

**League of Canadian Poets
Associate Members' Survey, 2004/05**

Executive summary

The questionnaire was distributed to the 84 Associate Members on record at the end of November, with a request to return them to the survey consultant by January 7, 2005. As an incentive for returning them, a draw for two free memberships was offered. By January 15, 2005, 48 surveys had been returned, representing 57 percent of all Associate Members. Another 3 surveys were returned after that date and were not included in the analysis. The proportion of responses is significantly higher than previous surveys of all members or the previous survey of Associate Members in 1998. Only 20 surveys were returned in the 1998 Associate Member survey and 140 were returned in the 2002 survey of all members, representing 37 percent of all members at that time. The geographical distribution of the returned surveys was:

	Number	Percent
BC	14	29.2
AB	5	10.5
SK	2	4.2
ON	21	43.6
PQ	2	4.2
NS	2	4.2
NL	1	2.1
USA	1	2.1

The following findings summarize the responses to both the numerical questions and the written comments associated with them.

1. Length of membership

- The majority of respondents (53 percent) had been members of the League for 1 - 5 years, while 11 percent had been members for less than a year.
- Slightly over 23 percent had been members for 6 -10 years, while 13 percent had been members for more than 11 years.

2. Factors in joining the League

- Supporting poets and poetry was seen to be the most important reason for joining the League, with 87 percent finding it important or very important.
- Becoming part of a network of poets was the next most important reason, with 74 percent finding it important or very important.
- Professional development was felt to be important or very important by 74 percent of respondents and 65 percent found membership important or very important for promoting their poetry.

3. Other literary activities

- All members who responded to the question had had poems published in literary magazines or periodicals, with 50 percent having had more than 10 poems published.

- Only 3 percent of respondents had not published in other magazines, while 63 percent had 5 - 10 poems published in other magazines
- Between 1 and 5 chapbooks had been published by 56 percent of respondents, while 16 percent had not published a chapbook.
- Publication in 1 - 5 anthologies was reported by 44 percent, while only 5 percent had not published in an anthology.
- Almost half (44 percent) of respondents had made between 1 and 5 radio broadcasts, while 37 percent of respondents had not made any broadcasts.
- Conversely, 63 percent of respondents had not made any recordings, while 4 percent had made more than 10 recordings.
- Other related activities reported were readings (77 percent of respondents), editing (36 percent), activities with poetry groups (28 percent), teaching poetry and judging contests (23 percent each).

4. Information to Associate Members

- The League was seen to be doing a relatively good job at providing general information to Associate Members, with 63 percent finding it good, 17 percent finding it excellent and only 2 percent finding it poor.
- The largest number of respondents (44 percent) felt service to Associate Members was only fair, with 29 percent finding it good, 20 percent finding it poor and only 9 percent finding it excellent.
- There was a similar pattern in respondents' perception of encouraging Associate Members — 41 percent of respondents found it fair, 29 percent found it poor, 29 percent found it good and only 7 percent found it excellent.
- Written responses to this question indicated feelings of marginalization and a feeling that the League is biased toward Full Members, uncertainly about what services are available to Associate Members. Respondents also felt they had not received much, if any encouragement in their poetry writing or information on how to develop professionally. On the positive side, there was praise for the Associate Member Rep., and the Saskatchewan Regional Rep.

5. Welcome package

- While 38 percent of respondents found it helpful or very helpful, 46 percent did not remember whether it was helpful.
- In the written responses there were positive comments from 2 respondents who were pleased with it and a negative comment from a respondent who found it unhelpful. A respondent also commented on the lack of follow-up after receiving it.

6. Experience at AGM

- Since only 15 members responded to this question it can be assumed that the other 33 respondents probably had not attended an AGM. For the most part it was a positive experience for the respondents who did attend, with 73 percent finding it somewhat positive or positive.
- Written comments reflect this as well, with 4 respondents providing generally positive comments. Negative comments from 2 respondents expressed a feeling of intimidation and the feeling that Full Members should be more inclusive at the AGM.

7. Reasons for not going to an AGM

- The most significant reason for not going to the AGM were distance and cost, with 76 percent of respondents indicating it was too far from home, and 50 percent indicating it was too expensive.

- A further 23 percent indicated they did not go because there was no vote for Associate Members and 10 percent simply were not interested.
- Conflicts with other activities was another reason for not attending, given by 4 respondents in the written section of this question.

8. Associate Member session at AGM

- Respondents were evenly divided in their response to this question, with 50 percent indicating they would be interested in going and the other 50 percent either not sure or not interested.
- In the written comments, cost and location were the main factors in deciding whether to go, while 14 respondents wondered whether an Associate Member session would increase the sense of segregation of Associate Members.

9. Newsletter

- A strong majority of respondents found all aspects of the newsletter somewhat or very important, with only 2 percent finding any part of it not important.
- All respondents read members' news and, while 2 percent did not read League news or the contest section and 5 percent did not read the market section.
- In addition to positive comments in the written section, suggestions for content included: articles on poetry; information on poetry-related issues, government policies and funding; an occasional column on Associate Member concerns; and a column for new members on how to get published.

10. Newsletter column

- A majority of responses (55 percent) indicated they would be interested in a newsletter column that had information specifically for Associate Members, while 27 percent were not sure and 17 percent indicated they were not interested.
- Respondents to the written section expressed concern that an Associate Member column might increase the separation of Associate Members and Full Members though others felt that the column would not make much of a difference and that the interests of both kinds of members were not that different.
- Positively, some respondents felt that a column would demonstrate a commitment to Associate Members. They also provided suggestions for content including: information on publishers of first books; articles on the biases of journals, schools of poetry and different approaches to poetry; tips on signing contracts; and information on help for travel and readings for first time authors.

11. League Activities

- Encouragement and guidance in getting work published was felt to be the most important League activity for Associate Members, with 88 percent indicating it was important or very important.
- Partnering at a reading with a Full Member and participating in National Poetry Month were seen to be important or very important by more than 70 percent of respondents.
- Information on reading venues, participating in (W)rites of Spring and mentoring with a full members were felt to be important or very important for more than 60 percent of respondents.
- The written comments to this question included queries on what (W)rites of Spring was, whether Associate Members can tour or teach in the schools and whether Associate Members can be paid for readings.

12. Importance of League activities

- Almost all (97 percent) respondents answered this question, with 55 percent indicating professional elements were important and helpful.
- Specific professional elements cited included information on poetry and ways to promote poetry, networking, the newsletter and the poetry bookstore. Other professional elements cited included information on markets, venues, contests, publisher and *Vintages*.
- The promotional element of the League was important for 8 respondents.
- Other comments included praise for the League, and Andrea Thomson in particular, a feeling of intimidation by 1 member and the need to focus on areas outside Toronto.

13. Negative Elements

- Most of the 33 respondents to this question used it to indicate what they didn't like about the League and what they feel needs improvement.
- The most prevalent comment was a sense of marginalization felt by 33 percent of respondents who felt the League did not appear to be committed to Associate Members and was more geared to serving the needs of Full Members.
- Organizational issues were cited by 10 respondents, including concern about spending money on the newsletter and AGM in a time of financial constraint, the need for better co-ordination of events, more events in the West, and more contact with Regional Reps.
- League politics was viewed negatively by 3 respondents and the need for stronger moderation of the listserv was cited by 2 respondents.

14. Other comments

- Only 12 respondents replied to this question with suggestions for professional development from 5 respondents, including publishing a critique of a poem, written by a professional poet; having a newsletter for Associate Members; having a "poet in a can" package for school readings and promoting Youngpoets.ca; having the League act as liaison between agents/publishers and Associate Members at annual publication fair, either physically or virtually; including short bios of Associate Members in the newsletter while limiting the length of bios of Full Members.
- Other comments from 5 respondents include 2 who feel little connection to the League; praise for having an Associate Members Rep and concern about the large number of requests for donations in League e-mail.