

ROME CONGRESS SURVEY (2016)

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

Overall, the survey results suggest that the Rome congress was a great success: 97% of all respondents thought that attending it was worthwhile and 95% would also recommend a colleague in her/his home country to attend a IAML congress.

This year the survey was sent out to 291 email addresses and generated 156 responses (54%). This more or less corresponds to the response rate of the 2014 Antwerp congress (142/272 = 52 %) and is significantly higher than that of the 2015 New York congress (216/502 = 43%), which was co-organized by the International Musicological Society (a fact that may explain the lower ratio).

Daily attendance showed a tendency similar to that seen in previous years: the four days from Monday to Thursday were the most attended (over 80%), Friday came close to these (over 76%), whereas at the Sunday opening ceremony only 61% was present (this figure, however, is significantly higher than in Antwerp and New York).

As to the programme, presentation sessions are still the major attraction for most participants (97% visited at least some of these). Poster sessions appear to have been less popular in Rome than in New York (44% vs. 55%, perhaps resulting from the specificities of the venue).

Attendance at the social events did not markedly differ from that seen in previous years. The opening reception on Sunday attracted close to 70% of all respondents (considerably more than the preceding ceremony), while the farewell dinner's attendance rate (43%) shows a slight decrease in comparison to the 46% measured in both the Antwerp and the New York surveys. On that note one should point out that a strong majority is in favour of some sort of farewell event, even though the related costs seem increasingly to be a concern: the 40–69 EUR range seems to have the strongest support (85%). According to present plans, the upcoming Riga conference will offer a somewhat different kind of closing event, which may help us further to ponder how attendance at the farewell programme could be increased in later years.

As to the topics of sessions, for those taking the survey the most important were presentations on

- technical developments
- music research (this seems to have increased in comparison to earlier years)
- librarianship and library policy
- music collections (also increased in comparison to earlier years)

The social programmes as well as the Wednesday tours are of great importance for the majority. This certainly has much to do with the desire to network with colleagues (indicated as a very important motivation for attending the congress by 65%).

While 81% would still like to see broadly similar kinds of content in future conferences, it should be noted that this represents a 10% decrease in comparison to previous years. 'Current topics', 'best practices' and 'internationally relevant topics' are still in high demand, and there is also clear (though by far not unanimous) support for more discussion. Intriguingly, the reservations toward different types of sessions have slightly decreased: 46% are in favour, 54% are against (in 2014 we saw 38% vs. 62%). In this context it seems relevant that a new feature of the Rome congress, the so-called 'hot topics' session seems to enjoy solid support: 26 % attended the session and found it useful, 64% was absent but found this a good idea, whereas only a single attendee expressed her/his frustration over the session s/he attended, and 14% seemed unconvinced by the idea as such.

This year the survey also included a question about how IAML should make the presentations available to a wider audience after the congress. While only a slight majority suggested that more of the papers or their summaries should be published in print, over 75% expressed the wish to see the papers (or at least the respective slideshows) published on the IAML website. This should provide confirmation and encouragement for our web team, which has recently been working in this very direction with notable success.

One important lesson to learn from the individual comments is that reliable internet connection is now considered as absolutely necessary by many of the participants; the local organizing committees of future IAML congresses should consider the potential venues with this in mind.

In an effort to help the organizers of future congresses this year we also asked the participants about post-congress tours. The results turned out to be very mixed: 18% had attended such tours and found them an important addition to the programme, 34% had no personal experiences with such tours but thought that they should be offered regularly, 7% had attended post-congress tours but thought they were no longer relevant, and over 40% never attended such tours and thought they were not needed. In view of this mixed reception, IAML's earlier policy – namely that offering or ignoring such tours should be left to the discretion of the local organizers of each congress – seems appropriate.

Finally, we have received several comments about the dimensions of IAML's congresses in general, most of them suggesting that there were perhaps too many parallel sessions which prevented the participants from attending all sessions and meetings of relevance for them. Others, however, commented that, even in its present format, the annual congress may be too long, which inevitably makes it difficult for some to attend the entire congress. These two opinions seem difficult to reconcile, but the fact that the Riga congress will have to be one day shorter because of a national holiday may offer the IAML community a good opportunity to see how a congress running from Sunday only to Thursday can work.

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(on behalf of the IAML Board)