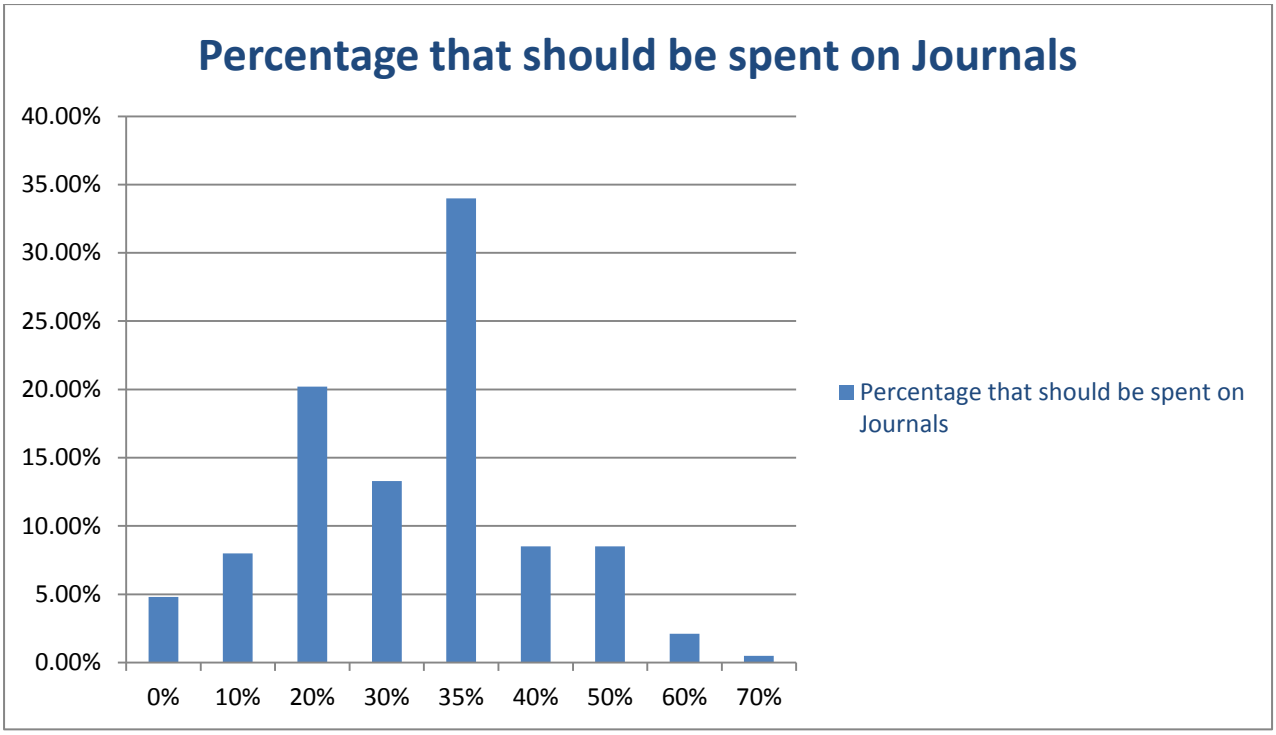


- In terms of expenditure on journals, 34% of members agreed that the current level of expenditure was appropriate. However, approximately 46% of members advocated a reduction in the level of expenditure on journals.

- In terms of the level of student fees going to finance journals, almost a third of respondents agreed that the level of expenditure on journals was appropriate. 12.5% of responses advocated a higher level of expenditure on journals, while the remainder of respondents advocated a reduction in expenditure of student fees on journals.

- When asked whether members would be likely to renew their membership if hard-copy journals were replaced with electronic copies, 64.4% of members indicated that they would be likely or very likely to renew their membership. 23% of members indicated that they were unlikely or very unlikely to renew their membership, while the remaining 15% indicated a neutral response.

- When asked whether members would be likely to renew their membership if membership dues were reduced and members could opt to pay extra for hard copies of journals, 65.4% of members indicated that they would be likely or very likely to renew their membership. Almost 15% of members indicated that they would be unlikely or very unlikely to renew their membership under these conditions.



Perceptions of AHRD

- Two-thirds of members either agreed or strongly agreed that they could be considered life-long members of AHRD indicating a high level of commitment to the AHRD. When asked whether members considered AHRD their professional home, almost 70% of members were in agreement with the statement.

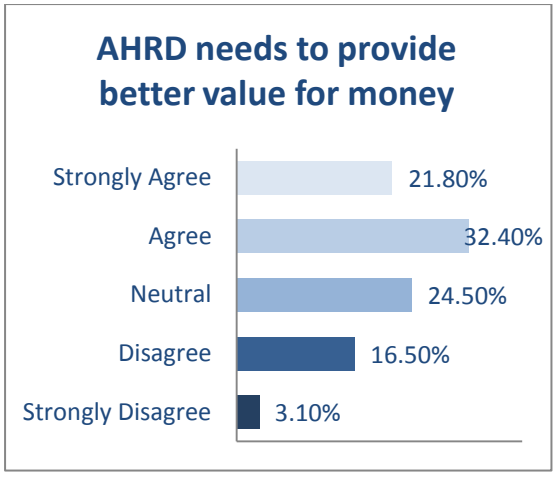
- In terms of responsiveness to members, 51% of members stated that AHRD was responsive to members, whereas 13% of members believed AHRD was not responsive to members.

- Almost 61% of members indicated that they were happy with how AHRD communicates with members, whereas 19.6% argued that AHRD needed to improve its level of communication.

- In terms of whether AHRD is member-focused, almost 29% of members felt that AHRD was sufficiently focused on its membership, whereas 40% of members felt AHRD needed to be more member-focused.

- 54% of members argued that AHRD needs to provide better value for money.

- 57% of members stated that they were strongly engaged with the work of the AHRD. A sizeable 35% of members indicated a neutral answer to this question.



- 46% of members replied that AHRD needed to be more engaged with social networking while 35% of members again indicated a neutral answer to this question.

Journal Issues

- When asked whether e-journals are the way of the future, a clear majority of members (almost 70%) felt that e-journals were the way of the future.

- There wasn't a clear consensus among members regarding whether e-journals were inferior to hard copy journals – but there were slightly more members who felt that e-journals were not necessarily inferior to hard-copy journals.

I consider E-Journals to be inferior to hard-copy journals	
Strongly Disagree	22%
Disagree	23%
Neutral	16%
Agree	24%
Strongly Agree	12%

- A third of members felt that their educational institutions considers e-journals to be inferior to hard-copy journals while a further one-third of members felt that their educational institutions did not consider e-journals to be inferior to hard-copy journals. The remaining one-third of members were undecided on this issue (or it was inapplicable to them).

- 64% of members indicated that they would be happy to publish in e-journals.

- 62% of members felt that e-journals made their work more applicable to a wider audience, while 73% of members felt that e-journals made their work accessible more quickly.

- 43% of members felt that there was not an appreciable different in journal quality between hard-copy and e-journals. 32% of members indicated a neutral response here, while 18% of members responded with a don't know/inapplicable answer.

- In terms of how members would like to access the four HRD journals, a similar profile of responses was found for Human Resource Development Quarterly, Human Resource Development Review and Advances in Developing Human Resources.

Preference for how you would like to access HRDQ, HRDR, ADHR	
Hard Copy	17%
Electronic	38%
Both Hard Copy and Electronic	47%

- In relation to Human Resource Development International, 12% indicated preference of receipt of the journal in hard copy format, 46% indicated preference of receipt in electronic format, while 45% indicated preference for receipt in both hard copy and electronic format.

- In terms of whether AHRD should create and publish its own journal, 74% of members indicated a preference for commercial publishers, while the remaining 26% of members would be happy for AHRD to create and publish its own journal.

- When asked to rank the personal importance of each of the four HRD journals, the following overall ranking was achieved

Personal Importance Attached to the four HRD Journals	
Human Resource Development Quarterly	1
Human Resource Development Review	2
Advances in Developing Human Resources	3
Human Resource Development International	4

- When asked to identify areas where reductions in expenditure should take place, the following ranking was achieved

Reducing Membership Benefits	
Reduce spending on Webcasts	1
Reduce spending on conference awards	2
Reduce AHRD office expenditure	3
Reduce AHRD Conference Subsidy	4
Reduce AHRD Office expenditure	4
Reduce AHRD Office staffing	6
Reduce spending on journals	7
Reduce AHRD student subsidy	8

- Members were asked for a qualitative comment on the survey conducted – a list of these comments is provided in appendix 2. :

Appendix 1: Analysis of Qualitative Comments Received from Members in Relation to the Matters raised by the AHRD Journal Taskforce Survey 2011

At the end of the journal taskforce survey, respondents were asked to provide a qualitative comment to guide the work of the journal taskforce. It needs to be emphasised that **respondents were free to comment on ANY area. In other words, members were not asked to comment on a specific topic or question.** Consequently, any analysis of the qualitative comments must bear this important limitation in mind.

A total of 87 comments were received (out of the 188 members who completed the survey – 46% of members). The comments were coded using NVIVO (version 8).

The analysis produced paints a very disparate picture with a wide range of comments covering many areas. It shows that respondents are aware of (and themselves grappling with) the difficult choices faced by AHRD. That said, there are few indications that members are agreed or moving towards a consensual solution.

The area which received most comment was coded as the preference for electronic access to journals. Even within this category, various motivations were outlined for this preference for electronic access including:

- Preference for electronic access over hard-copy
- May be accompanied with membership fee reduction
- May reduce publication costs and enable AHRD to keep the current 4 journals in print
- Hard copies are too old-fashioned and not environmentally friendly
- Online publishing may enable more journal issues to be printed
- Capable of being accessed through Kindle and newer technologies

The case for electronic access was perhaps articulated most clearly by the following comment:

> *I believe that e-journals are definitely the option that will soon become the standard. E-journals can offer multimedia files as well as just print. They offer faster publication turn-around, wider distribution, and lower publication costs. However, at the present time, the transition from print to e-journal formats has several important problems. Few take advantage of the multimedia capabilities of electronic format (color, hypermedia, video additions, etc.). Many people still prefer hardcopy for ease of access and reading. Many universities are still stuck in older thinking about the "quality" of e-journals being less than that of hard-copy journals. This is nonsense, but it IS still a reality. Personally, I am pleased that professional journals will eventually evolve into electronic formats with advanced multimedia capabilities. However, given the current issues with eformats, I believe most of us are best served by gradual transition of professional journals to e-formats to allow*

an adjustment and maturity of editorial media use, author development and access skills, and institutional attitudes.

There were a number of suggestions from members regarding a soft or gradual movement/transition towards electronic access to journals. This was best exemplified by the following comment:

Please provide e-copy and hard copies of journals and then slowly move towards e-copy. Change should be slow so that it could be embraced and appreciated by all those who are going to be affected by it.

The case for retaining hard copy access to journals was also clearly articulated by several respondents. Motivations for keeping hard copy access to journals included:

- Facilitates journal issue browsing
- Helps connect members with work of their colleagues
- Abandoning print quality journals would diminish the standing and reputation of AHRD
- Core communication tool of AHRD

The case for retaining hard copy access to journals was articulated in the following comment:

I am satisfied with AHRD and wish the membership amenities to remain the same. The hard-copy journals are very important. Browsing e-journals is not something I would do as I do the hard-copy. E-journals are only helpful when I know what I article I want.

Several respondents reminded the journal taskforce in their comments of the core mission and vision of the AHRD and how journals are central to achieving this mission and vision. Such comments included the following:

The primary mission of AHRD is to lead the profession through research and the journals are the NUMBER ONE way in which this is done. …This cannot be a purely economic decision. And, if we are serious about fostering research and it's proliferation in the world, it is entirely reasonable for member dues to subsidize the journals. If there are members who do not wish to subsidize/sponsor the journals, then I question their commitment to research and, thus, to the primary mission of AHRD. The focus of this task force seems to be on "customers" and their perceived benefits. While I understand that is part of the equation, there is a much bigger mission at stake here.

Membership fees were cited as an issue of concern for several members. For some of these individuals, the hard-copy/electronic access issue was connected to one of membership fees and option-based membership. Many of these individuals cited financial pressures and lack of support from their universities as affecting their membership of AHRD. Such comments included:

Why not reduce membership dues for those who access online? Why not make dues contingent on which journals matter (don't read the international version yet I'm paying for it) to the member? I want access to the journals and will use electronic methods

While I appreciate those who prefer hard copies of the journals, I respectfully disagree with the obligation that they put us under through demanding them to be continued to be mailed. I am very happy to pay less fees for my membership and receive them electronically.

I believe that the membership fee and conference fee should be more affordable to students and academics who receive minimal to no funding assistance from the university.

The issue of journal mergers was also raised by some respondents. Some comments suggested that perhaps AHRD was too big to house 4 journals. Such views could be encapsulated in the following comments:

AHRD are for journals and for the conference. These are probably the two likely targets. It is possible that we have too many journals with a limited number of authors competing for placement which can impact the journals and quality of the journals. I would imagine 2 - 3 journals is likely sufficient but this will not be an easy choice but possibly a necessary one.

Having four journals in such a small association makes it difficult on many levels

Other issues raised by respondents included:

- Two respondents expressed the view that the questions posed were biased
- Two respondents suggested that AHRD should publish its own journal in-house
- One individual suggested charging extra for webcasts
- One individual suggested waiting a couple of years before switching to electronic access
- One individual suggested that AHRD needed to work more closely with New Horizons in Adult Education
- One individual suggested that AHRD needed to be more open to different worldviews and epistemic diversity
- Two individuals argued that AHRD needs a practitioner-based journal
- One individual questioned how the hard-copy/electronic access debate would affect SSCI accreditation
- One individual suggested that the conference be held in warmer climates (ones not subject to winter storms)

Conclusion

The analysis of qualitative comments indicates that the issues raised in the survey are subject to lively and passionate debate amongst members. It is clear that the issues raised go to the heart of what AHRD is and what it stands for. Within the comments produced, there is no sense of agreement or movement towards a common path as yet. What is clear is that decisions to be made may well prove divisive and will undoubtedly affect member's commitment and views towards the AHRD.