

Last November, the AAR celebrated the start of its Centennial year at the Annual Meeting in Montréal, Québec. Montréal's international flair and its vibrant culture made the event quite attractive. Though attendance was down from our record-setting meeting in Chicago in 2008, over 4,700 AAR members and exhibitors attended the Montréal meeting. We are confident, however, that attendance at the 2010 meeting, to be held in Atlanta, Georgia, will increase.

In terms of programming, the Montréal meeting set new participation records. Over 600 AAR and Additional Meetings sessions occurred during the six-day time period from Thursday, November 5, to Tuesday, November 10. AAR continued to expand its program and hosted 423 sessions, making it the largest ever.

Responses to the post-Annual Meeting survey reflect positive experiences by the members in attendance. Survey results are posted [online](#).

An overwhelming 93 percent of survey respondents thought the 2009 Annual Meeting was a satisfactory or very satisfactory experience. Satisfaction with this year's sessions was high; 91 percent of survey respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality. The opportunity to network with other colleagues also received high marks; 91 percent reported satisfaction. Respondents rated the Montréal Annual Meeting location very favorably, giving positive feedback about its hotel facilities (90 percent) and meeting room space (89 percent).

The Annual Meeting attracted attendees from around the world; 46 nationalities were represented. A large number of Canadians (768) attended the meeting. Americans made up the largest international group with 3,395 attendees, followed by the United Kingdom (145), Germany (33), Japan (26), the Netherlands (20), Denmark (16), Belgium (15), Norway (14), Australia (10), and France (10). New York was the best-represented state in 2009 with 378 attendees, followed closely by California (368), Massachusetts (293), and Pennsylvania (202). The Canadian provinces of Ontario (328) and Québec (288) were strongly represented.

Once again, Annual Meeting registration and housing was handled by Experient. Satisfaction with the registration and housing process was very high; 97 percent of respondents rated the process positively. The peak hotel night was Saturday, November 7, with over 1,900 hotel rooms in use. Overall more than 7,000 room nights were occupied during the meeting.

The comments from survey respondents were generally positive. The most frequent complaints were about the distance of the Annual Meeting hotels from the Palais des Congrès, where most sessions were held, and their cost. The AAR signed the contracts for this meeting in 2004, long before the Westin, Embassy Suites, and many of the other hotels surrounding the Palais were built. At the time, the hotels in the city best positioned to act as headquarter hotels, because of their size, meeting space, and proximity to the Palais, were the La Centre Sheraton and the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth. We realize the burden this placed on those staying in these hotels, so we offered complimentary shuttle service between these hotels and the Palais. Eighty-three percent of those who used the shuttle service were satisfied or very satisfied with it. In Atlanta this year, we will not have this issue at all — the headquarters hotels are across the street from each other, and registration, the Exhibit Hall, the Job Center, and all sessions will be held in these two hotels.

We are always concerned about the cost of our meetings. When the contracts were signed in 2004, the American dollar was much stronger against the Canadian dollar. When the exchange rate declined precipitously in the summer of 2008, we traveled to Montréal and with the help of our partners at Experient and Tourisme Montréal, we renegotiated our rates with all of our Annual Meeting hotels down approximately 20 percent from our originally contracted rates. The exchange rate returned to a favorable position in late 2008 and early 2009, but by the fall of 2009, the U.S. Dollar had weakened once again. By this time, however, it was much too late to try to renegotiate the rates again. As a result, the U.S. dollar traded approximately one-to-one with the Canadian dollar during our Annual Meeting dates. This meant that our hotel costs were unfortunately higher than we had hoped to provide for our members. We regret this situation, but we did everything we could in order to make the Annual Meeting an affordable venture for our members. Our rates for 2010 are more affordable: \$149 single, \$169 double, \$179 triple, and \$189 quad.

The Annual Meeting Satisfaction Survey is sent via e-mail to all Annual Meeting attendees at the conclusion of each meeting and is offered online at the AAR Website. The number of responses this year was 1,091, which represents about 23 percent of attendees. Respondents did not answer each question, so the values were measured from the number of respondents who did. The survey is voluntary and open to all attendees. The Executive Office staff would like to thank everyone who participated in the post-Annual Meeting survey. It continues to be valuable to the Annual Meeting process, for it provides the AAR's Program Committee, Board of Directors, and Executive Office staff with an important measure of member satisfaction. We value this opportunity to hear your comments and suggestions on how we can continue to meet your needs and to offer an excellent meeting.