

Last November, the AAR joined with SBL to host their 2012 Annual Meetings in Chicago, Illinois. 10,677 AAR and SBL members and exhibitors attended the Chicago meeting — making it the second largest Annual Meetings gathering in history.

Over 1,250 AAR, SBL, and Additional Meetings sessions occurred during the five-day time period from Thursday, November 15, to Tuesday, November 20. AAR hosted 446 sessions.

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

Seventy-six percent of survey respondents thought the 2012 Annual Meetings was a satisfactory or very satisfactory experience. Satisfaction with this year's sessions was high — 76 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 — 84 percent reported satisfaction. Respondents rated the Chicago Annual Meetings location favorably, giving positive feedback about its hotel facilities (75 percent) and meeting room space (61 percent).

The Annual Meetings attracted attendees from around the world — 72 nationalities were represented. Canadians made up the largest international group with 500 attendees, followed by the United Kingdom (321), Germany (167), Australia (71), Israel (68), the Netherlands (60), Norway (46), Switzerland (46), and South Africa (40). Home-state Illinois was the best-represented state in 2012 with 883 attendees, followed by California (790), New York (493), Texas (475), Massachusetts (461), Minnesota (403), Pennsylvania (362), and Indiana (346).

This year, Annual Meetings registration and housing was handled in-house by AAR and SBL. Satisfaction with the registration and housing process was high — 80 percent of respondents rated the process positively. The peak hotel night was Saturday, November 17, with almost 5,000 hotel rooms in use. Overall, more than 19,000 room nights were occupied during the meetings.

The most common complaint was with the vast size and difficulty navigating the McCormick

Place Convention Center. In addition, the distance of McCormick Place from the Loop hotels, and the necessity of using shuttles — although not the shuttle service itself, which was highly praised — was a complaint.

Although the location was far from ideal, McCormick Place was the only location in the city of Chicago that could house a meeting of 10,000+ people, 100,000+ square feet of exhibit space, 150+ concurrent sessions, and almost 100 interview booths. When the AAR made the decision to cancel its contracts in Atlanta in 2012 and join the SBL in Chicago, we looked at many possible footprints for the meetings, but using McCormick Place was the only option that would have worked. AAR's decision not to use the meeting space in the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place in deference to the Unite Here boycott of the hotel also aggravated the situation, since not utilizing this space meant that the McCormick Place East and North buildings had to be used instead.

2013 Annual Meetings attendees will be pleased by the much smaller Baltimore Convention Center and its convenient Inner Harbor location, surrounded by all of the AAR's and SBL's headquarters hotels. We hope that this location will provide a much more pleasant experience for all involved.

The AAR 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 1,309, which represents about 26 percent of those AAR and dual members who were sent the survey. 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.