

Career Satisfaction of Young Archivists: Preliminary Findings

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Abstract:
The results of the 2004 A*CENSUS survey provided the most recent snapshot of the archival profession. Included in the action items results were a way in which to “make room” in the archival profession for new workers, in an effort not to lose them to other professions and to work to “engage younger professionals in leadership roles in organizations” and provide opportunities for growth. Career satisfaction, defined by Hoppock (1935) as any combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that cause a person to claim job satisfaction, is an important aspect of these action items. Utilizing a two-pronged theory involving satisfaction with workplace and satisfaction with the greater profession, the survey of young archivists begins to address these action items. This poster reports the key preliminary results of a career satisfaction survey of young archivists.

Methods:
Utilizing the Herzberg et. al. (1959) theory of intrinsic and extrinsic factors of job satisfaction, survey questions were designed to assess respondents’ satisfaction with intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of work environment and the greater archival profession. Greater archival profession satisfaction was mainly addressed through questions related to professional associations. An invitation to participate in the thirty item internet survey was distributed to sixteen identified young archivists, five relevant listservs, and program directors of thirty-three archival education programs listed in the SAA Education directory and/or hosting a SAA student organization list. Analyses were conducted using SPSS 16.0 and NVIVO 8.

Future Work:

- The A*CENSUS respondent mean age was 48.8 with only 16% of respondents reporting age as 34 and under. Comparison with A*CENSUS data may highlight a youth perspective of the archival profession.
- Further statistical analysis of respondent results will lead to greater identification of contrasts and trends among results.
- A more comprehensive review of available archival literature will provide a critical background to suggest implications and propose questions for further research.

Respondents were asked what they were most **satisfied** with and most **dissatisfied** with in their current positions. Below are lists of the most frequently occurring themes.

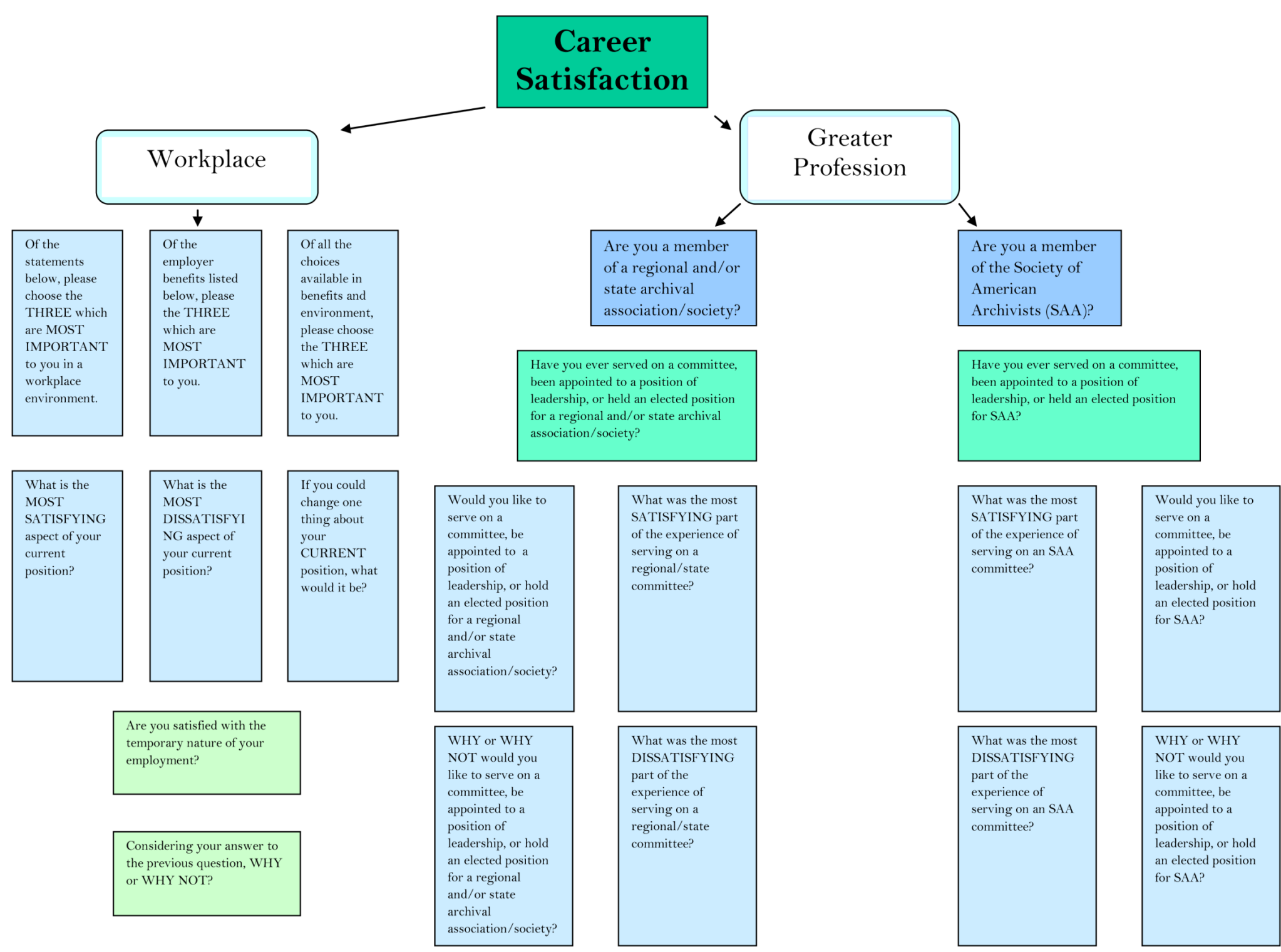
Dissatisfied

backlog communication is difficult/poor coworkers are difficult dealing with difficult donors do fewer administrative tasks having librarian duties I desire more authority don't feel listened to I don't feel my supervisor and/or coworkers take me seriously I don't like technology I don't like the physical work space I feel discriminated against I feel unjustly evaluated I feel isolated I feel uncertain because of my temporary status I feel undervalued I manage older people who don't respect me I needed more vacation time my first year I want more feedback and/or performance review I want more of a challenge I want more of a voice in departmental and/or institutional decisions I want more opportunities for training I want more professional recognition I want to spend more time doing archival duties I would like to be full time it's frustrating to have to depend on slow-moving IT staff it's stressful lack of motivation/participation of others to do work more recognition that the archives and/or archival duties are important from administration and/or patrons more staff are needed my boss doesn't care about and/or understand archival issues My coworkers depend on me too much my job is a temporary position my job is going nowhere my manager is too hands-off my manager micro-manages me my supervisor is incompetent and/or ineffective my workplace doesn't have the latest technology not enough funding not enough money/salary not enough processing not enough responsibility not enough travel funds to attend conferences and/or meetings not enough vacation and/or sick time not enough variety not enough work nothing people are too busy to answer my questions policies are unclear progress is slow the benefits are poor/there are none the commute is too long the current state of the materials the eurocentric bias of my workplace the inflexible hours the institutional politics the institutional structure the lack of guidelines the lack of institutional support the lack of job security the low workplace morale the outdated methods/procedures the poor management and/or leadership the resistance to change the tenure requirement the work is boring the workload is overwhelming the workload is unequal there's little opportunity for advancement there's no support of innovation and new ideas things are too slow to happen too many management duties too much alone time too much bureaucracy and red tape too much independence too much processing too much reference work too much responsibility too much team work

Satisfied

feeling like I'm improving the research experience I feel appreciated I feel like I'm improving and or making a difference in some aspect of archival work I feel appreciated I have a job in my chosen field I included in discussions about institutional direction I interest in old and or primary source books, documents, records, images, film interesting its positive work experience I like to learn something new love of learning management duties management is supportive and/or effective networking opportunities for growth opportunity to tackle a tough project organizing outreach activities physical work space problem solving processing reference work salary sense of accomplishment variety working with other archivists in the area

The tree graph represents the two-pronged theory of career satisfaction and the questions derived thereon.



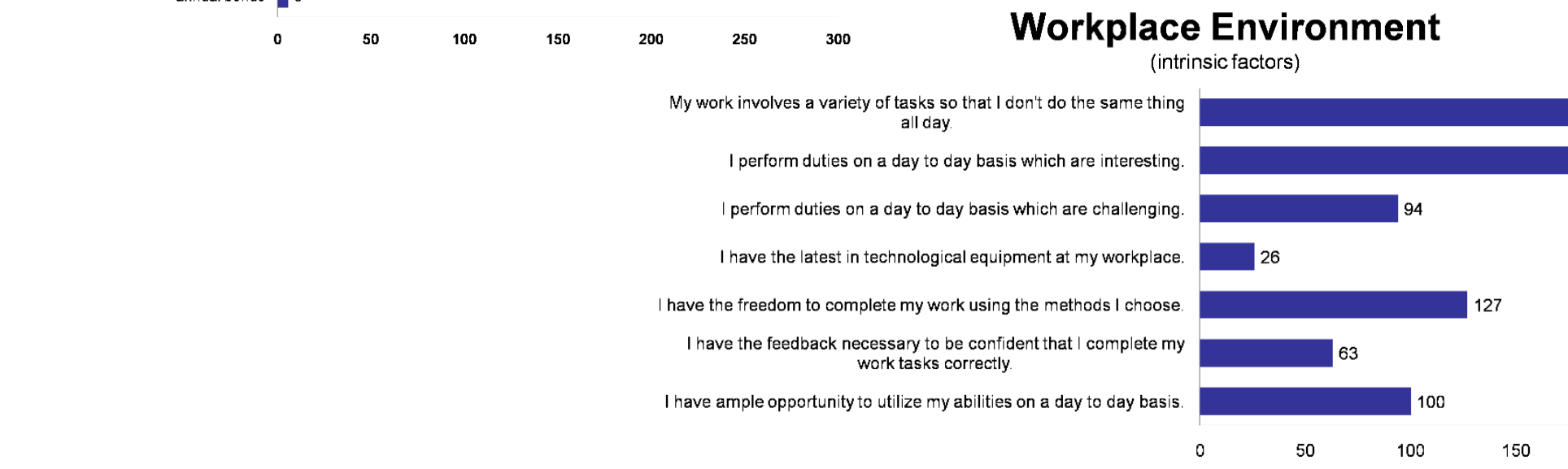
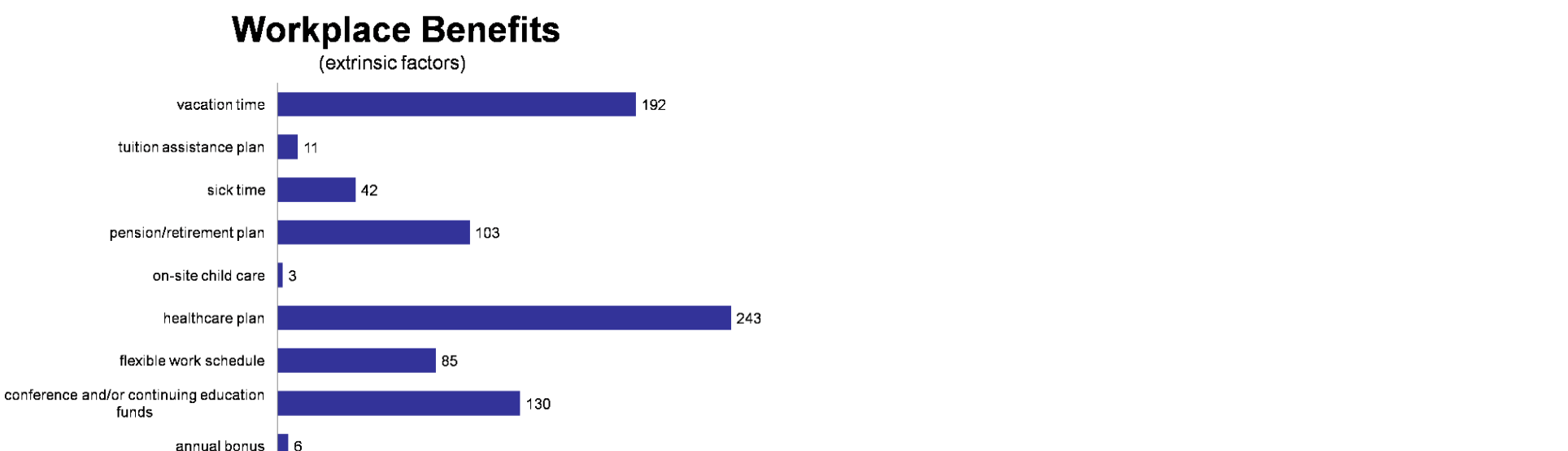
Respondents were asked to identify whether or not they are members of SAA, after which were questions determining their participation or interest in leadership and/committee work within the organization. Member totals may be affected by the unpredicted international response rate.

Are you a member of SAA?
Yes: 65.4%
No: 21.7%
No answer: 7.5%

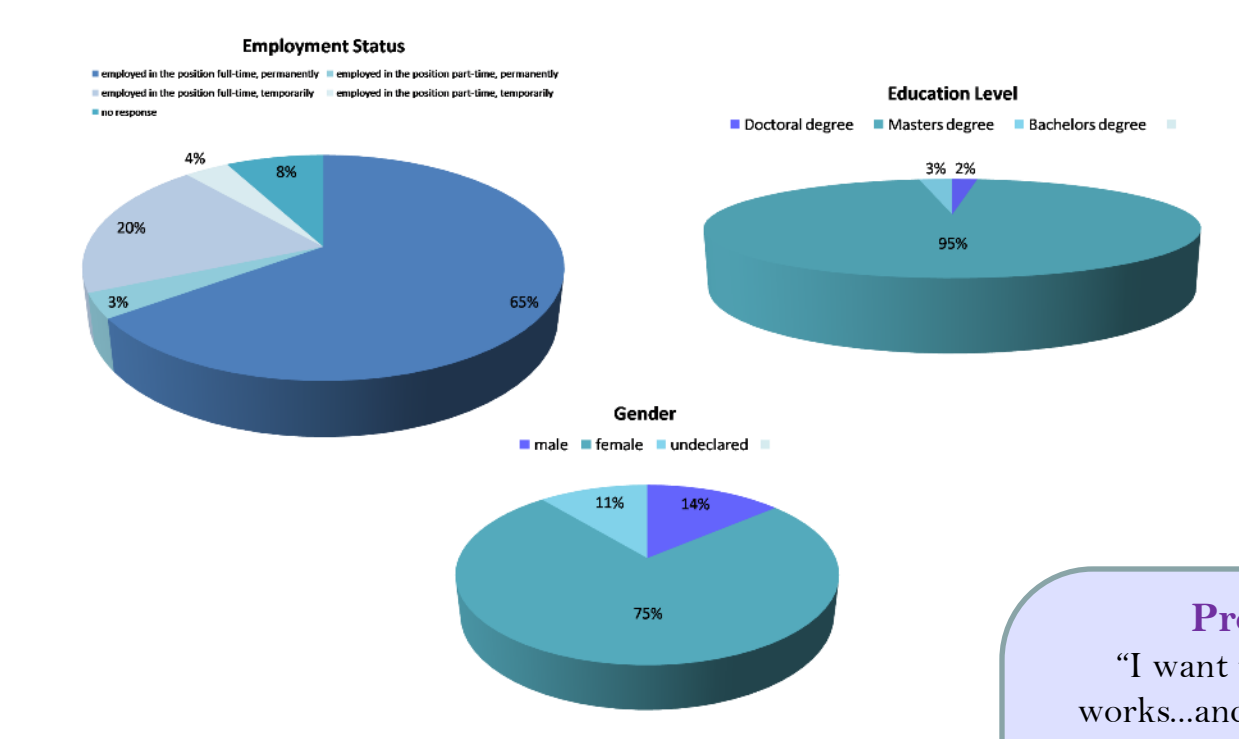
Have you served on a committee for SAA?
Yes: 16.9%
No: 83.1%
(Only those who claimed SAA membership saw this question)

Would you like to serve on a committee for SAA?
Yes: 29.7%
No: 24.7%
Unspecified: 45.5%
(Only those who claimed SAA membership saw this question)

Respondents were asked to identify the three benefits and environmental attributes of a position which were most important to them.



Respondents' Profile: 280 total



The two most common themes in response to why or why not service for SAA was desirable were “professional values” (yes), and “time commitment” (no).

Professional Values (yes):
“I want to change the way the profession works...and the way archivists take their work (and standards) too seriously.” - #627764442
“The ability to shape the direction of my profession and meet like-minded people.” - #627869420
“I like to learn from and teach others. SAA has really helped me learn a lot about the profession even when I was just a student, and I'd like to give back.” - #628007235

Time Commitment (no):
“National work seems kind of abstract and requires more time/travel.” - #627766347
“I want to be able to contribute as much as I can in my job, and I feel that holding a leadership position in an association would interfere with that. Even if I did not let it interfere with work, it's not something I would want to do with my leisure time.” - #627823244
“My life is too full to do what seems to be a lot of work; maybe later after my child is older.” - #628014041