

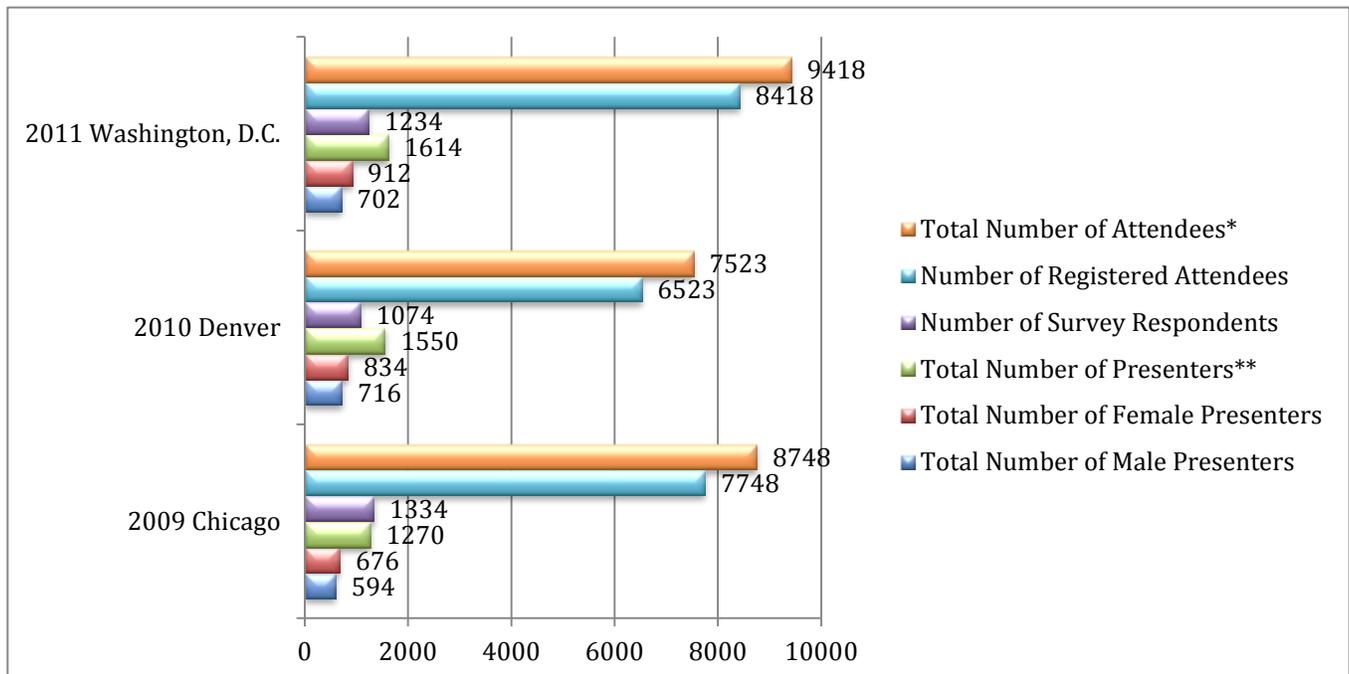
# 2011 Conference & Bookfair Survey Report

Each year following the annual conference, AWP conducts an online survey of conference attendees. AWP uses responses from that survey to improve the planning and execution of our conference, and to address the concerns and needs of our attendees and members. AWP is committed to providing the best service and experience to our conference attendees with the staff and resources available to us.

AWP continues to improve our conference each year, and feedback from our attendees is a tremendous help to us in doing so. If you attended AWP's 2011 Conference & Bookfair and had a question or concern not addressed in this report, please feel free to email us at [conference@awpwriter.org](mailto:conference@awpwriter.org).

## OVERVIEW

The charts in this report illustrate a comparison between the 2009, 2010, and 2011 surveys. We are happy to report that all surveys demonstrate a satisfaction rate among respondents of over 95%. Overall, the results were excellent in comparison to previous years', and tremendous improvements have been made to the conference over the last three years in service and execution of events. However, AWP does recognize there's always room for improvement and we will consistently take a critical look at ways to make the conference even more beneficial to our members, attendees, and presenters.



\*A few evening events and the Saturday bookfair were open to the public, increasing general attendance by more than 1,000 people.

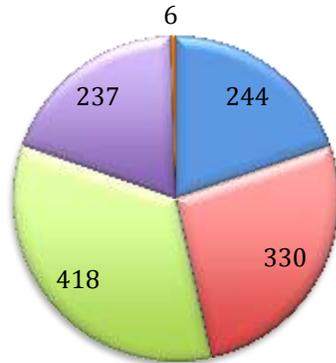
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## 2011 SURVEY RESULTS

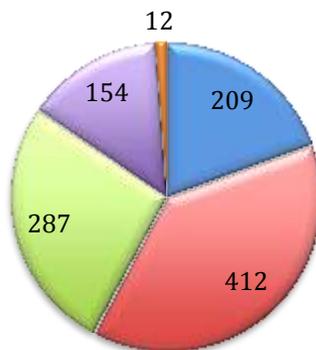
### 1. Are you a member of AWP?

2011 Washington, D.C. Survey



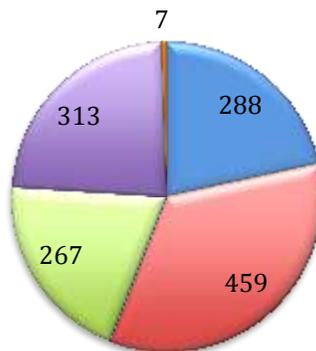
- 19.8% Professor or Director of Member Program
- 26.7% Non-member of AWP
- 33.8% Individual Member of AWP
- 19.2% Students of a Member Program
- 0.5% No Response

2010 Denver Survey



- 19.5% Professor or Director of Member Program
- 38.4% Non-member of AWP
- 26.7% Individual Member of AWP
- 14.3% Students of a Member Program
- 1.1% No Response

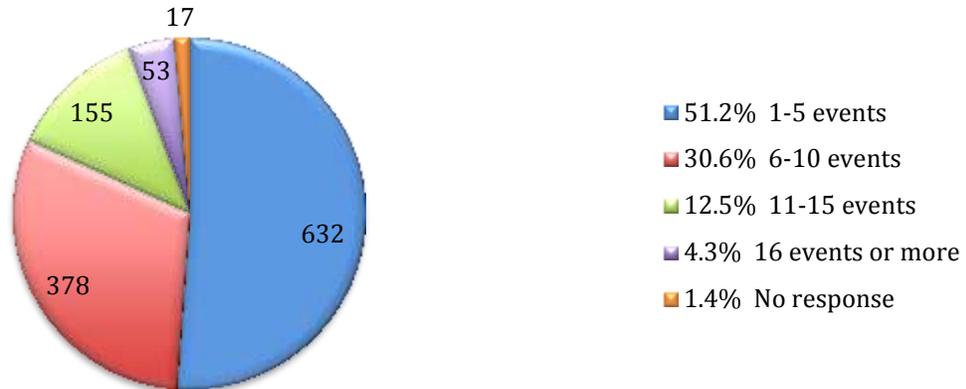
2009 Chicago Survey



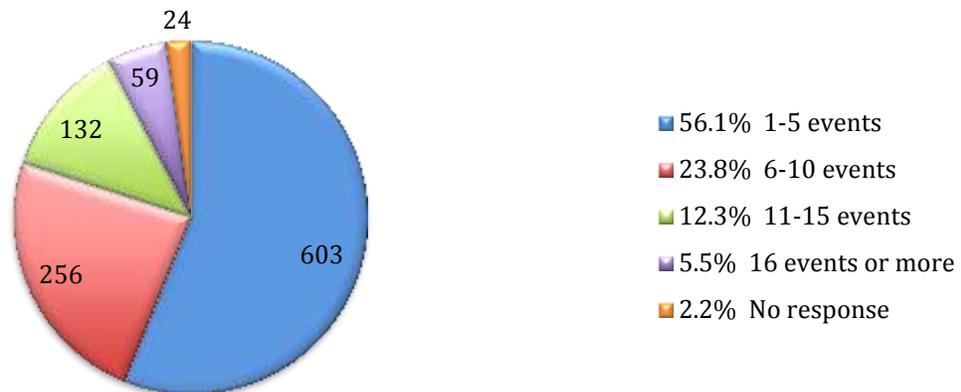
- 21.6% Professor or Director of Member Program
- 34.4% Non-member of AWP
- 20% Individual Member of AWP
- 23.5% Students of a Member Program
- 0.5% No Response

2. How many literary conference events (readings and panel discussions) did you attend this year?

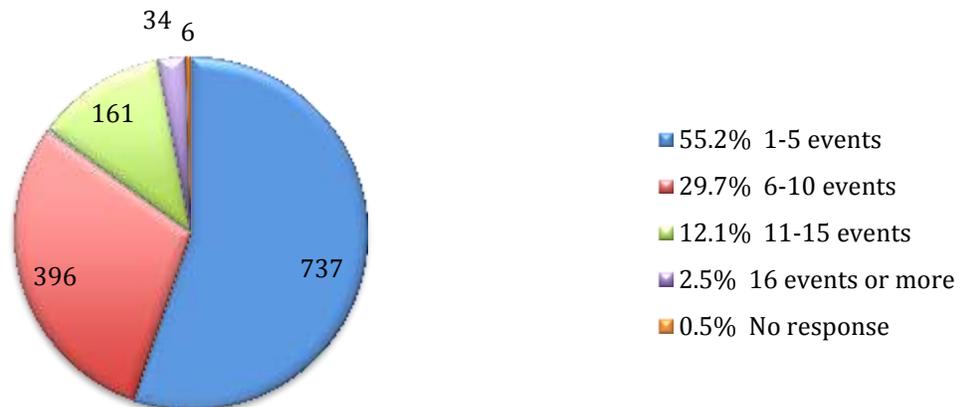
2011 Washington, D.C. Survey



2010 Denver Survey

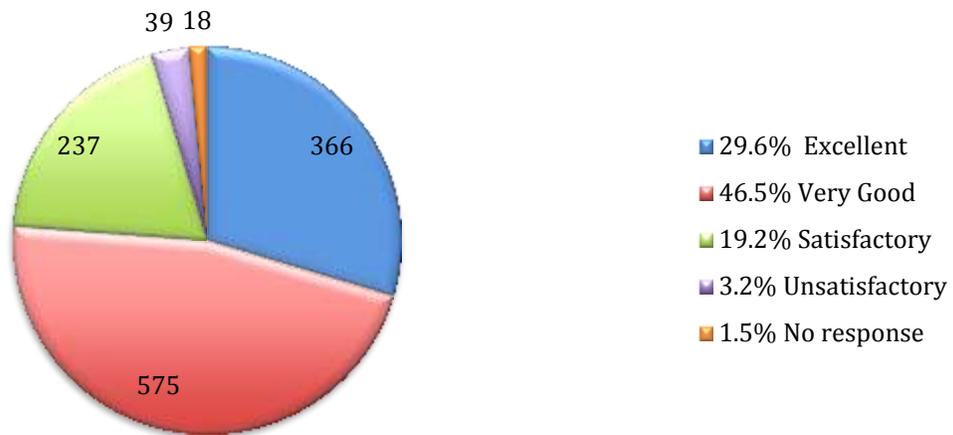


2009 Chicago Survey

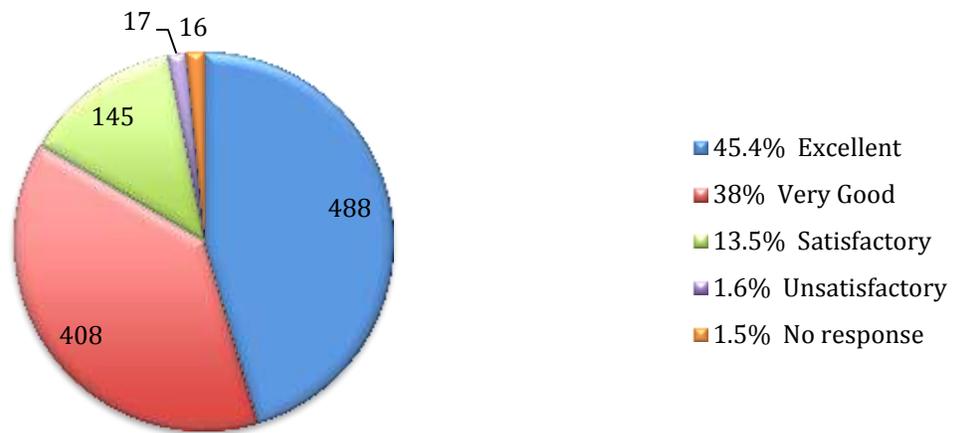


### 3. In general, how would you rate this year's conference?

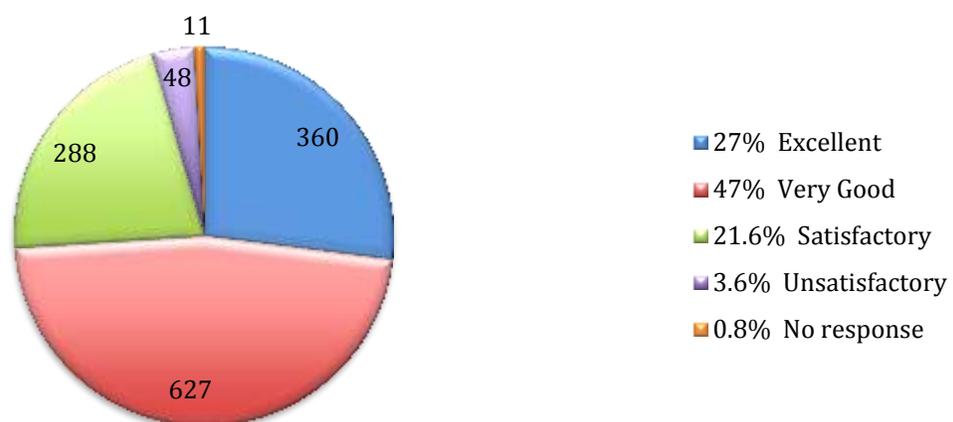
#### 2011 Washington, D.C. Survey



#### 2010 Denver Survey

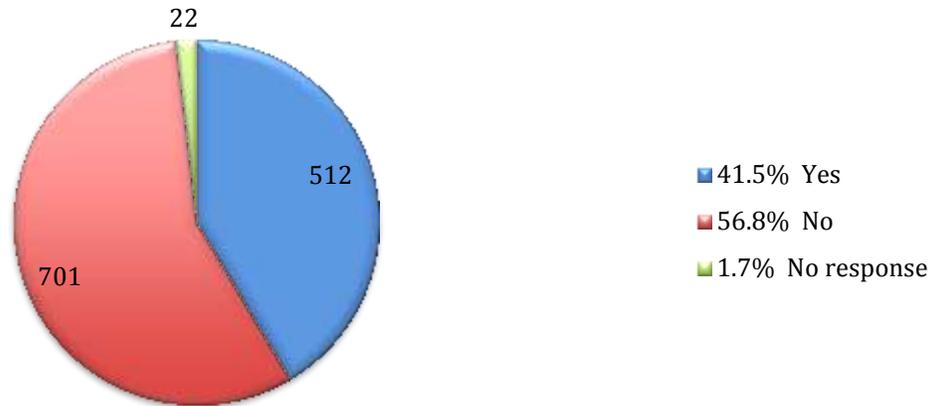


#### 2009 Chicago Survey

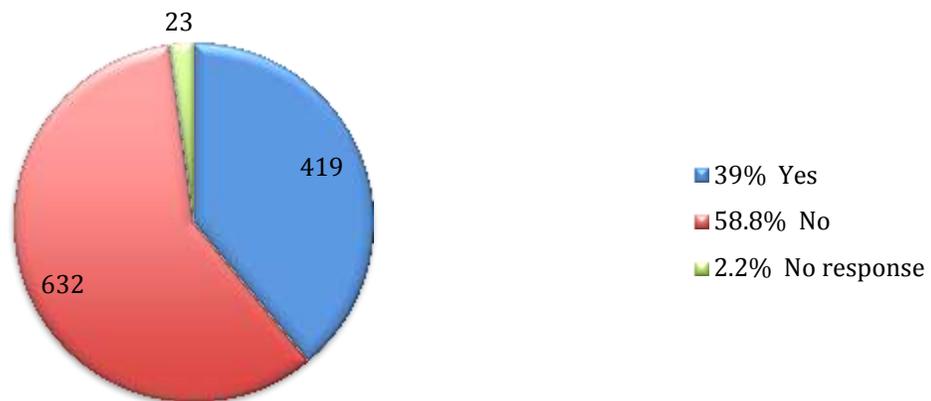


#### 4. Is this the first time you've attended an AWP Conference?

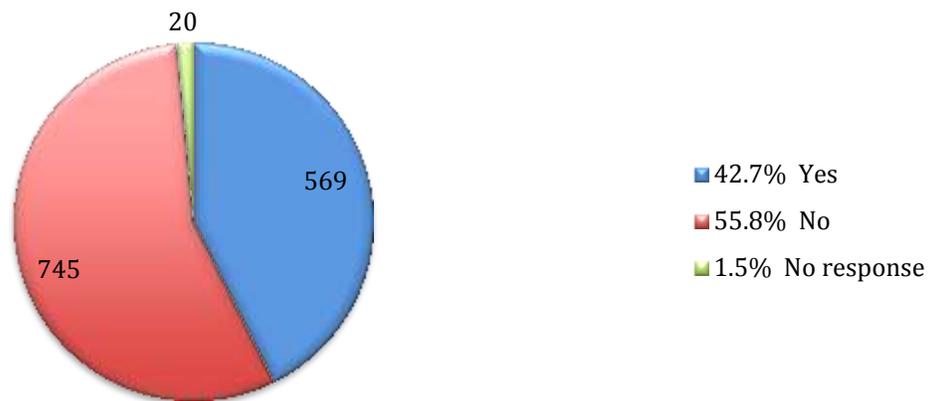
##### 2011 Washington, D.C. Survey



##### 2010 Denver Survey

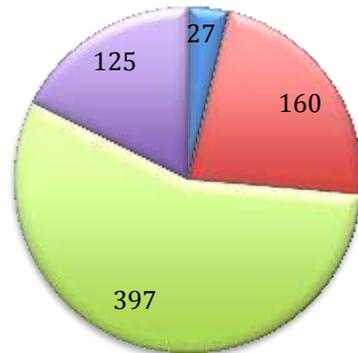


##### 2009 Chicago Survey



5. If you have attended other AWP Conferences in the past, how would you compare this year's conference to previous conferences?

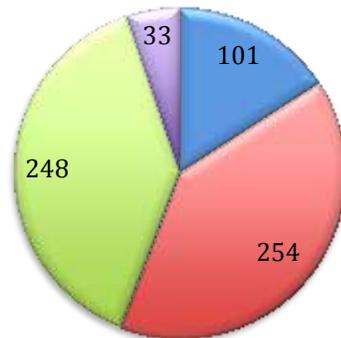
2011 Washington, D.C. Survey\*



- 3.8% Greatly improved over previous years
- 22.6% Better than previous years
- 56% As good as previous years
- 17.6% Worse than previous years

\*out of 709 respondents

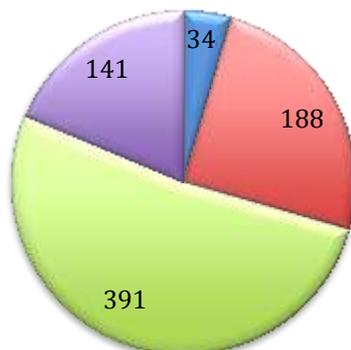
2010 Denver Survey\*



- 15.9% Greatly improved over previous years
- 40% Better than previous years
- 39% As good as previous years
- 5.1% Worse than previous years

\*out of 636 respondents

2009 Chicago Survey\*

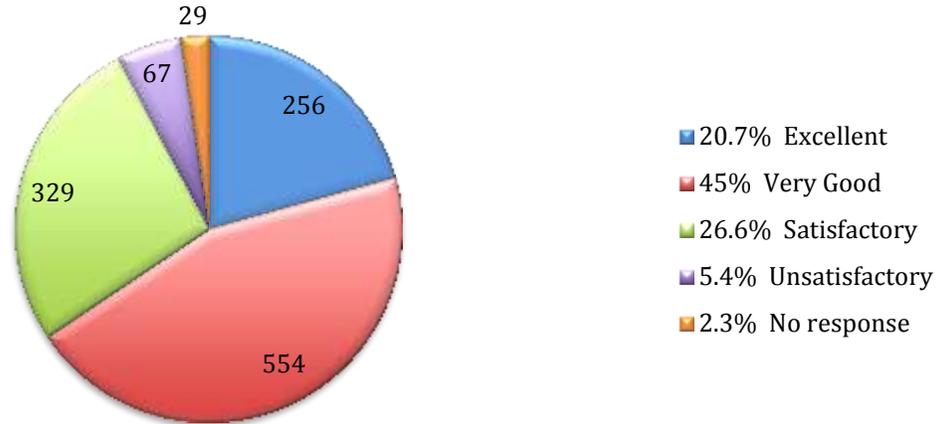


- 4.5% Greatly improved over previous years
- 24.9% Better than previous years
- 51.9% As good as previous years
- 18.7% Worse than previous years

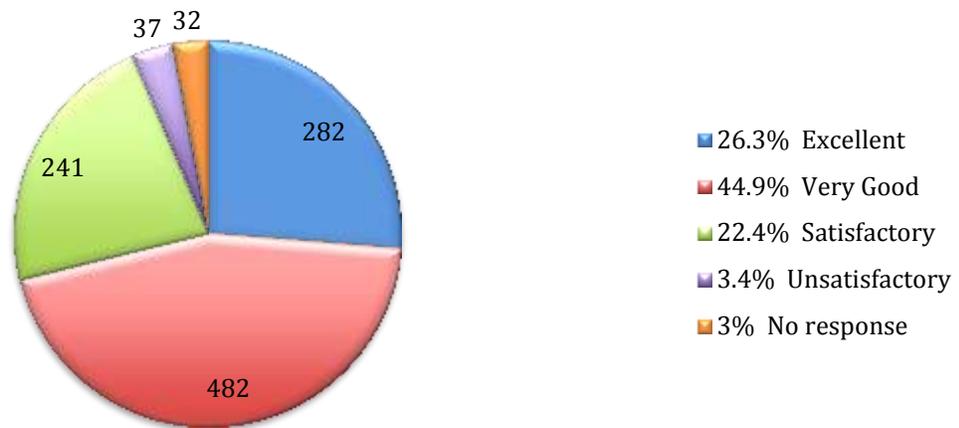
\*out of 754 respondents

## 6. How would you rate the variety of presentations offered this year?

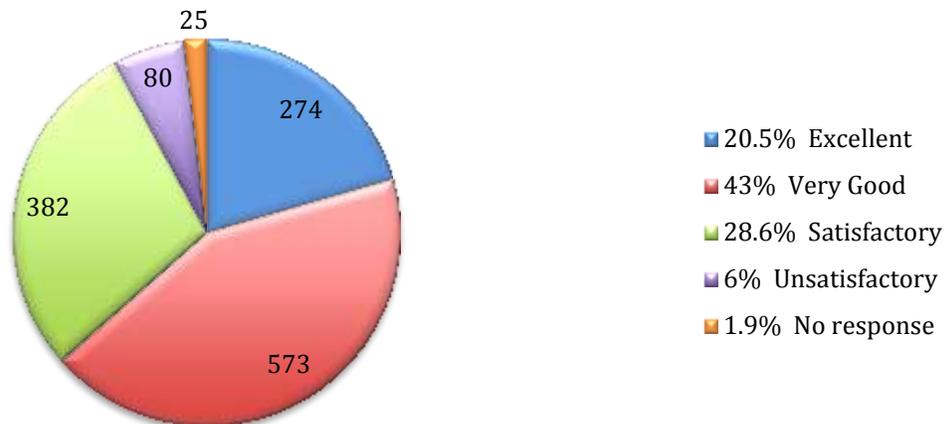
### 2011 Washington, D.C. Survey



### 2010 Denver Survey

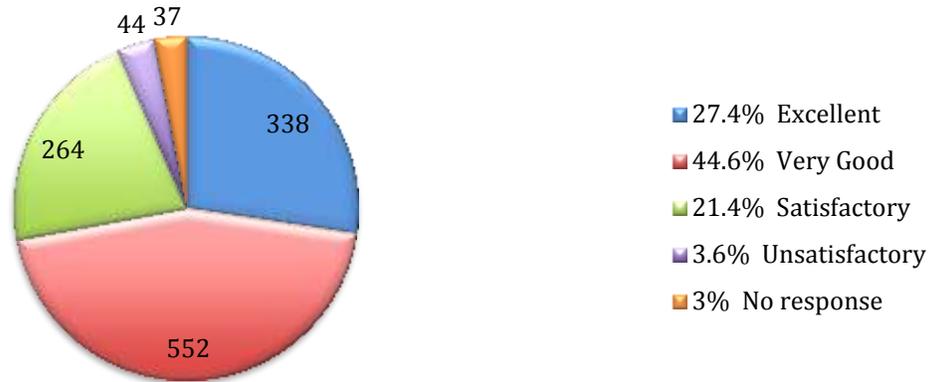


### 2009 Chicago Survey

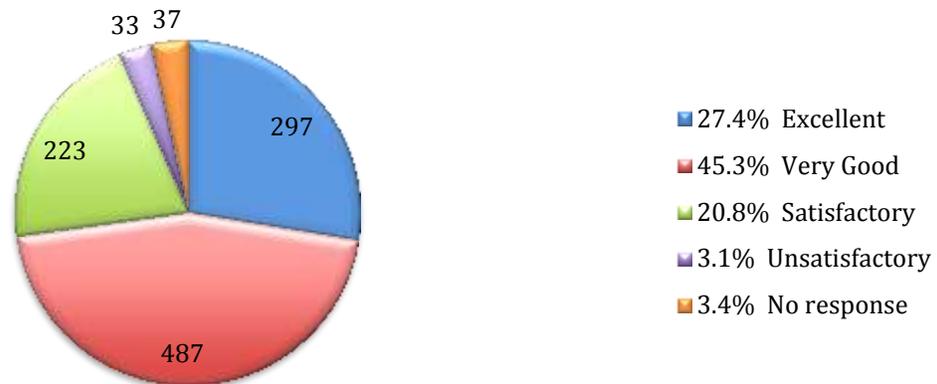


7. How would you rate the level of preparation among this year's presenters, in general?

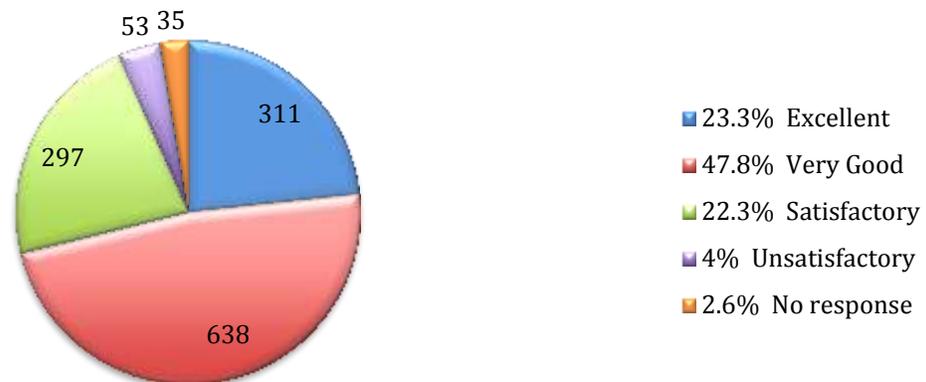
2011 Washington, D.C. Survey



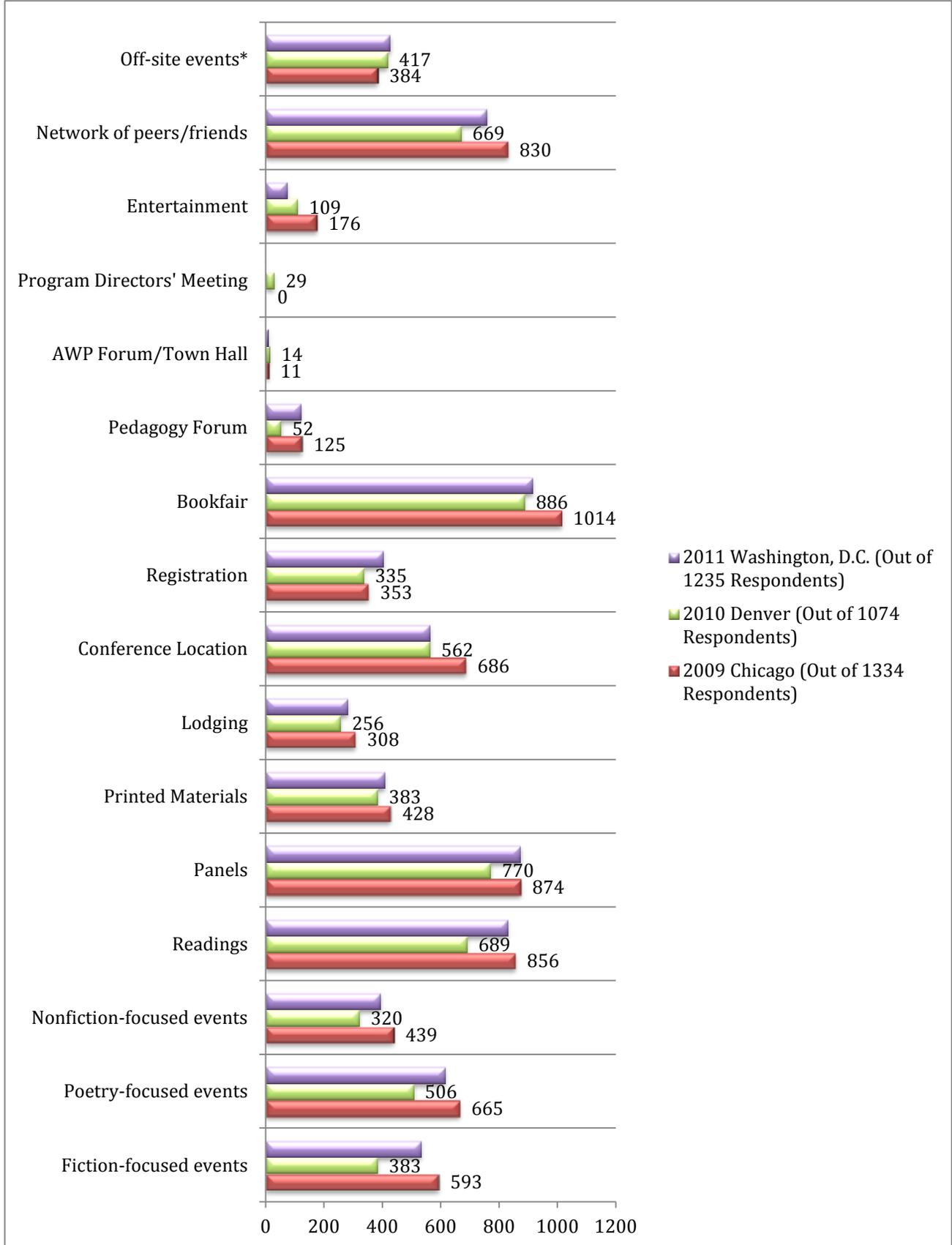
2010 Denver Survey



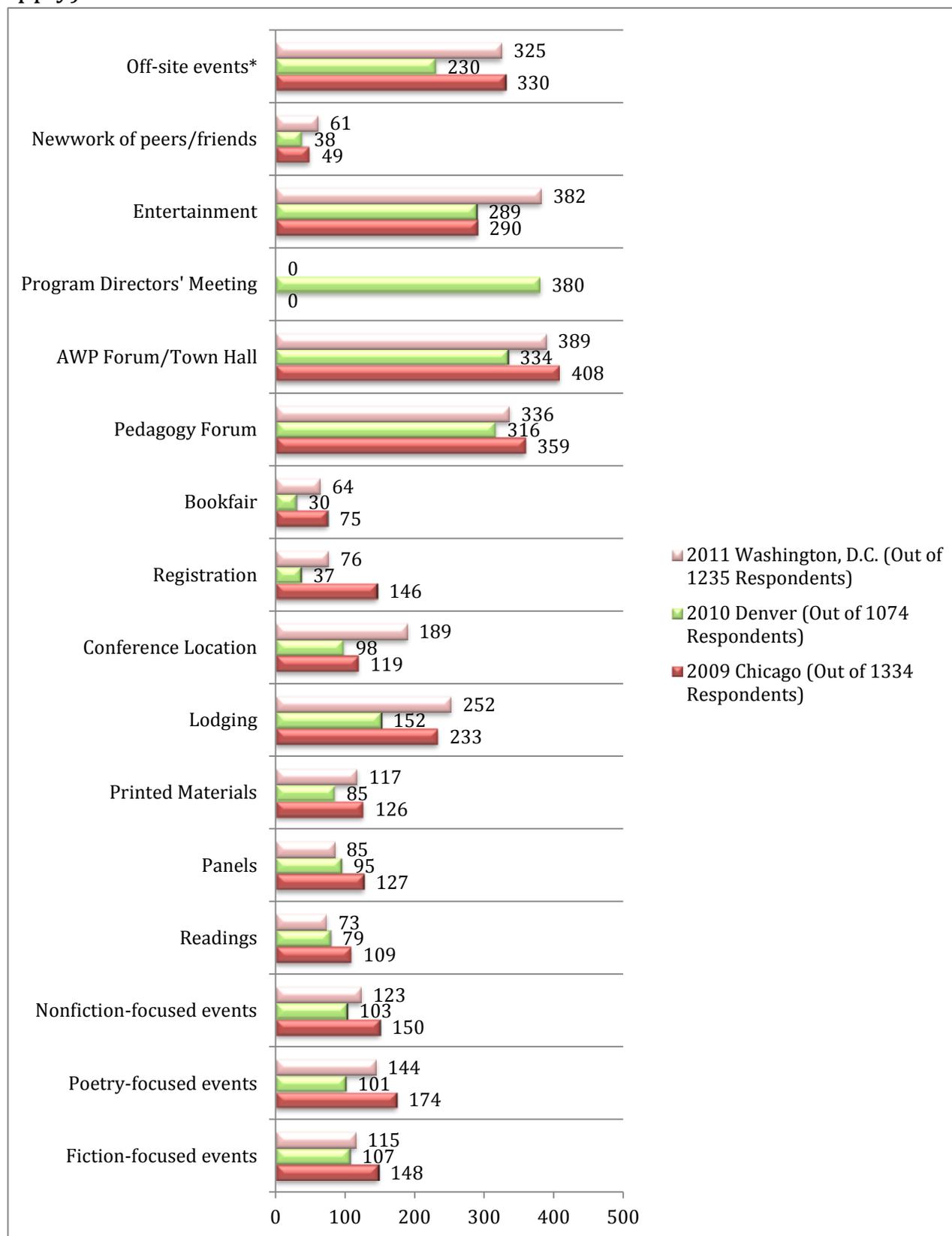
2009 Chicago Survey



8. Which components of the conference were helpful to you? (Check all that apply)

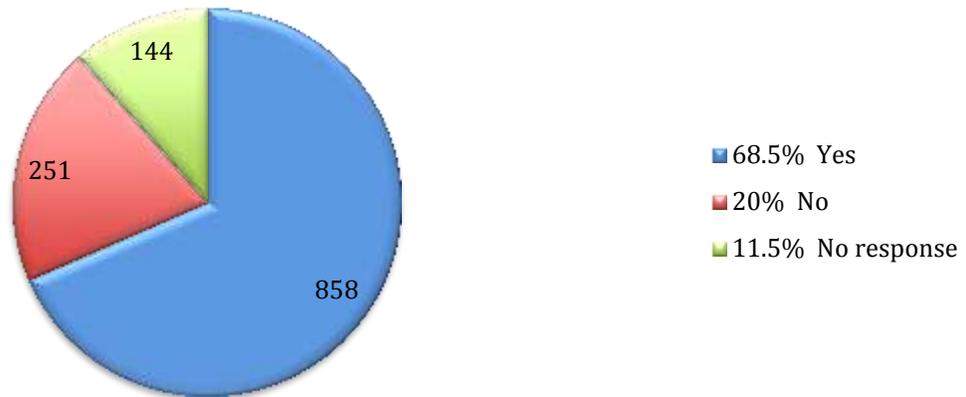


9. Which components of the conference were least helpful to you? (Check all that apply)

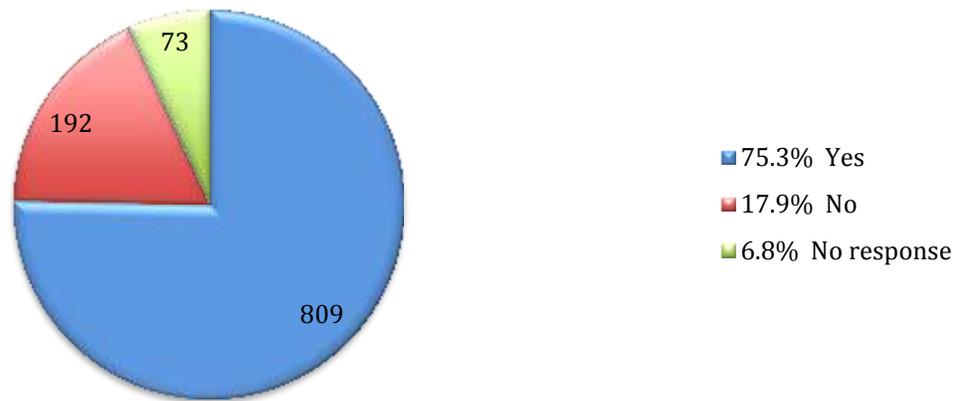


## 10. Have you attended other literary events in the past five years?

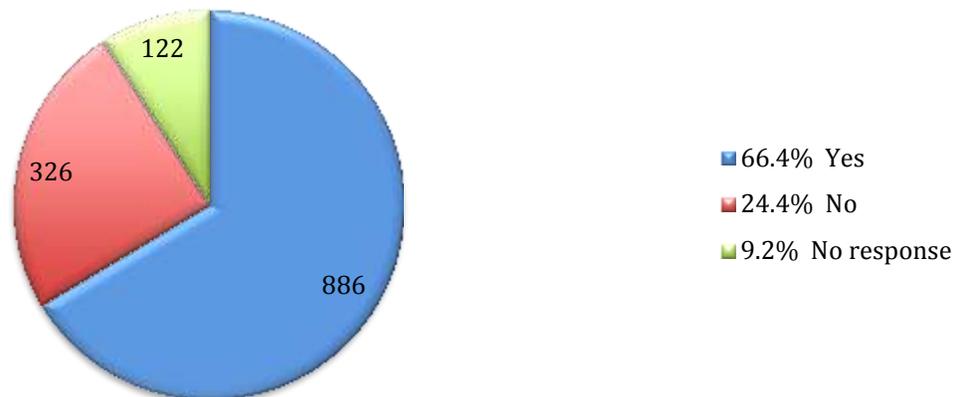
2011 Washington, D.C. Survey



2010 Denver Survey

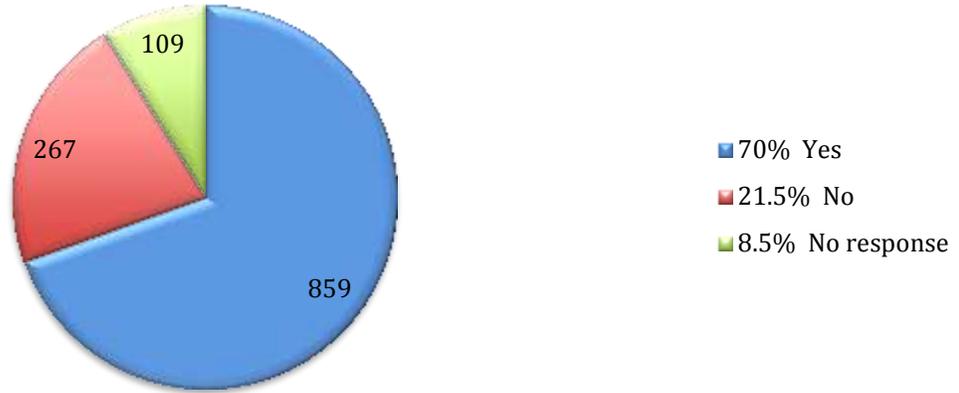


2009 Chicago Survey

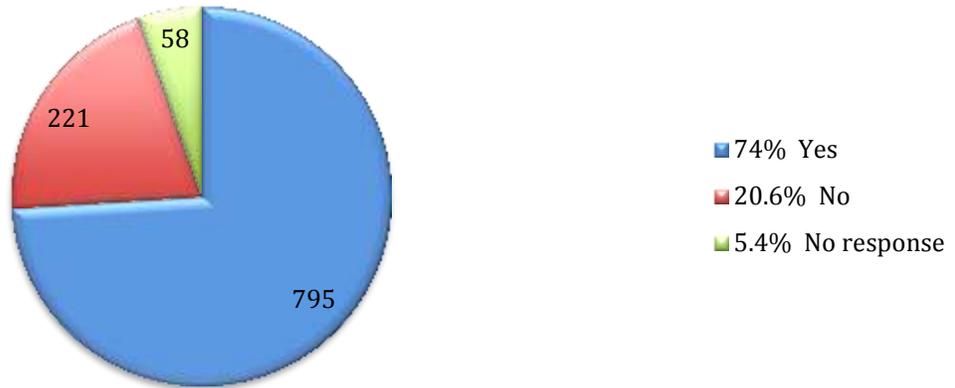


11. Do you subscribe to or regularly read any writer's magazines?

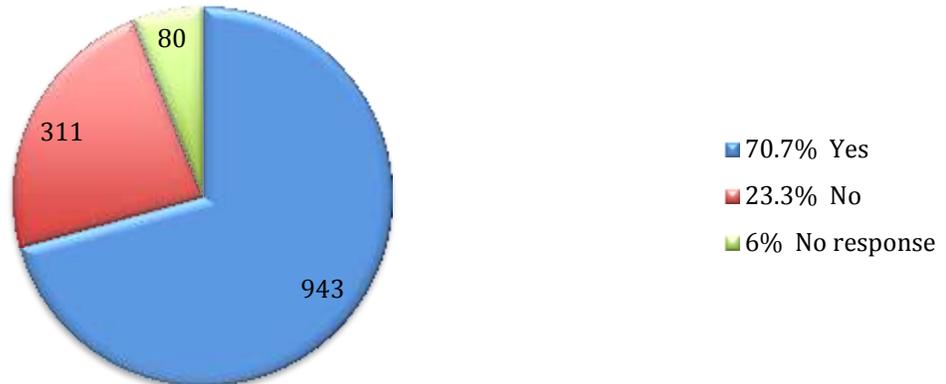
2011 Washington, D.C. Survey



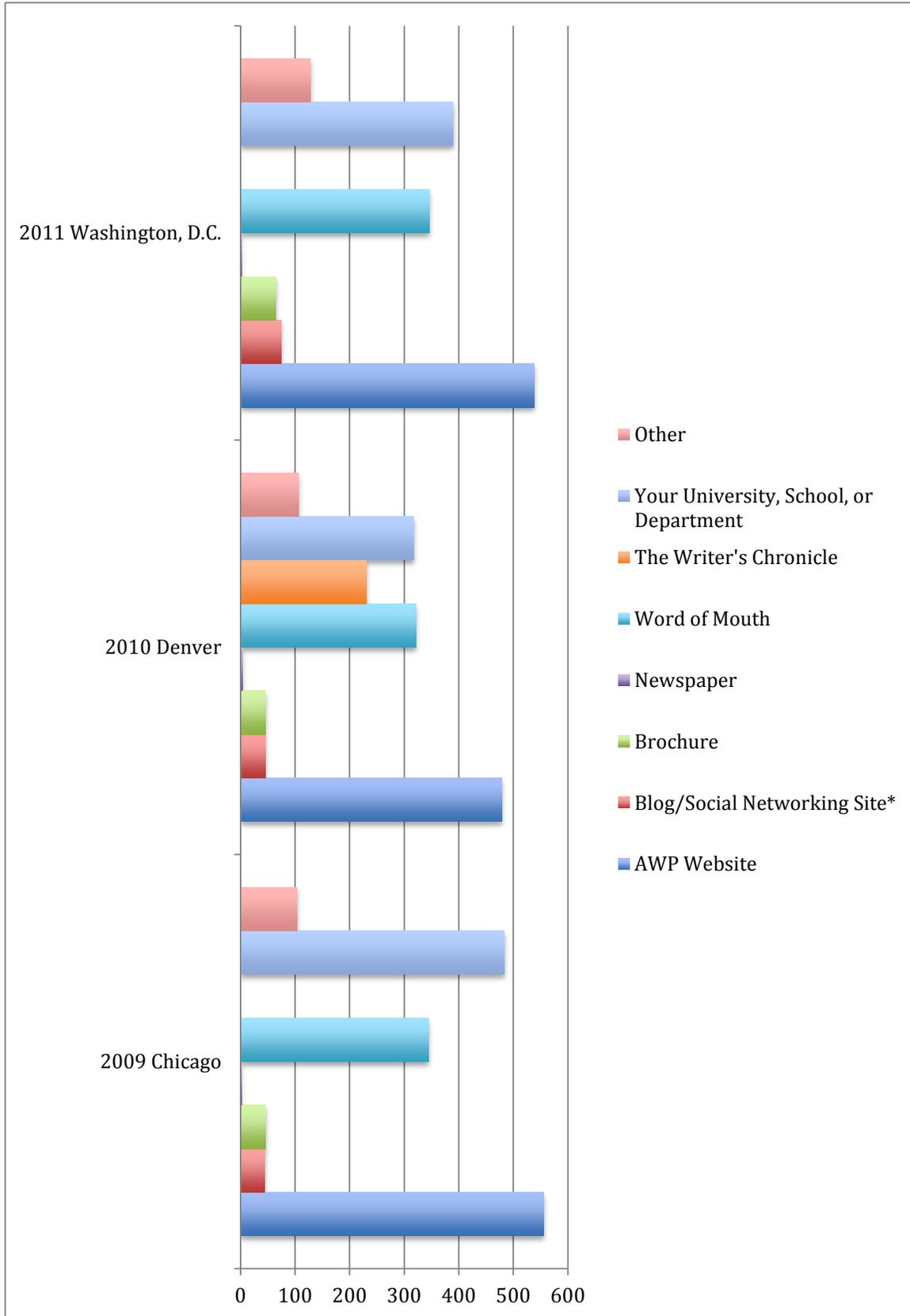
2010 Denver Survey



2009 Chicago Survey

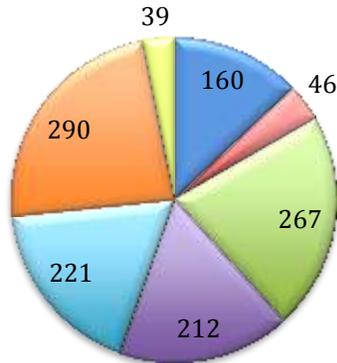


12. Where did you learn about this year's conference? (check all that apply)



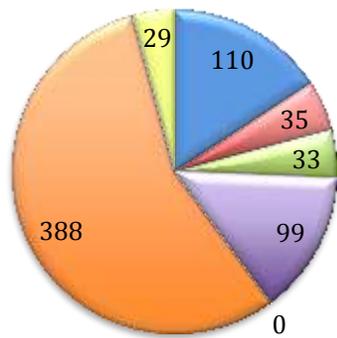
13. How far did you travel to attend the conference?

2011 Washington, D.C. Survey



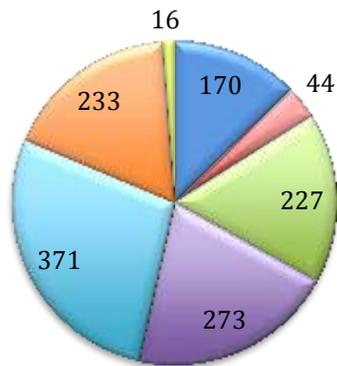
- 13% 1-50 miles
- 3.7% 51-100 miles
- 21.6% 101-300 miles
- 17.2% 301-500 miles
- 17.9% 501-1000 miles
- 23.5% more than 1000 miles
- 3.1% No response

2010 Denver Survey



- 10.2% 1-50 miles
- 3.3% 51-100 miles
- 3.1% 101-300 miles
- 9.2% 301-500 miles
- 0% 501-1000 miles
- 36.1% more than 1000 miles
- 2.7% No response

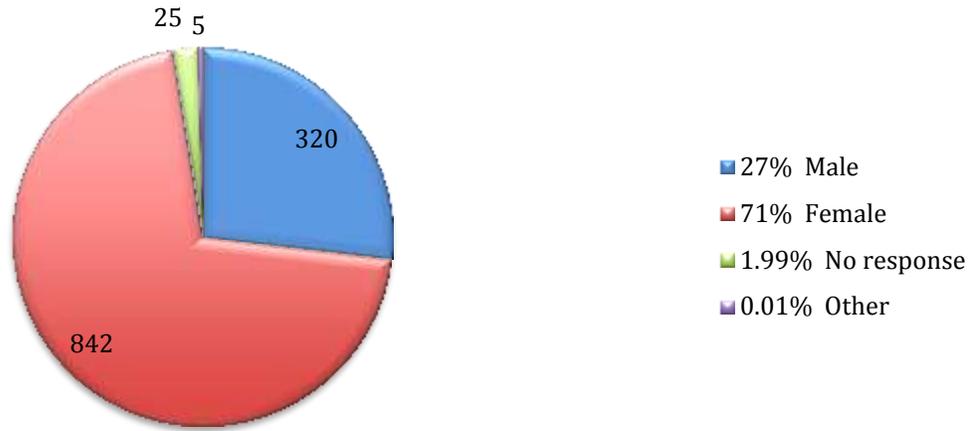
2009 Chicago Survey



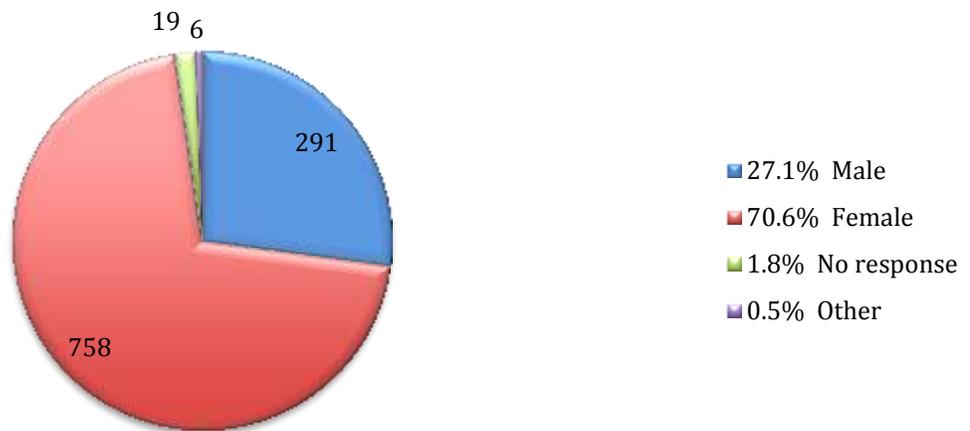
- 12.7% 1-50 miles
- 3.3% 51-100 miles
- 17% 101-300 miles
- 20.5% 301-500 miles
- 27.8% 501-1000 miles
- 17.5% more than 1000 miles
- 1.2% No response

14. What is your gender?

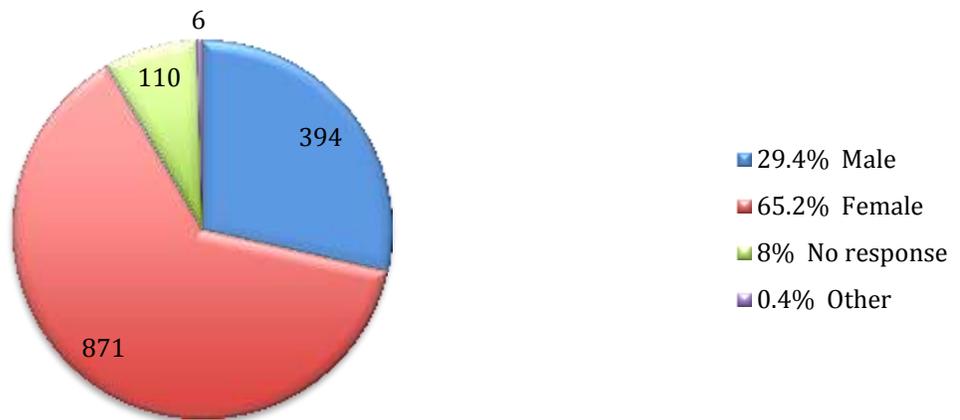
2011 Washington, D.C. Survey



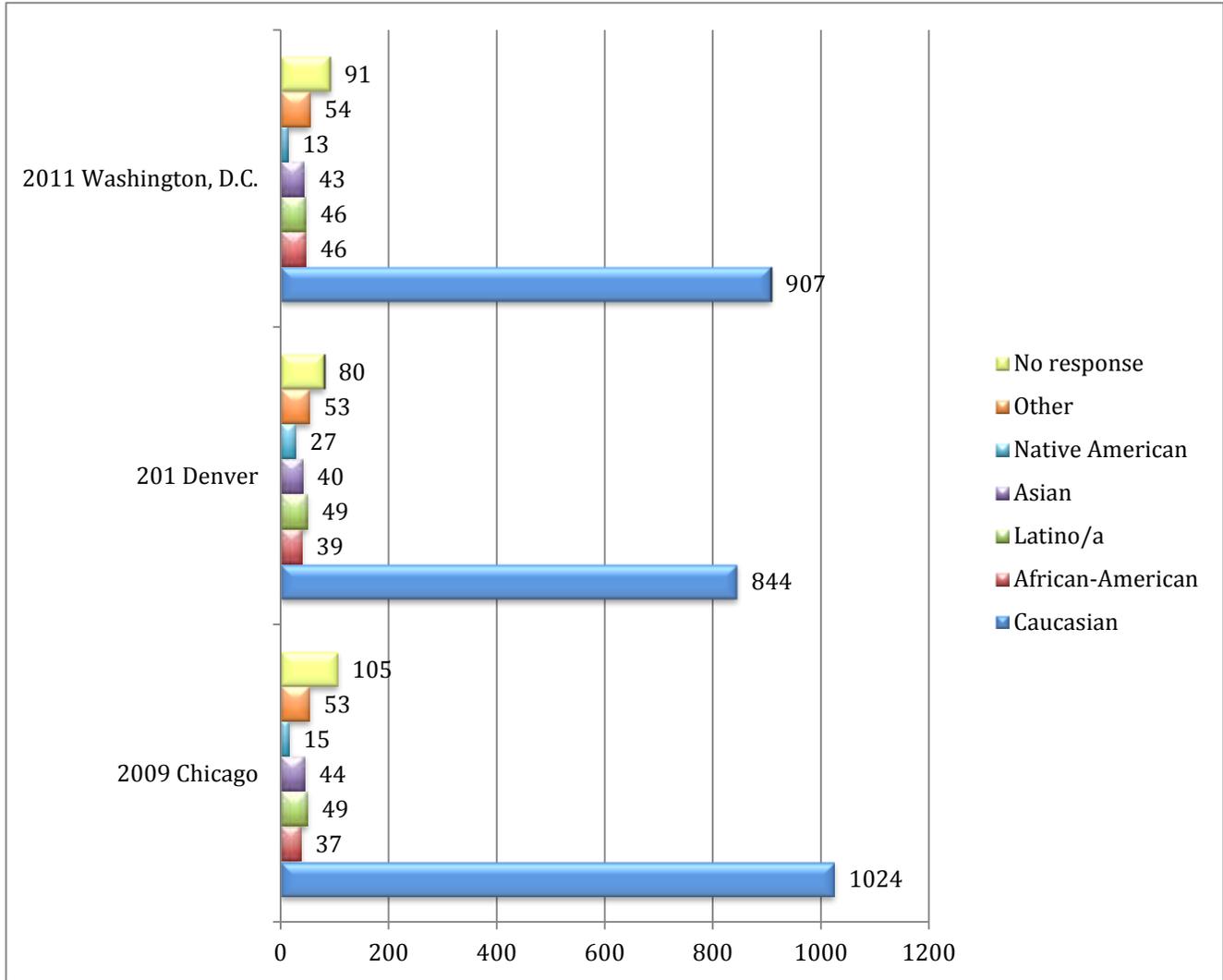
2010 Denver Survey



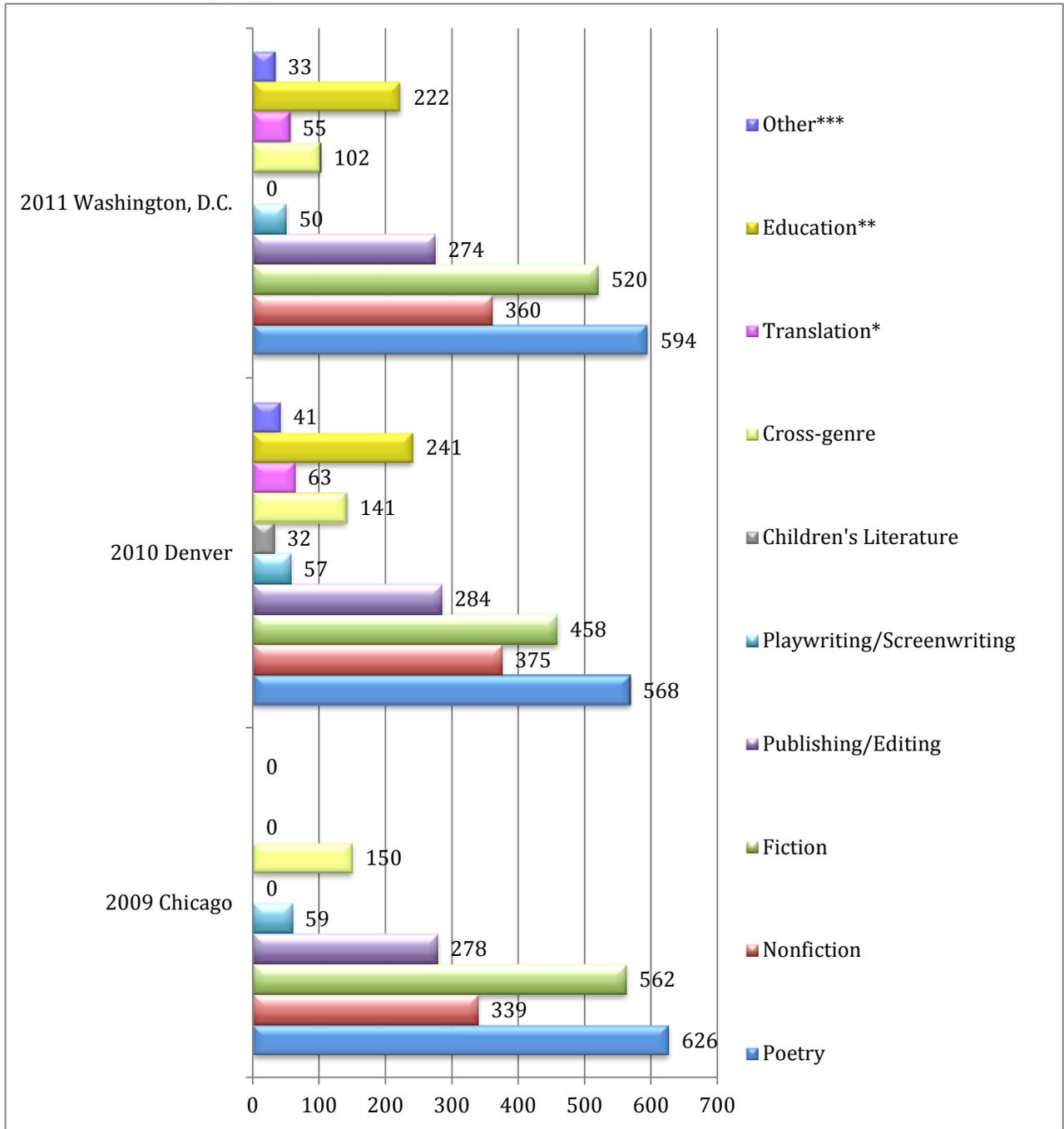
2009 Chicago Survey



15. What is your ethnicity? (check all that apply\*)



16. Please indicate which areas you consider to be your primary area of focus. (check all that apply)

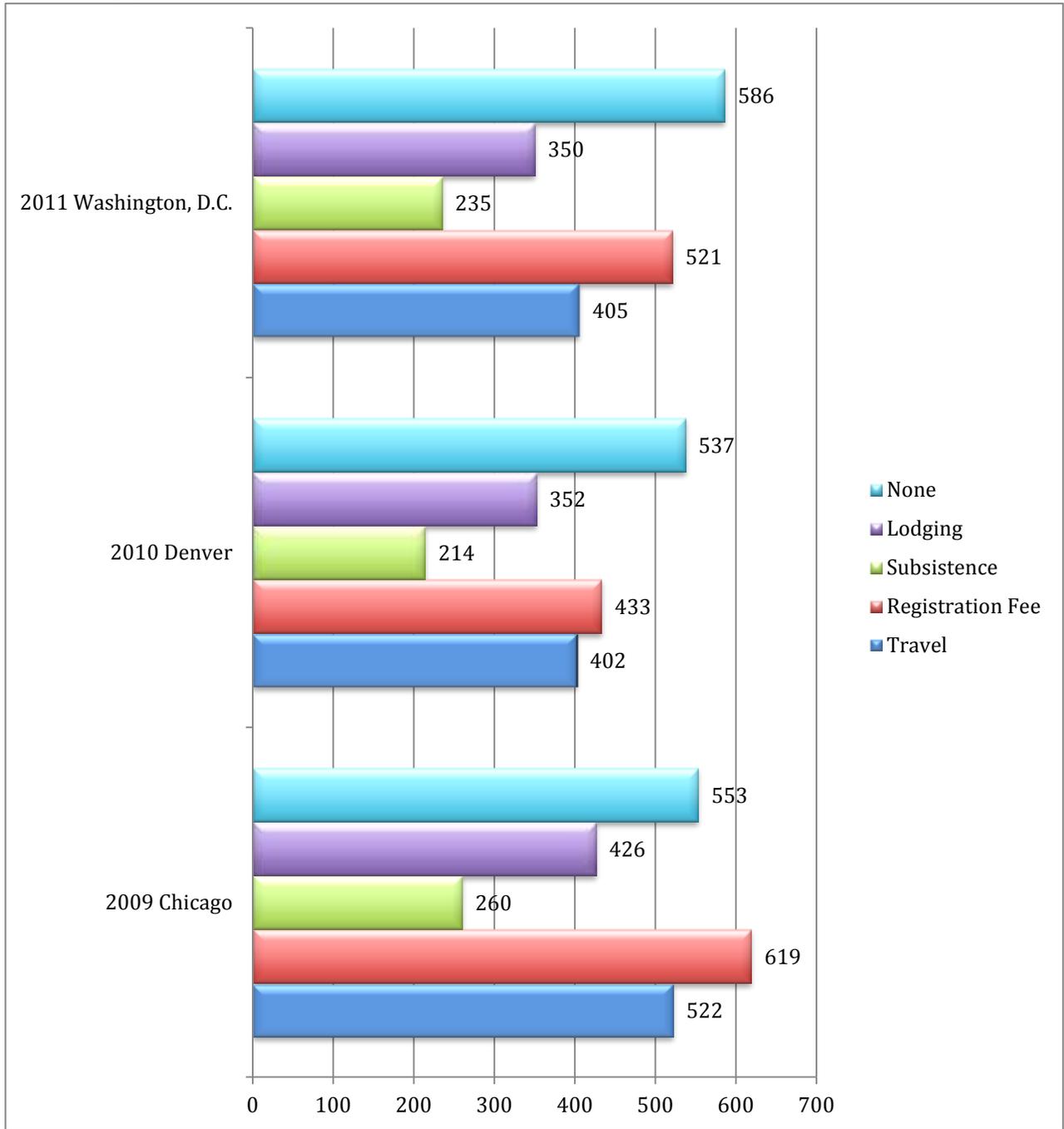


\*\*\*Other was not a component of the 2009 survey

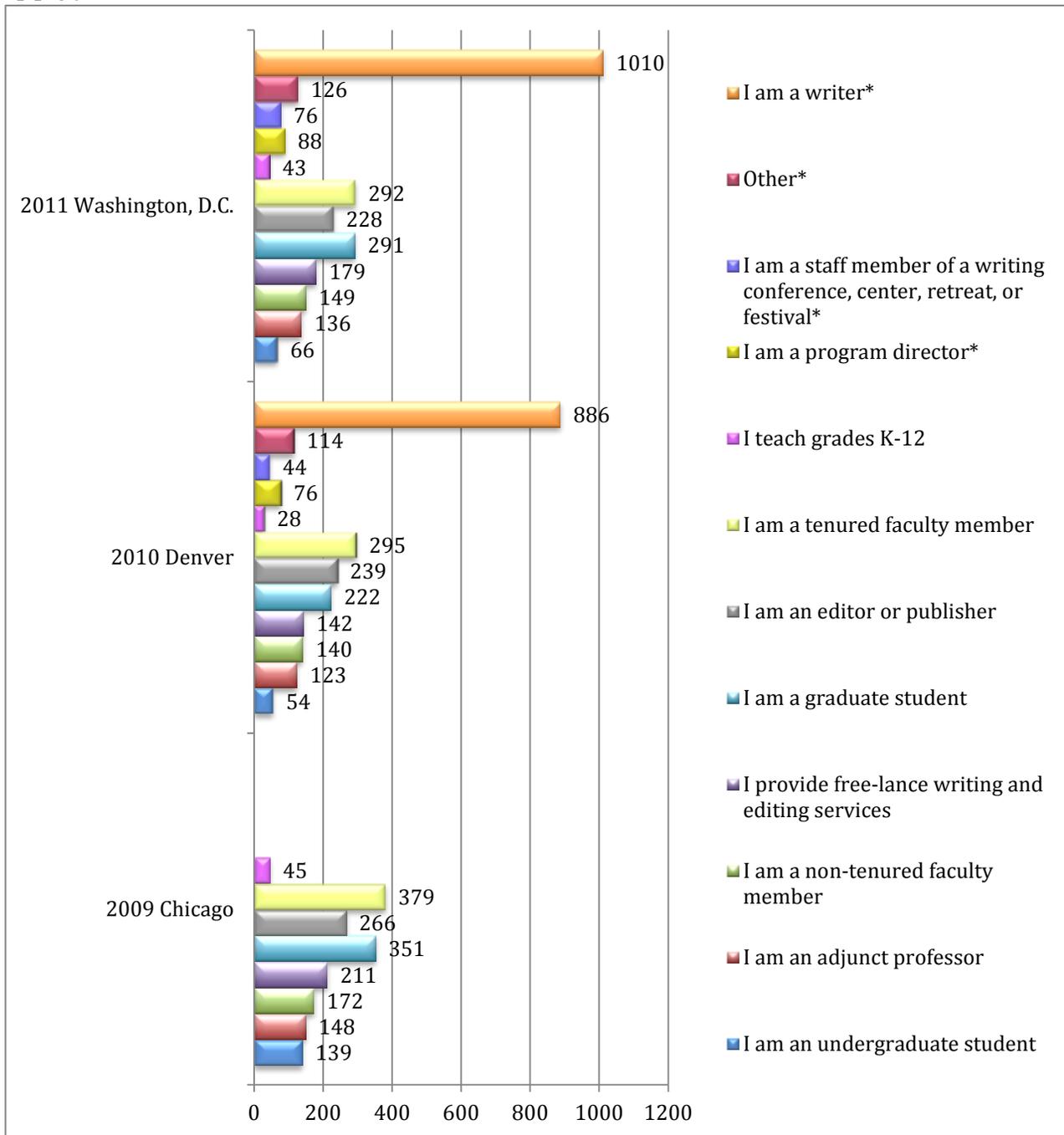
\*\*Education was not a component of the 2009 survey

\*Translation was not a component of the 2009 survey

17. Please indicate for which expenses you received institutional funding. If you did not receive support to attend this year's conference please check "none." (check all that apply)



18. Please indicate which statements below best apply to you. (check all that apply)



\*I am a writer, Other, I am a staff member of a writing conference, etc., and I am a program director were not components of the 2009 survey.

## QUANTIFYING AND RANKING THE WRITTEN COMMENTS

EXAMPLE: Comment ([Number of Mentions within Written Comments](#) / Out of 829 Survey Respondents with Written Comments / 1235 Survey Respondents / 8418 Registered Attendees).

1. The layout of the Conference was confusing. Hold the Conference in a Convention Center ([88](#)).
2. Hold the Conference later in the academic year/Springtime ([80](#)).
3. Rooms were too crowded or too large for Audience turnout ([69](#)).
4. Hold the Conference in Warmer Climates and/or on the West Coast ([60](#)).
5. Panels were lackluster, uninformative, did not support the attendee's needs, or provide provocation. Panels were also repetitive from previous years ([55](#)).
6. The layout of the Bookfair was confusing. Hold the Bookfair in a single contiguous space ([48](#)).
7. There were unprepared or disorganized moderators and/or presenters ([46](#)).
8. Presenters did not stay focused or present on issues related to what was discribed in the program. Some Events publicated as *Panel Discussions* turned into *Readings* instead ([42](#)).
9. Presenters did not engage the audience, or read directly from papers. There was not enough Q&A time after an Event ([42](#)).
10. There are too many scheduling conflicts with similar events taking place at the same time ([33](#)).
11. There were not enough academic, craft-of-writing, pedagogy, or literary criticism panels ([33](#)).
12. The Conference & Bookfair has become too large and overwhelming. It has become increasingly difficulty to network ([31](#)).
13. There was a lack of diversity to the presenters in regards to age, race, sex, ethnicity, nationality, prestige, sexual orientation, spirituality, and political views ([31](#)).
14. There was a lack of variety to the Panels ([28](#)).
15. There were not enough Events centered on Diversity issues ([25](#)).
16. Have a designated Lunch hour, and/or longer Breaks between Sessions ([25](#)).
17. There were not enough Events related to Avant-garde, Cross-genre, or Multi-media issues ([22](#)).
18. Comments concerning the dissolvment of the Pedagogy Forum ([22](#)).
19. There were not enough Panels on Publishing, Online Publishing, Publishing Presses, Small

- Presses, Editing, Freelance Writing, or Job Search (21).
20. Comments on turning the Dance Party into a Benefit (17).
  21. There should be more Playwriting & Screenwriting Panels (11).
  22. Have Childcare Services available at the Conference (10).
  23. On-site Registration took too long (9).
  24. Include more Events/Caucuses geared towards 2-year Colleges (8).
  25. Have more Presentation Handouts for attendees, and/or post the Presentation Materials Online (8).
  26. Have more Children's & Young Adult Literature Events (7).
  27. Have Media Applications available to attendees, such as a searchable Online Schedule, Mobile APP for the Conference Program, or a Twitter feed for a live Message Board (7).
  28. Have more Nonfiction Events (5).
  29. The Bookfair is closed too early in the day, and/or should be open when no Events are taking place (4).

## **AWP RESPONDS TO WRITTEN COMMENTS**

AWP Continues to improve our Conference each year, and feedback from our attendees is a tremendous help to us in doing so. If you attended AWP's 2011 Conference & Bookfair and had a question or concern not addressed in this report, please feel free to contact us at [Conference@awpwriter.org](mailto:Conference@awpwriter.org)

### **1. CONFERENCE SIZE / CROWDING / NETWORKING:**

AWP received 88 responses requesting that future conferences be hosted in a convention center. After 2012, AWP will be moving towards a permanent convention center model. While AWP has hosted the Conference & Bookfair in a convention center in previous years, we are not always able to use such a facility. Next year's AWP Conference will be held at the Hilton Chicago & Palmer

House Hilton Hotels; it will be our last year hosting the Bookfair and events at a hotel venue. In 2011, AWP had a record-breaking number of registered attendees at 8,418 people, and an estimated 1,000 more attendees with selected evening events and the Saturday Bookfair open to the public. Despite the winter snowstorm, many attendees made it to the AWP Annual Conference & Bookfair.

We had 69 responses that the planned occupancy of rooms were inadequate, and that rooms were overcrowded or too large for the size of the audience. The 2011 Conference & Bookfair hosted 388 panel discussions and readings, with 1,548 presenters. As the Conference grows, and we strive to represent a variety of diverse voices, aesthetic viewpoints, and literary, academic, and pedagogical topics, sometimes our estimates for space requirements do not go as well as we would like. There are many variables that go into room assignments that often complicate the matter, e.g. time of day, other events going on at the same time, and composition of panelists. Because the last thing we want is for any attendee to be shut out from an event that interests them, proper room assignments will continue to be at the forefront of our efforts when completing the schedule.

AWP received 31 responses that the conference has become too large of an atmosphere to network. As the conference grows to accommodate the expanding interests and concerns of our constituents, the networking atmosphere will change, and can seem overwhelming, especially for a first-time attendee. Quite simply, some attendees prefer smaller conferences. For those individuals, AWP offers the services of WC&C, a network of over 100 Writers Conferences & Centers that provide a cozier experience, where an attendee can attend events, readings, workshops, festivals, residencies, and retreats throughout the year in North America and abroad.

## **2. QUALITY OF PRESENTATIONS:**

AWP received 55 comments that some panels were uninspiring, uninformative, did not support the attendee's needs, or were repetitive from previous years. While we are aware of some of these unfortunate circumstances, we make it our goal to encourage presenters to prepare as much as possible, to not read directly from their paper, to engage the audience directly, to not speak beyond their allotted time, to allow time for Q&A, and to not stray from the subject of the panel as described in the program. These are all things we strongly encourage, particularly because we know that the best panels are ones that capture the audiences' attention. Only 3.6% of respondents ranked presenter preparation as unsatisfactory in 2011. Each panel is accepted or rejected mainly on the strength of their proposal. In other words, we want the panels to be as good as we can imagine they could be when we accept them. We will continue to remind our presenters and moderators, not only to uphold their agreement with us, but to show up for their event prepared in a timely manner, follow the conversation indicated in their event description, and of other ways in which they can best fulfill their obligations to the audience. AWP will continue to provide all moderators and presenters with guidelines for their presentations in as many forms as possible. While respondents are rightly concerned with the lack of presentation on the part of some presenters, it has also been observed that preparation overall has improved over the years. In the past two years, we've had a better than 95% satisfaction rate for the conference, with 27.4% of the respondents ranking the level of presenter preparation as "excellent," and with 44.6% of the respondents ranking it as "very good." In 2011, 3.8% of the respondents ranked the conference as having "greatly improved over previous years," and 22.6% of the respondents ranked it as "better than previous years." While AWP cannot manage the execution of every event,

or force presenters to engage in discussion with attendees, time for Q&A and limiting the number of panelists can be strongly suggested or required in the guidelines. Though AWP embraces the creativity that is often impromptu among our conference presenters, we feel it is our obligation to provide attendees with well-executed and exceptionally prepared events. We will continue to improve the quality of our events and presentations.

### **3. CONFERENCE SCHEDULE CONFLICTS:**

We work meticulously to ensure that conflicts of similar events taking place in the schedule are avoided. AWP has a large and diverse constituency of writers; in other words, we try to make sure that panels on special literary topics, disability, sexuality, Latino/a, African American, Native American, Asian American, and other groups that comprise AWP, are not scheduled against themselves. We attempt to avoid any conflicts with panels that deal with similar types of issues; with 388 panel discussions and readings in three days, conflicts outside of specific groups, and mostly between genres, sometimes appear. Other contingencies to consider, such as the appropriateness of room size, audio/video requirements, and events that have to be scheduled at specific times, are issues we also have to consider in creating the schedule. One of the problems with having a conference of this size is that there are going to be more things our attendees would like to see than they are able to go to. AWP has several staff and board members review the schedule to try and avoid conflicts as much as possible.

### **4. ATTENDEE EXPENSES:**

AWP received 53 comments that this year's conference was too expensive either in terms of hotel guest rooms, the cost for food and beverage at the hotel, the fee for attendee registration, the AWP Dance Party Benefit, parking at the hotel, or the cost of traveling to and using public transportation in Washington D.C. In 2011, the conference rate at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park and Omni Shoreham Hotels was \$169/night, which was reduced from the standard rate of \$219/night. AWP was pleased to bring our attendees a lower rate for guest rooms this year. In comparison to 2010, the Conference rate at the Hyatt Regency in Denver was \$189/night, which was reduced from the standard rate of \$259/night. While the cost of food and beverage in any major American city is going to be expensive, the fees for these amenities at the hotels that can contain the AWP Conference & Bookfair are always going to be at a premium. While we understand how these added expenses are weighty to some attendees, public receptions, hosted by individual institutions, and AWP's Public Reception on Thursday, offered free drinks and hors d'oeuvres. In 2011, AWP launched its first ever Dance Party Benefit at the Annual Conference & Bookfair in Washington D.C., taking place of the Public Reception on Friday and Saturday nights of the Conference. AWP was thrilled to introduce the Dance Party Benefit as an effort to help AWP expand and improve many of its services for writers, teachers, students, administrators, and small publishers. Part of the \$50 donation for the Dance Party Benefit helped to underwrite AWP's services on behalf of members, including the Job List, our national advocacy efforts, and our work to ensure small classes, better pay, and more financial aid for faculty and students. However, after much discussion we have decided to discontinue the Dance Party Benefit in an effort to keep the AWP Public Reception a freely available celebration for all registered attendees. AWP will continue to provide such services as the Public Reception as budgeting allows, and will continue to

find new ways to serve our members and attendees by providing affordable conference services. As a nonprofit, the cost for registration and bookfair space is calculated in such a way to primarily enable AWP to cover the expense of hotel and convention center space rental, staff time, exhibit setup, decorating, and other significant expenditures necessitated by hosting such a large conference. Though these prices all fall below the normal costs of a professional conference of equal size, AWP carefully analyzes how each fee is best put to use to further support our attendees. AWP understands, particularly in light of the current economy that visiting Washington D.C. stretched many of our attendees' budgets. AWP recognizes that travel budgets and institutional support are currently being scaled back, or in some cases eliminated, at many colleges and universities; we will keep this in mind as we negotiate future hotel contracts, ensuring that we get the best rates possible for our members.

## **5. DATES AND LOCATION OF THE CONFERENCE:**

AWP received 60 requests for the conference to be held in a warmer climate, on the west coast, or later in the Spring. Previously, hotel rates offered for cities like Miami, San Francisco, and San Diego have been too high (over \$250/night), for our members. We want to make sure that accommodations and living costs in the host city are not cost prohibitive to our attendees. That being said, AWP is happy to announce that the Conference will be brought to Los Angeles in 2016. AWP will continue to search for the best cities possible to host our upcoming Annual Conferences & Bookfairs. Even in warmer cities on the southeast and the west coast, the task of negotiating discounted rates for attendees becomes more difficult because either there is not an off-season rate, or the off-season rate is six months later than our conference can take place. The west coast is a very difficult area to receive good hotel and convention center rates; even a city such as Seattle demands top dollar during our conference season. AWP is pleased to announce our next hosts cities as follows: Chicago, Illinois (2012), Boston, Massachusetts (2013), Seattle, Washington (2014), Minneapolis, Minnesota (2015), and Los Angeles (2016).

## **6. BALANCE OF GENRE / CRAFT / PEDAGOGICAL PANELS:**

AWP received 23 comments that there were not enough non-fiction, playwriting/screenwriting, or children's/young adult literature events at the 2011 Conference & Bookfair. We received 33 comments that there were not enough academic, craft-of-writing, pedagogical, or literary criticism events. There were 21 comments in regards to the conference not including enough publishing, publishing presses, online publishing, freelance writing, or events on job search. There were 22 comments that there were not enough events related to avant-garde, cross-genre, or multimedia issues. Lastly, 28 respondents in the survey commented that there was a lack of variety to the panels. AWP developed a system of modules to ensure that there is a balance between the variety issues and topics that interest our constituents. Over the past few conferences, the gap between poetry and other genres has been closing. An increased number of fiction and nonfiction events at the conference is no doubt a result of an effort to develop more quality featured prose events. In 2011, there were 76 fiction and nonfiction events, making up 19.6% of the panels and readings at the Conference; there were 77 poetry readings and panels, making up 19.8% of event programming. In equal proportion to the number of prose and poetry events accepted, AWP received 176 prose proposals and 179 poetry proposals. However, the same case cannot be said about the number of proposals submitted for the genres of playwriting/screenwriting,

children's/young adult literature, publishing, and agents/contracts. If we are to maintain the increasing number of writers who are interested in joining us at these events, we cannot rely on such submissions to be made without AWP prompting. In 2005, the number of prose event proposals shot-up due to the AWP Board's efforts to solicit prose proposals from colleagues, universities, and list-serves. Because AWP is constantly looking for panels that are diverse, unique, and as wide ranging as our membership, such practices, and additional solicitations to AWP's vast constituency would continue to prove beneficial.

## **7. DIVERSITY / VARIETY WITH PANELS AND PRESENTERS:**

AWP has worked very hard to diversify its conference programming. Typically, event discussions and readings centered on diversity issues and minority participants receive special consideration in the review of proposals. At the 2011 Conference in Washington D.C., 78, or 20.1% of the 388 panel discussions and readings were focused on African American, Asian and Asian American, Latino/a, Diasporic literature, Feminist, LGBT, and other diversity issues important to AWP's constituencies. While AWP received 25 comments saying that there were not enough events centered on diversity issues, and 31 comments stating that there was a lack of diversity to the presenters in regards to age, race, sex, ethnicity, nationality, prestige, or sexual orientation, AWP will continue to seek ways to bring the highest quality programming to our broad and growing constituency. The expansion of the conference from four symposia and two evening readings in 1972 at AWP's first Annual Meeting at the Library of Congress, to 16 panel discussions and readings in the 1990s, to around 400 events today has drastically improved the variety of aesthetic view points, diversity, and the support we provide to AWP members at all stages of their careers. Similarly to fiction and nonfiction events, AWP will continue to play a more active role in soliciting and encouraging such proposals in order to have a more diverse representation among event topics. AWP is constantly looking for panels that are as distinct, unique, and multifaceted as our constituency. We want nothing more than to have panelists that best reflect who our constituents are, and the community we represent. The committee, made up of qualified AWP Board, members from the association, and Staff Members varies from year to year. Over the decades, the Conference Committee has been comprised of members of various ethnic groups, sexual orientations, ages, beliefs, and varying genre interests. The selections do not have anything to do with prejudice, but much like with the editor of a press or journal, it's hard to question someone's personal opinion of quality. Of course, that certainly doesn't mean the committee feels the panels they reject are not of high quality. We received 979 proposals in 2011, and each year, the Conference Committee laments the difficulty of their decisions; because of space considerations, we were only able to accept 388 or 39.6% of the proposals. We will continue to seek conference venues capable of accommodating the increasing number of accepted panels each year. While many high quality panels had to be left off of the 2011 schedule, we do not take this lightly, and will continue to vet the panels in a transparent, honest, and as serious a way as possible.

## **8. BREAKS BETWEEN SESSIONS / ADEQUATE REST AREAS:**

AWP received 25 requests for a designated lunch hour and/or breaks. Attendees may take breaks whenever they would like, and while it is unfortunate that a panel discussion may be taking place

at the same time a person would like to have lunch, it would be unwise to bring back the lunch break, or to increase the break time between events. Increasing the break between sessions would require eliminating an entire time slot of events from our schedule—one of our biggest compliments is the variety of sessions. Eliminating the lunch break was a practical move to open up a time slot. Everyone needs time to rest—even those who are excited to attend their fourth or fifth event in a row. For all panelists and attendees, we provide a lounge area to spend time eating breakfast, for friends to catch-up during the day, or just a place to gather oneself to relax and write. AWP will continue to create lounge areas for our attendees, as long as the space considerations allow it.

## **9. DISSOLVING THE PEDAGOGY FORUM INTO PEDAGOGY EVENTS AT THE CONFERENCE:**

At the 2011 AWP Annual Conference & Bookfair in Washington D.C., we announced that the Pedagogy Forum would be dissolved into Pedagogy Events at the Conference, meaning that the forum would cease to continue. Formerly, there were two deadlines, two systems for the adjudication of proposals, and two venues for the presentation of pedagogy events. Pedagogy events once appeared within the Pedagogy Forum as well as within the main schedule of events at the conference. Now, *all* pedagogy events will appear within the main conference schedule. As all pedagogy events get folded into the main conference schedule, the number of pedagogy panel discussions will increase from 30 in Washington D.C. to 50 in Chicago; in 2013, the total number of pedagogy events will increase to 60 presentations devoted to pedagogy. However, the number of pedagogy presenters will remain the same in 2012 as this year's total number of pedagogy presenters. We hope that including all pedagogy events into the main program will build and increase both intergenerational discourse and interscholastic discourse between different schools, genres, and generations of writers. The Pedagogy Committee, composed of the AWP board members of the Professional Standards Committee (the regional representatives of AWP programs) and three non-trustee members of AWP who will be students or recent graduates of our programs, trusts that by including all pedagogy events within the main programming, that proposals for these events will only ensure greater rigor, creativity, and diversity in the benefit of this focus. AWP will work to ensure that approximately half of the pedagogy presenters will be students and adjunct faculty in order to facilitate participating in the conference by these groups. We will also continue to choose and adapt the best of its events for publication in the pedagogy section of AWP's eLink and in an annual PDF booklet. Lastly, the Pedagogy Committee will work on creating a blog devoted to pedagogy issues in order to continue the conversations started at the AWP Annual Conference & Bookfair.