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## **Evaluation of the 2006 ICA Conference in Dresden**

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### Conference evaluation

Each year ICA conducts an evaluation survey among delegates who attended the annual conference. To ensure comparability across conferences, each year's survey is closely based on that of previous years.<sup>1</sup> The survey is administered online, this year using a specialist website at Bristol University. The web survey did not collect any personal, IP or other identifying information.

The ICA office emailed all delegates at the Dresden conference to complete the survey (on 26 June 2006). Two follow-up emails were sent to everyone (on day 17 and 26 after the survey was launched), both of which resulted in a significant increase in responses. The web survey was thus available for completion throughout July and August, and it was closed down 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2006.

### Attendance

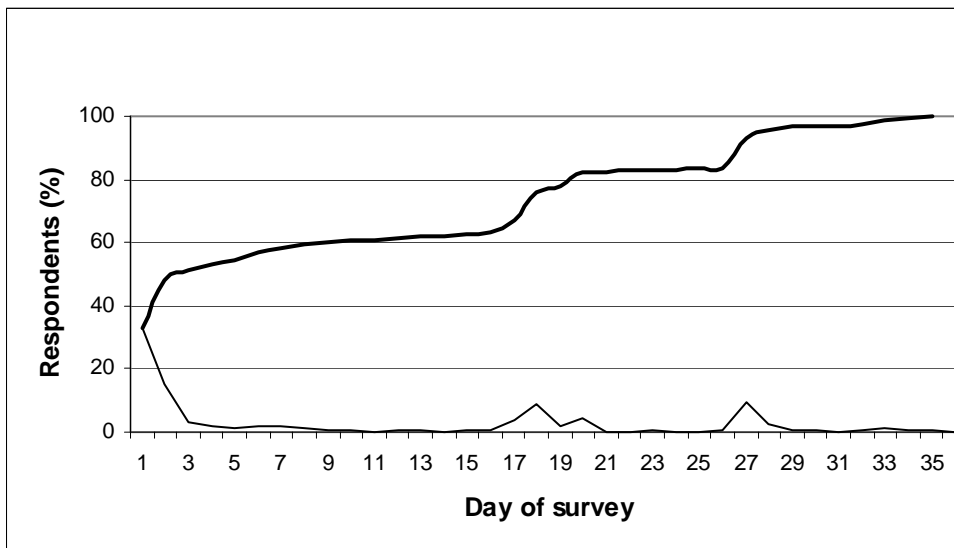
Although the 2005 New York conference had the highest attendance of any ICA conference so far, the Dresden conference attendance was typical of recent conferences. With attendance at 1869, the Dresden conference continued the recent trend towards a larger conference, and countered the past tendency towards lower attendance for conferences held outside North America.

Year and Location	Attendance	Survey N	Response Rate
2006 – Dresden	1869	730	39
2005 – New York	2238	716	32
2004 – New Orleans	1814	127	6
2003 – San Diego	1854	754	41
2002 – Seoul, Korea	1159	251	22
2001 – Washington	1677	318	28
2000 – Acapulco	1118	284	15
1999 – San Francisco	1581	158	10
1998 – Jerusalem	857	195	23
1997 – Montreal	1339	287	22
1996 – Chicago	1404	--	--
1995 – Albuquerque	1329	--	--
1990 – Dublin	1250	--	--
Most recent 10 year average	1553		24
Most recent 5 year average	1790		27

### Survey implementation and response rate

The response rate was acceptable: 730 people responded to the web survey, a response rate of 39%. One third (33%) responded on the first day, 58% within the first week, just over four-fifths (82%) in the first three weeks, and the remaining 18% in the last week. The sample N for most questions was 713-632 (with a low of 632 for questions about the Star Alliance flight program). The survey was offline for one day for unknown reasons, but this problem was quickly spotted and those who contacted us because they had tried to participate in this period were contacted and able to fill out the survey later. This seems not to have lead to a significant loss of respondents.

<sup>1</sup> The survey included two open-ended questions. The responses to these are summarized in the present report. Full free-text answers are available from ICA head office.



Data were transferred to and analyzed in SPSS. This report discusses the questions in relation to topic and compares the answers with those of the 2005 ICA conference in New York. The questionnaire is added as an attachment. Responses for previous conferences used percentages rather than means, and so cannot be easily compared.

### Overall evaluation

#### Q1. How much did you enjoy each of the following aspects of the conference?

(Select one answer on the 7 point scale from 1=not at all to 7=very much)

	Dresden	New York
Location	5.8	6.2
Organization, preparation and information	5.5	5.7
Quality of the hotel, its rooms and facilities	5.3	4.9
Quality of the program, good speakers, papers, etc	5.3	5.2
Social atmosphere, meeting with colleagues	5.5	5.4
Social program, events and outings	5.1	4.5
Accessibility and convenience of travel to the conference city and hotel	4.9	6.0
Average	5.3	5.4

Evaluations are similar for 2006 (Dresden) and 2005 (New York). Although participants liked the location, organization and accessibility more in New York, they were more positive about the quality of the hotel, the program, the social atmosphere and the social events in Dresden.

#### Q2. When you decided to attend the Dresden conference, how important were the following motivations for you personally? (Select one answer on the 7 point scale from not at all to very important)

	Dresden	NY
Improve my academic record through paper presentation or other activities	5.3	5.4
Job market, i.e. get in touch with potential employers/employees/colleagues	3.4	2.8
Keep up with recent research	5.8	4.7
Seek opportunities for research cooperation	4.9	5.6
Meet or socialize with colleagues, friends	5.8	4.9

Job market, keeping up with recent research, and socialization were more important this year than last year, but improving one's academic record and seeking opportunities were more important in New York.

### Role at the conference

#### Q3. Which of the following roles did you play in the Dresden conference?

	Dresden	NY
Award winner	7%	
Chair	18%	19%
Discussant	14%	14%
Divisional/Interest Group/ICA officer, committee or Board Member	8%	7%
Paper Reviewer	23%	
Pre conference (organizer, presenter)	4%	
Presenter (paper, panel, poster; includes non-presenting co-author)	76%	77%
Volunteer (student, staff)	2%	
Attendee (any sessions or meetings, but not any of the prior roles)	31%	
Other (please specify)	3%	8%

This question was considerably expanded this year, but there are no major differences compared with the conference in NY. Presenting research was the major role played, with one third attending but not presenting, and one quarter reviewing papers.

### Conference attendance

#### Q4 How many ICA conferences have you attended before this one in Dresden 2006?

	Dresden	NY
0	32%	17%
1	14%	32%
2	9%	9%
3	8%	6%
4	5%	6%
5	4%	5%
6 to 9	12%	11%
10 or more	15%	15%

Notably, for one third of participants, this was their first ICA conference. There were considerably more first-time participants in Dresden than there were in New York, where most had participated once before. Still, around half of delegates at both conferences had not attended before more than once.

#### Q5. Which of the following events at the Dresden conference did you attend? (other than those for which you had a formal role e.g. presenter/committee member)

	Dresden	NY
Divisional panel	70%	83%
Theme panel (not a plenary session)	59%	67%
Plenary session (not including Poster session or ICA Business meeting)	58%	50%
Plenary poster session	40%	45%
ICA Business meeting with presidential address	14%	24%
Affiliate organizational panel	7%	22%
Division business meeting	43%	53%
Division reception	49%	57%

University/institutional reception	29%	60%
First night's ICA reception	41%	49%
Pre-conference workshop	8%	19%
New members' orientation	5%	8%

Most attended divisional panels, followed by theme panels, plenary sessions, and the poster session. However, there were more participants who attended the division/university receptions and business meetings in New York than in Dresden. Rather few attend pre-conferences, and rather few new members appear to attend the new members' orientation.

**Q6. How many sessions in the conference program were you interested in attending?**

	Dresden	NY
Too many	19%	16%
About right	63%	59%
Too few	15%	22%
No opinion	2%	3%
Average	1.97	2.05

Participants were generally satisfied with the number of sessions that they wanted to attend, in both Dresden and NY.

**Q7. Thinking about the sessions you attended, how many different divisions/interest groups did you go to? (Count theme sessions as a separate group but ignore business meetings/receptions)**

	Dresden	NY
1 I only attended the sessions from one division	6%	10%
2 different ones	21%	24%
3 different ones	42%	36%
4 different ones	21%	15%
5 different ones	6%	5%
I attended sessions from at least 6 different divisions/groups	2%	6%
0 I did not attend any sessions	2%	4%
Average	3.01	2.90

Participants attended slightly greater diversity of sessions, on average, in Dresden than in New York.

**Q8. Please indicate which divisions or interest groups you are a member of:**

	Dresden	NY
Information Systems	12%	11%
Interpersonal Communication	11%	13%
Mass Communication	33%	31%
Organizational Communication	15%	14%
Intercultural and Development Communication	14%	16%
Political Communication	22%	20%
Instructional and Developmental Communication	4%	5%
Health Communication	13%	14%
Philosophy of Communication	9%	6%
Communication and Technology	17%	19%
Popular Communication	8%	10%
Public Relations	10%	8%
Feminist Scholarship	7%	8%
Communication Law and Policy	5%	6%

Language and Social Interaction	6%	6%
Visual Studies	7%	4%
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies	3%	4%
Intergroup Communication	3%	3%
Journalism Studies	15%	11%
Ethnicity and Race in Communication	5%	4%
Game Studies	4%	

It seems that participation from the various divisional/SIG groups was equivalent in Dresden and New York (note that some participants were members of different groups, so the total does not sum to 100%). Attendance figures more or less follow the size of each division or SIG.

### Conference funding

#### Q9. Who made the final decision about whether you got funding to attend the Dresden conference?

	Dresden	NY
You	25%	33%
Chair of your department	25%	26%
Dean/Director of your School/College	21%	21%
Senior professor, mentor	5%	3%
Foundation	3%	4%
Company	1%	2%
Not applicable/I funded my trip personally	12%	11%
Other (please specify)	7%	

Generally, either delegates, their Chair or their Dean decided if they could receive funding to attend. There were more participants in New York who made the final funding decisions themselves than in New York; the distribution of other funding bodies was fairly equivalent.

#### Q10. Which of the following forms of conference participation are sufficient (i.e., if you only did that one) for you to receive travel funding?

	Dresden	NY
Present paper competitive session	71%	73%
Present paper on a panel	56%	58%
Present paper in a competitive poster session	41%	45%
Official discussant	28%	31%
Chair session panel	25%	26%
ICA Board member	24%	20%
Office division, interest group, other unit		21%
Serve on ICA committee		16%

Most participants depend for their funding on presenting a paper in a competitive session or panel.

### Paper submission

#### Q11. For the Dresden conference, what was your personal experience with the online paper submission system? (Select one answer on the 7 point scale from Very poor to Very good)

	Dresden	NY
personal experience with online paper submission system	5.6	5.6

The evaluation of the online paper submission system was largely positive in Dresden and New York.

**Q11a. Briefly, what would have improved your experience with the online paper submission system?**

There were 10 types of comments on how to improve the submission system:

- a) *Technical uploading problems.* There were problems with correcting papers and, especially, abstracts once they had been uploaded. Some indicated that their papers were not recognized as word documents, or were considered to be spam. Another had problems because the references were not visible.
- b) *Panel papers* could not be submitted properly. This was a very frequent comment, as separate panel papers could not be uploaded by panel participants but only through the panel coordinator.
- c) *Downloading problems.* Downloading was considered cumbersome and slow by some. A search function would be appreciated.
- d) *Submission deadlines.* Many commented on the deadline for paper submissions, finding these set too early; people would also like to be able to continue adjusting papers until the day the conference starts.
- e) *Too short a review period.* The reviewers remarked that they had too little time to review papers.
- f) *Quality of the reviews.* Many participants indicated lack of satisfaction with the feedback, especially the reliance on numbers; they would have appreciated more detailed feedback and more accessibility to the feedback online.
- g) *Clearer feedback about acceptance (and in which session) /rejection.* Some people thought their papers were accepted in a panel/paper session and found out later that it was a poster session.
- h) *Reminder emails should be sent out.* Some participants missed the deadlines because they did not know online submission was possible or that there was a deadline. Others, on the contrary, felt that too many erroneous emails were sent out about acceptance and the electronic submission procedure; these should be sent only to those who had not submitted.
- i) *The design of the website was unsatisfactory/outdated.* There were comments about font size, color, navigation and the home page of the website.

**Evaluation of events****Q12 & Q13. How much do you agree with the following descriptions of events at the Dresden conference? (Select one answer on the 7 point scale from Strongly disagree to Strongly agree)**

	Dresden	NY
Dresden was a stimulating conference location	5.5	6.0
The Dresden Conference Center was a good conference site	4.8	4.8
The local organizing committee did a good job in providing special events throughout the conference	5.4	4.7
The e-mail checking service was useful to me	3.9	4.6
The layout of the meeting rooms made it easy to get to sessions	4.5	4.2
The meeting rooms were comfortable	4.1	4.2
Audio visual needs were met effectively	4.7	5.1
The printed program was easy to follow	5.5	5.4
Too many interesting programs were scheduled opposite one another	4.5	4.7
The pre-conference workshops were stimulating and valuable additions to ICA	4.2	4.5
The keynote and plenary sessions were valuable	4.9	4.5
The theme sessions were valuable	5.0	4.8
The quality of the papers I heard at panels was first-rate	4.6	4.8
The quality of the posters I saw at the poster plenary was first-rate	4.3	4.4
Adequate time was available for audience discussions at the end of sessions	4.0	4.1
I was bothered by the number of no shows among panelists on the program	4.3	3.3
The book exhibit area was very useful to me	4.4	5.1

Overall satisfaction for the various aspects of the conference varied from neutral to fairly positive. The Dresden conference was considered better in terms of the local organizing committee, the layout of the meeting rooms, the quality of the key note and plenary sessions and the number of no shows. The New York conference was considered more satisfactory in terms of location, e-mail services, audiovisual provisions, pre-conference workshops, and the book exhibit.

In both years, most criticism attached to the time available for sessions, and the comfort and layout of the meeting rooms. The conference in Dresden received criticism for the email access and the book exhibit. The number of no shows at sessions and the quality of the local organizing committee were seen as considerably improved by comparison with New York.

### Conference location and facilities

**Q14. Has the fact that the 2006 conference took place in Dresden, Germany, made it easy for you to participate, difficult, or did it make no difference compared with previous conferences?** (this question was not asked for the New York conference)

	Dresden
Easier	32%
No difference	36%
More difficult	31%
Average	1.99

There does not seem to be much difference between the convenience of Dresden and New York: for some, it was easier to reach and for others it was more difficult; for the largest group, it was just as easy to participate.

**Q15. Do you prefer conference rooms to be allocated according to....**

	Dresden	NY
Assign same room to same division/interest group (as much as possible)	29%	37%
No preference	29%	18%
Allocate and rotate rooms to best fit the session's requirements	42%	45%

In both Dresden and New York there was a distinct preference for allocating and rotating rooms so that a session's requirements could be met, rather than trying to assign the same room to a particular division/SIG.

### Conference travel

**Q16. What airline did you use to travel to the conference? (questions were not asked for New York)**

	Dresden
American	4%
Delta	3%
Continental	7%
Northwest	7%
United	8%
Lufthansa	29%
British	4%
Land transport (Train, bus, car)	11%
Air Canada	3%
Budget airlines (Easy Jet, Ryanair, German Wings)	6%
KLM	3%
Other	18%

Note. Percentage of the total number of journeys made.

A number of people were annoyed by this question because they came by train or car (11%). The largest proportion of participants traveled some part of their journey by Lufthansa. The budget airlines were as important as the big US-based airlines. The 'other airlines' category is large, and included a range of smaller airlines (e.g. Air France, Czech Airlines, Airlingus, Allitalia, and Thai Airlines). Many people traveled with more than one airline. Clearly, this question could be rephrased depending on the conference location.



**Q17. What class of service did you use?**

	Dresden
Economy	81%
Business	4%
First	1%
No answer	14%

The most common travel experience was by economy class. Those who did not answer this question are very likely to have traveled by means other than air or to have taken different flights and more than one class.

**Q18. Did you know that the Star Alliance Official Airline Network offered a reduction on flights to attend the conference?**

	Dresden
Yes	47%
No	31%
Not sure	10%
No answer	12%

Half of the participants knew about the Star Alliance offer (53% of those who answered the question), a third did not and 10% were not sure. It is likely that some of those who didn't know (or did not answer/were not sure) had no need to know because they were traveling by car or train.

**Q19. Did you purchase the Star Alliance Conventions Plus fare to attend the conference?**

	Dresden
Yes	3%
No	81%
Not sure	3%
No answer	12%

Although 48% knew about the star alliance offer, only 3% (4% of those who answered the question) used or were able to use this offer. It did not seem, therefore, particularly useful to delegates, though many were concerned about the cost of travel.

**Personal details****Q20. Are you...**

	Dresden	NY
Faculty (including emeritus, dept chair, dean, university administrator, etc)	58%	60%
Researcher (coordinator, scientist, director, administrator, not faculty or student)	7%	
Student (undergrad, master, PhD)	31%	31%
Non-University Professional (journalist, publisher, librarian, government official, foundation)	2%	3%
Other	1%	6%

Two thirds of the participants both in Dresden and New York were university faculty members; the other third were mostly students and a few researchers.

**Q21. Gender**

	Dresden	NY
male	50%	47%
female	48%	53%

As in New York there were as many women delegates as there were men.

**Q22. Where do you currently reside?**

	Dresden	NY
Africa	1%	0%
Asia/Pacific	6%	4%
Australia/New Zealand	3%	2%
Central and South America	0%	1%
Europe	31%	19%
Middle East	2%	2%
North America	57%	71%

There were more European participants in Dresden (31%) than in New York (19%), but in both conferences the majority of participants came from North America. Participants from other parts of the world were relatively few.

ICA registration data show that conference registrants came from 53 countries (up from 49 in New York).

**The 20 countries with the most participants were:**

Country	Attendees	
	Dresden	New York
United States	971	1666
Germany	297	94
Netherlands	84	57
United Kingdom	62	62
Israel	35	33
Korea, Republic of	32	27
Switzerland	32	13
Sweden	31	20
Australia	28	31
China	26	*
Canada	24	55
Singapore	23	23
New Zealand	22	*
Japan	18	11
Finland	15	*
Denmark	15	*
Spain	15	11
Belgium	14	15
Taiwan	14	*
Mexico	*	15
Norway	*	14
Hong Kong	*	11

\*Not in 'top 20'

**Q23. Please add any additional comments you have about the Dresden conference in the box below****Participants really valued the following aspects of the Dresden conference:**

- Provision of lunch was great for socializing and helped students out in terms of costs.
- Snacks and drinks during the day very much appreciated.
- Quality of keynote speakers.
- Dresden was a wonderful location.
- Organization was efficient and top quality (bus passes, tours, events, volunteers): especially appreciated were the VW tour, the wine tasting and the Mayor's reception.

- EU participation was appreciated (although lack of Germans).
- Socializing opportunities in open conference centre and during lunch were great.
- Starting times of the conference appreciated (9am instead of 8am in NY).

**However, they considered that there was room for improvement in the following areas:**

**a) Costs (travel, hotels, timing)**

- Hotels were expensive and there was criticism of the staff. ICA could offer a wider range of prices and perhaps student dorms.
- Star Alliance program did not work, either because prices at which discount started were too high (i.e. higher than online fares) or because personnel at airlines did not know about the offer and the process to get the discount was too complex.
- World Cup at the same time as conference was inconvenient and made everything more expensive and difficult to book.

**b) Dresden as conference location and location of hotels**

- Convenience conference city (Dresden was not easily reachable by international air). People requested a location with direct international flights.
- Dresden was according to some boring. Better locations that would have been easier to reach and more exciting: suggestions - Berlin, Koln
- Hotel and conference centre should be combined in one location, participants were too spread out which made socializing difficult and hindered some people with mobility difficulties.
- Pre-conference workshops should be in same city/location.

**c) Quality of facilities (conference centre)**

- Lack of air conditioning and water was most frequently mentioned complaint of all.
- Vegetarian food was not available and there were no restaurants or facilities for food near the conference centre. Many groups people excluded because of meals based on pork (e.g. Hindus, Jews, Muslims).
- Five Computers not enough, bad internet facilities especially the lack of wireless (if there was any, it cost too much)
- No data projector available or the technical equipment did not work in conference rooms. Some rooms did not have light.
- No food/drinks on last day of conference.
- Conference centre was difficult to navigate.
- Conference centre staff rude or unhelpful.

**d) Quality of speakers, presenters and reviewers**

- Reviewing process was unclear and the feedback was not good (reviewers were not well instructed on how to review or not given enough time).
- Some people said they were moved to a different session than they had signed up for and that they turned out to be in a poster session when they thought it would be a paper session.
- There were a lot of no shows in paper presentation sessions and quality of presentations was low. Some commented that they chaired sessions that they found embarrassingly bad.
- Keynote speeches should be available in writing and online/electronic availability of papers should be better searchable and better organized.
- Sessions which were badly timed so that they ran over lunch time, through keynote speeches or sessions with similar focus were held at the same time.
- PR sessions were too crowded while some sessions had only 15 people in a big room, perhaps allocate according to size of division.
- Expand focus of conference to cover non cultural approaches (i.e. empirical, interpersonal, organizational) to communication and to include wider genres: for example include debating sessions and live drama – although another criticized the lack of qualitative cultural approaches and humanistic research.
- The conference was Western/US centered.

**Other suggestions were**

- Recycling badges and reduce material in general.

- Printing names on both sides of badges to guarantee readability.
- Conference schedule to include a list with presenter's email address/contact details.
- Signs outside rooms to know which session is taking place.
- Translation of signs and menus into English.
- Make computers Mac compatible.
- Give map of city and additional information about the region in conference pack.

