New York 2020 Congress Survey Analysis

INTRODUCTION

The 2020 New York ISPA Congress: Reframing the Conversation: Art and Borders was held on January 14-16 at Symphony Space (Tuesday) and the Times Center (Wednesday and Thursday). The general structure of the congress remained unchanged from previous years with daily provocations and performances, Pitch New Works and ProEx on Wednesday, and two lengthier panel sessions per day. One new addition included access to wordly that was available to all delegates via a link on our website. The site provides instantaneous translation for 15 languages and was designed to make sessions more accessible.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey methodology did not deviate from previous years’ surveys and included a balanced spectrum of responses including Excellent, Good, Neutral, Fair, and Poor to evaluate most questions. The questions that required a different evaluation are noted. There were a few new questions this year, including why the congress is important to delegates, two things delegates liked most and two things we could improve upon, and theme ideas for next year. The following is an analysis of the 2020 New York congress survey with comparative data from 2019 in blue where appropriate and available in addition to many opportunities for comparative analysis over the past three NY congress years.

GENERAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

This was a record breaking year for ISPA! We hosted a total of 671 (626) delegates, a 24% increase over 2018 (607 passes sold). Both Wednesday and Thursday passes sold out in advance of the congress.

193 delegates or 29% responded to the congress survey – the same response rate as 2018 and 4% lower than last year. Most respondents (86%) rated their overall experience at the congress as Good or
Excellent, and when asked why the annual NY congress is important to them, 93% said it expands their network and 85% said they learn from others.

The majority of respondents work for a performing arts organization and 63% are members while 18% are fellows, 19% employees and 17% non-members. 28% indicated that they are new members and 32% indicated that NY20 was their first ISPA congress. The age of respondents seemed on par with previous years.

WEBSITE/COMMUNITY LINK

This year, ISPA once again used its mobile-friendly website design as well as Community Link, accessible through its member and content management system provider YourMembership. Community Link offers members-only communication and profile information and took the place of and enhanced the delegate list function of the app.

Briefly, the number of website users during the NY20 congress increased by 12% while the number of new users rose by 23% compared to the NY19 congress period (January 8-10). Users were predominantly from the United States (1,425), Canada (148), and the United Kingdom (147), followed by Hong Kong, Australia and Singapore. Website usage received high remarks, with over 86% of respondents stating that they were Satisfied or Very satisfied. Most respondents used the website to view the daily schedule (85%), reference general information (72%), and download the delegate list (66%).

When asked to rate their overall experience using Community Link, 70% of respondents selected N/A, 14% Neutral, and 12% indicated they were Satisfied. Given how few delegates used Community Link, it would be useful to look into how to attract more members to the platform or look into using an alternative in the future. Rather than only create Groups for each congress in the platform, ISPA could create groups based on region or interests that would remain active throughout the year and allow members to interact with those in their region more easily outside of congresses or other events.

WORDLY

This year ISPA introduced “wordly,” with the intention of increasing access to session content for all delegates. Based on the survey data, only half of respondents were aware that this app was available during the congress even though it was announced during the opening ceremony, ISPA
referenced it in all daily congress emails, and posted signage at each venue. To increase visibility of the app, ISPA will examine other opportunities.

Of those delegates who used wordly (32%), 53% were Satisfied overall or Very satisfied with the app while the rest felt Neutral (34%), and 13% were Unsatisfied or Very unsatisfied. Very few (12.5%) said that the app was a distraction from the sessions and 54% recommended we use this app for the next congress. Most responded with neutral when asked whether the translation was accurate, but delegates did not indicate which language they used so it is hard to determine which translation they found to be inaccurate.

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<th>Was the translation accurate?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very much so</td>
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| Yes           | 18%
| Neutral       | 58% |
| Somewhat      | 23%
| Not at all    | 0% |

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<th>Do you recommend we use this app for the next congress?</th>
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**SOCIAL MEDIA**

During the congress, ISPA uses social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter in a variety of ways – from branding, to recruitment, to information dissemination. We encourage the use of social media platforms through hashtags and prompts to share and tag. In light of our efforts, 74% of respondents indicated that they used social media outlets during the congress. For attendees, Facebook is still by far the most utilized platform, followed by Instagram then Twitter. ISPA began using Instagram for the NY19 congress and the number of followers has grown to 827, up 115% from last year. It would be useful to create a strategy around using these platforms, in particular to attract younger audiences and keep members engaged throughout the year.

**SESSIONS**

The individual session rankings were down across the board compared to last year, but higher across the board compared to 2018 rankings.

Survey respondents were asked to evaluate each session on a scale of 1-5 regarding the Overall Quality and Relevance to their career/interests (5 indicating high quality and relevance). The lowest ranked session in terms of both Relevance (3.98) and Quality (3.82) was Session 1 - The Value Proposition:
Artists, Institutions, and Community
whereas the two highest rated sessions in both categories were Thursday’s provocation by Yaron Lifschitz (Relevance: 4.65, Quality: 4.66) and Session 5: Design Thinking: New Ideas Today (Relevance: 4.67, Quality: 4.51). In terms of the content delivery format and the opportunity for exchange, over 90% of respondents stated that we are Moving in the right direction and that they Loved it! Do it again! with daily provocations instead of a single keynote speaker (94%), coffee klatch discussions (96%), and the design thinking session (92%). This year, we asked attendees for topic ideas for next year’s congress and the majority suggested climate change. Other topics included technology and addressing diversity and nationalism.

PITCH NEW WORKS & PROEX
For the past two years, we asked survey respondents to rank the quality, diversity, format and overall impression of the Pitch New Works session. For NY20, the Quality of Projects received an Excellent or Good ranking by 80% of respondents, Diversity of Projects received 75%, Format received 80%, and Overall Impression was ranked at 80%. An average of 14% of respondents selected “N/A”. Pitch New Works (PNW) has not deviated from the current format since its inception and is one of the most anticipated sessions. PNW is not only a draw for attendance, but there has been an increase in the number of applications submitted for consideration. In 2020, ISPA received 86 (99) applications for the PNW session, down 13% from the record number of submissions in 2019.

The ProEx rankings were down across all categories for 2020, but NY20 also had the highest number of respondents select N/A. Accounting for N/A responses, NY20 is higher than NY19 in all categories except Exchange (4 points below). There were surprisingly few comments in the survey about delegates’ experience at ProEx.
PERFORMANCES

The NY20 performances included performance art from Morocco and two jazz artists, both locally based Latinx artists. The Excellent and Good rankings for the performances were down across all categories over 2019. An average of 11% of respondents selected N/A. We did not ask about specific performances so the reason for the lower rating this year is unclear. Comments on performances were overall positive, but a few delegates desired more time for performances.

![PERFORMANCES EXCELLENT/GOOD RANKINGS](image)

PROVOCATEURS

The daily provocations were introduced in 2018 as a way to move from one single keynote speaker to a shorter provocation each day. The feedback on this innovation was similar to last year with 86% (87%) noting that they Loved it! Do it again! or Moving in the right direction. When asked to rank each provocateur on a scale of 1-5 in Overall Quality and Relevance to their career/interests (5 indicating high quality and relevance), all of the provocations received higher marks than last year across the board, with Yaron Lifschitz the highest rated. As a reminder the 2019 provocateurs included janera solomon, Bassem Youssef, and Lee-Ann Buckskin.

![PROVOCATEUR RANKING QUALITY & RELEVANCE](image)

COFFEE KLATCH

Also introduced in 2018, the Coffee Klatch was held on Thursday morning and billed as small group discussions curated by a table host. There is limited seating for approximately 130 delegates, so pre-registration is required. This year, Coffee Klatch sold out weeks in advance, so those on a waiting list were invited to sit at a general discussion table should they not be able to be accommodated. A New Generation of Resources and Experimenting with Borders were the topics with the highest number of delegates signed up.

Of the 77 respondents that attended Coffee Klatch and had an opinion about it, 88% said they Loved it! Do it again! and Moving in the right direction, an increase of 5% from last year. 52% of those who took part in Coffee Klatch found the conversation to be very meaningful with an additional 33% ranking it as meaningful, a total of 85%. The rankings indicate a high level of engagement and a desire to move
the conversations forward beyond ISPA. Comments in the survey indicate that delegates are particularly fond of this session as it allows them extra time to engage.

VENUES

The first day of the congress was held at Symphony Space, and Wednesday and Thursday were held at the familiar Times Center. The latter historically receives higher marks than other venues and this year was no exception. The lower rankings for Symphony Space are likely attributed to the fact that the venue had little space for participants to mix and mingle, and the foyer area insufficiently accommodated delegates during the coffee breaks which likely resulted in the low Comfort ranking.

The Excellent and Good rankings for the Times Center are similar across all categories compared to last year with the exception of the higher 82% (78%) ranking for Comfort. The majority of the comments for Symphony Space were centered on the space being overcrowded and unable to accommodate the number of delegates. Those for the Times Center noted that ISPA has outgrown the space and the acoustics were poor. With these comments in mind, 47% of respondents noted that the venues were appropriate and 84% wish to return to the Times Center while only 26% asked to move to a larger space. 15% prefer to remain at the Times Center, but limit the number of passes sold. It may be useful to consider hosting the last day at the Times Center and consider switching to a new venue on Tuesday and Wednesday in order to accommodate all delegates and give them more space to engage. 75% of respondents said that they are Likely or Definitely going to attend next year's congress in New York while 23% are unsure.

EVENTS

The Opening Reception/New Member Welcome was once again held at the popular Bryant Park Grill. The reception was ranked as excellent or good by 82%, up 4% from last year (78%). ISPA enjoys a great relationship with the Bryant Park Grill and we look forward to returning there in the future.
The closing event was held for the first time at the Redeye Grill. This is the second year where we opted for an earlier reception following the end of the congress. This closing reception received a ranking of Excellent or Good by 70% (59%) of delegates, up over 10% from last year.

Regarding the coffee breaks and lunch rankings, delegates commented on the excellent ISPA staff, but did note a limited variety of vegetarian options and the long cue for coffee on Tuesday at Symphony Space. The coffee ranking for the Times Center went up by 3% to 70% (67%) and the lunch rankings went up 13% to 70% (57%). Overall customer service and communication received a rating of good or excellent by 97% of respondents while overall on-site organization and logistics received a rating of 94%.

HOTEL

A new hotel was chosen this year, Hotel Edison, located just a few blocks from the Times Center. Only 24% of respondents were guests at the hotel. Of those who did not stay at Hotel Edison, 45% stayed in a different hotel. Others were New Yorkers who did not require accommodation, chose to stay with friends or at an Airbnb or apartment rental. Of those who did stay at Hotel Edison, 56% said their overall experience was Excellent or Good while 44% rated their stay as: Fair/Neutral (39%), Poor (5%). Comparatively, 66% or 10% more respondents, rated their overall stay as Excellent or Good at last year’s Millenium Hotel, while 28% felt it was Fair/Neutral and 6% ranked it as Poor.

FINANCIAL VALUE

Respondents were asked to rate the value of the congress fee. Similar to last year, 37% of respondents rated the value as Excellent or Good with 40% (up 2% from last year) taking a neutral stance and 20% rating it as Fair.
FINIAL TAKEAWAYS

The feedback regarding the overall content and experience of the congress was overall positive and on par in many aspects compared to previous years. **97% (92%) of respondents rated overall Customer Service as Excellent or Good and 94% (90%) rated the overall Onsite Organization/Logistics as Excellent or Good.** This year we asked delegates the two things they liked most about the congress as well as two things we could improve upon. They overwhelming commented on the enjoyment of simply getting together and engaging with one another. Over one third of the comments regarding what ISPA could improve upon at the congress were around the desire to move away from the panel format. Delegates noted a need to change up session format to include more breakout groups and opportunities to engage around topics which is a challenge when most of the sessions are panel format. Other comments were related to a desire for more focus on sustainability, suggestions to change venues to increase access and allow space for dialogue, more diverse session content and a separate session(s) for fellows. Moving forward, the ongoing challenge will be creating a balance between offering a quality experience for members and non-members, while providing space and time for dialogue and engagement.

What two things did you like most about the Congress?

meeting new inspiring connecting really knowledge ProEx made presentations work old pitch sessions perspectives diversity new contacts discussions also ISPA many better Coffee Klatch loved seeing world around world pitches connections meeting people present new year sessions congress meeting old friends networking one colleagues focused people new ideas provocations discuss great made new delegates day opportunity time conversations feel interesting panel discussions panels contents meeting new people felt Learning way friends experience ideas welcome think exchange new works Fellows