

Evaluation of the 2003 Canadian Psychological Association Convention

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This is the third year of systematic evaluation of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) Convention, undertaken by a sub-committee of the Convention Committee. The purpose of this evaluation is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the convention and its operation, in order to establish an empirical foundation for decision-making in future convention planning. As always, the goal is to make the CPA convention an exciting, interesting, educational and social experience for members and non-members alike.

Method

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was a modified version of the closed-ended questionnaire used in 2001 and 2002 (see Appendix A). It was modified to take into account new issues and in response to the suggestions made in the 2002 evaluation report (Veitch, Ross, Charles, & Wells, 2002). All questionnaires were in English. The cost of translation was beyond the means of the subcommittee, and the Hamilton location was deemed to be unlikely to attract a significant number of unilingual francophones.

Procedure

Student volunteers collected data, receiving free convention registration in return. As expected, this proved to be a major improvement over 2002, with a larger sample size resulting.

Data collection took place on Thursday afternoon, Friday and Saturday. Although the 2001 experience suggested that Thursday data came too early (Ross, Gallivan, Schepmyer, & Veitch, 2001), the 2002 experience was that by Saturday afternoon many attendees had dispersed. The new schedule attempted a balance.

Data collectors were assigned to various locations in the convention centre, usually at corridor intersections or 'hubs' near escalators or food service. The team distributed questionnaires using a simple random sampling procedure: every n^{th} person (usually the 5th) was selected as they passed a fixed location during a three-hour shift. CPA Board members, Convention Committee members, and CPA staff were excluded from participation.

The senior authors met with the team to explain the importance of random sampling and how the random sample would be selected.

At the opening ceremonies on the Thursday of the convention, an announcement was made about the evaluation. Attendees were urged to take the time to respond to the questionnaire if they were selected as part of the sample.

If an attendee asked the person distributing the questionnaires for a questionnaire to fill out (i.e., a person who was not part of the random sample) the data were flagged.

Results

Response Rate

One hundred and fifty-four randomly selected persons responded to the questionnaires. A further 33 volunteered to complete the questionnaire. Responses from the 33 people who

volunteered are not included in the results to avoid selection bias. The number of volunteer respondents for each day can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Surveys by date

	<i>Surveys by Date</i>	<i>Valid %</i>
Thursday	62	40.5
Friday	74	48.4
Saturday	17	11.1
Valid	153	
Missing	1	
Total	154	

Sample Comparison to Population

To assess sample bias, we can compare the sample to the population in terms of whether they were students or not, their CPA membership, and to their provinces of origin.

Registration statistics indicate that of the 806 registrants who were true attendees (excluding CPA staff, companions, and exhibitors), 49.3% registered as students (more than the 44% in 2002 but fewer than the 56% in 2001). Of the 148 respondents who responded to the question, 75 (50.7%) indicated that they were students. A chi-square test of goodness-of-fit using the convention registrations for expected values indicates that the sample distribution does not differ significantly from the convention distribution ($\chi^2 = 0.07$, $df=1$, *n.s.*). Of the 153 volunteer respondents to the question about CPA membership, 134 (87.6%) reported being CPA members. This does not differ from the proportion of CPA members among all attendees (710, or 88.1%; $\chi^2 = 0.004$, $df=1$, *n.s.*).

As can be seen in Table 2, most respondents were from Ontario, as were most attendees. Although the distribution does not follow precisely the distribution of convention attendees, a chi-square test of goodness of fit using the registrants' addresses for expected values indicates that the deviation is not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 13.7$, $df=10$, *n.s.*).

Table 2: Geographic distribution of randomly-selected participants.

	<i>Respondents' Province of Work</i>		<i>Attendees' Mailing Addresses</i>	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Alberta	11	8.4	46	5.8
BC	6	4.6	36	4.6
Manitoba	7	5.3	26	3.3
New Brunswick	8	6.1	26	3.3
Newfoundland	0	0	3	0.4
Nova Scotia	9	6.9	30	3.8
Ontario	72	55.0	505	63.8
PEI	0	0	5	0.6
Quebec	10	7.6	62	7.8
Saskatchewan	4	3.1	34	4.3
Territories				
USA	4	3.1	18	2.3
Valid	131		791	
Missing	23		15	
Total	154		806	

We did not ask respondents whether or not they were presenters in the current year; this question might justifiably be added in future years as a further check of the validity of the sample against the population. If the question were worded with options "not a presenter"; "First time presenting as principal author"; "second or greater time presenting as principal author", it would also be possible to compare the sample against the population of first-time presenters as well as overall presenters.

Identity as a Psychologist

In 2003 we asked only about membership in CPA, not about other professional associations, to reduce the length of the questionnaire. As noted above, 88% of respondents were CPA members.

Ninety-one respondents (59.9%) reported membership in one or more CPA Section (of a total of 152 valid responses to this yes/no question), but of these only 84 named at least one section membership. The modal number of sections named was 1, but one person each listed 4, 5, 6, and 10 section memberships.

The CPA section(s) to which respondents belong can be seen in Table 3. The frequency for members in the Student section is particularly noteworthy; although 75 volunteer respondents said that they were students, only 15 reported being members of the Student section. Given that all students are automatically members of this section, it suggests either that some students are unaware of this fact, or do not strongly identify with the section when asked.

Table 3: Number of randomly-selected respondents from each section

<i>Section</i>	<i>Respondents (N)</i>	<i>Registrants' Primary Section (N)</i>
Adult Development and Aging	3	2
Brain and Behaviour		1
Clinical	22	35
Clinical Neuropsychology	2	
Community	4	1
Counselling	4	5
Criminal Justice	2	19
Developmental	7	8
Disaster and Trauma	1	
Psychologists in Education	2	3
Environmental	1	3
Family		
Health	5	5
History and Philosophy	5	4
Industrial/Organizational	15	16
International and Cross-Cultural	7	1
Military	3	3
Perception, Learning and Cognition		
Psychoanalysis	5	
Psychopharmacology		
Religion		
Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity	3	
Social and Personality	12	19
Students	15	4
Teaching	3	2
Women and Psychology (SWAP)	9	8
Interest Group - Psychophysiology		
Total who listed a section	84	139
None identified	70	667

Note. Evaluation respondents may belong to more than one section.

Respondents were asked about their primary identity as a psychologist. This question was rephrased following the 2001 and 2002 evaluations. In 2002 we separated the category "student" as it appeared to cause confusion among students who were uncertain whether to reply according to their nascent career identities, or their current status. Table 5 summarizes the 2003 results.

Table 5: Primary identity as a psychologist

<i>Primary Identity</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Practitioner/public sector	12	8.1
Practitioner-scientist/public sector	50	33.8
Scientist/public sector	43	29.1
Educator/public sector	10	6.8
Other/public sector	25	16.9
Practitioner/private sector	2	1.4
Practitioner-scientist/private sector	4	2.7
Scientist/private sector	1	0.7
Educator/private sector	1	0.7
Valid	148	100
Missing	6	
Total	154	

CPA Convention Attendance

For the first time, specific questions concerning prior CPA Convention attendance were added. These data were scrutinized for differences between those who volunteered and those who were randomly selected. This provided a check on the hypothesis that randomly-selected and volunteer respondents might differ. It is the only question for which the volunteer sample was used.

Table 6 summarizes the results concerning respondents' last previously-attended CPA convention. It is apparent that there were differences between the random sample and those who volunteered, with the random sample disproportionately including first-time attendees. Sampling bias cannot be ruled out as an explanation. The student data collectors might have found it more difficult to intercept a more senior colleague in the crowds, and might have focused attention on the more approachable first-time attendees, who were more likely to be students than not (across the whole sample, random and volunteer responders, Cramer's $V = .50$). If this is true, however, it did not result in an over selection of students (see above).

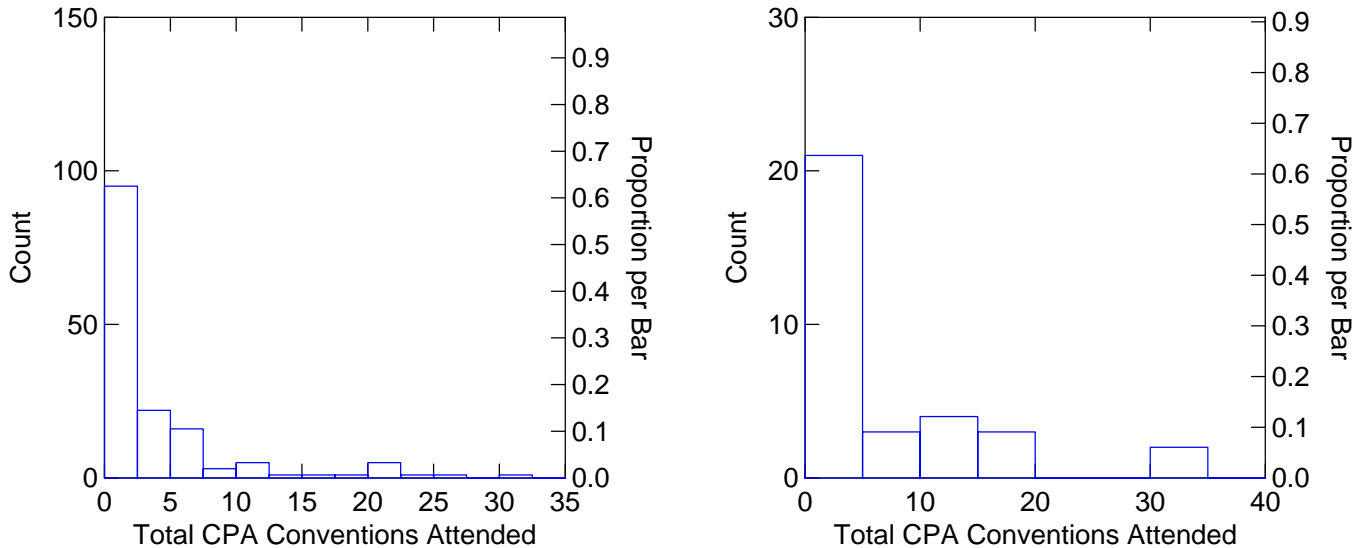
Table 6: Prior CPA Attendance

	<i>Random Sample</i>		<i>Volunteers</i>	
	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percent</i>
First-time attendee in 2003	69	44.8	8	25.0
Last attended in 2002	43	27.9	19	59.4
Last attended in 2001	20	13.0	3	9.4
Last attended in 2000	10	6.5	0	0
Last attended in 1999	0	0	1	3.1
Last before 1999	12	7.8	1	3.1
Valid	154	100	32	100
Missing	0		1	
Total	154		33	

Responses to the question "How many CPA conventions have you previously attended?" were also compared across the set of randomly-selected and volunteer respondents. The Mann-Whitney U test showed that there was a difference between the two sets ($U = 3102.5, p < .05$).

Volunteer respondents had attended more CPA conventions than the randomly selected sample (median = 3, versus median = 1). However, the modal response was 0 for both groups and the maximum was 30 for the random sample and 34 for volunteers.

Figure 1. Distributions of responses to the question "How many CPA conventions have you previously attended?" Left panel: random sample. Right panel: volunteers.



The tendency for junior colleagues to be over-represented among the random sample both justifies the decision to exclude the volunteers (who might have volunteered in order to express specific opinions) and suggests a different sort of bias, in that the random respondents had less experience on which to base judgements of quality.

Reasons for Attending

In the previous year, respondents found it time-consuming and difficult to rank-order their reasons for attending, so in 2003 we asked for a weight to each reason. Despite the change in format, the results (recall that from here on, only data from the random sample are included) were similar to the rankings from 2002 (Table 7): The most important reason was "Learning about advances in my specific area of interest", which shared the highest median and modal response with "Giving presentations/publication credit". Continuing education and networking came next in importance, followed by learning about advances in other areas of psychology, learning about/having input in advocacy, and practical skills / continuing education. Touristic opportunities and association meetings were lowest in importance. Five people gave other reasons and gave them heavy importance ratings:

- establishing a reputation
- poster presentation; pre-convention workshop
- support for Canadian psychology
- see friends
- love the smaller size & ability to interact with Canadians; job opportunities; collaboration

Table 7: Reasons for attending CPA

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Median	Mode
Learning about advances in my specific field of interest	143	4.3	0.85	4	5
Giving presentations/publication credit	145	4.0	1.10	4	5
Learning about advances in other areas of psychology	143	3.5	0.97	4	4
Learn about and have input into advocacy on behalf of science, education and practice	143	3.2	1.01	3	3
Continuing education / building practical skills	142	3.4	1.25	4	4
Networking opportunities	146	3.9	0.88	4	4
Tourist opportunities	143	2.6	1.10	3	2
Association meetings	141	2.4	1.20	2	3
Other	5	4.4	0.55	4	4

Overall Reactions to Convention

As can be seen in Table 8, a bare majority (51%) of the respondents rated the convention as “good” or “excellent.” This is lower than both 2002 and 2001 (65% and 58%, respectively).

Table 8: Overall rating of convention

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Awful	0	
Bad	12	8.1
Okay	61	49.0
Good	68	45.6
Excellent	8	5.4
Valid	149	100
Missing	5	
Total	154	

Respondents were asked if they had attended previous conventions and, if they had, how the present convention compared. (See Table 9). Eighty-five respondents (55% of all randomly-selected respondents) had attended previous conventions and answered this question. Of these 43.5% said that it was the same. However, 34.1% said that it was worse than previous conventions, and 22.3% thought that it was better than previous conventions.

Table 9. If you have been to previous conventions how would you rate the present one?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Much worse	3	3.5
Worse	26	30.6
Same	37	43.5
Better	16	18.8
Much better	3	3.5
Valid	85	
Missing	69	
Total	154	

When asked to compare value to overall cost of the convention, only 1.3% thought the price about right, but 66% thought that it was good or very good value for the cost (Table 10). These responses are polarized in comparison to the 2002 survey.

Table 10: Value for overall cost

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very poor value for the cost	4	2.7
Poor value for the cost	38	25.3
Just about right	2	1.3
Good value for cost	66	44.0
Very good value for cost	33	22.0
Valid	143	
Missing	11	
Total	154	

Most respondents also indicated that they are likely to attend future CPA conventions (Table 11), with 70% in total being "somewhat" or "very" likely, and only 10% unlikely to attend again. Twenty-four individuals provided reasons why they might not attend CPA in future: Six stated that the convention content was too far from their own ("too clinical"; "too applied"; "enjoy presenting to a broader audience more specific to my field"). Four cited poor-quality presentations and poor organization. Four reported that the benefit was too great for the cost. Three were disappointed by what they judged to be poor attendance at the convention. Three said that they would attend in future provided that it was near their city, or if they had a paper to present. One person, probably referring to St. John's in 2004, cited the distance as being too great. The other respondents cited retirement, leaving the field, or being companions.

Table 11. How likely are you to attend future CPA conventions?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very unlikely	4	2.6
Somewhat unlikely	9	5.9
*	2	1.3
Don't know	29	19.1
Somewhat likely	68	44.7
Very likely	40	26.3
Valid	152	
Missing	2	
Total	154	

As might be expected, the overall ratings of this convention were correlated with each other (see Table 12). In addition, those who are more satisfied with the present convention are more likely to plan to attend future conventions, and these correlations are the same size as in 2002. Whereas future attendance was not related to opinions about the current convention in relation to past conventions in 2002, there was a small correlation in 2003.

Table 12: Spearman correlations between measures of satisfaction and plans to attend future conventions

		Overall rating	Value for cost	Been to previous how rate present?
Value for cost	<i>Correlation</i>	.45		
	<i>N</i>	149		
Been to previous how rate present?	<i>Correlation</i>	.51	.35	
	<i>N</i>	85	85	
Likely to attend future conventions?	<i>Correlation</i>	.37	.33	.16
	<i>N</i>	149	150	85

Programme Quality

Respondents' ratings of the quality of the various presentations can be seen in Table 13, with the associated descriptive statistics in Table 14. More people indicated that they had attended symposia and poster sessions. Symposia received high ratings for their quality. Poster sessions received the lowest ratings of quality, although the modal rating was "good". Invited talks received the highest ratings but were attended by fewer people than were symposia or poster sessions. Few people in the randomly selected sample had attended workshops, conversation sessions, or the pre-convention workshops, but they rated these as being of high quality. The pattern of ratings is similar to the 2002 data, although there is a slight lowering, with a few people giving "poor" or "very poor" ratings, whereas there were none in the small sample from the 2002 convention.

Table 13: Ratings of the quality of presentations

% of attendees:	Very poor	Poor	Okay	Good	Very Good	Did not attend (N)	Valid N	Missing (N)
Invited talks		4.1	8.1	33.8	54	47	121	33
Symposia		3.3	12.4	37.2	47	16	137	17
Posters	2.5	5.8	25.6	43.8	22.3	16	137	17
Workshops		9.1	18.2	36.4	36.4	91	113	40
Conversation Sessions		6.9	17.2	39.7	36.2	59	117	37
Pre-convention workshops		5	10	35	50	92	112	42

Table 14: Ratings of the quality of presentations

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Median	<i>N</i>
Invited talks	4.4	0.81	5	74
Symposia	4.3	0.81	4	121
Posters	3.8	0.94	4	121
Workshops	4.0	0.98	4	22
Conversation Sessions	4.1	0.91	4	58
Pre-convention workshops	4.3	0.87	4.5	20

Accommodation

As Table 15 shows, the majority of respondents stayed in the Sheraton hotel, which was the official CPA hotel. A large number stayed at home and commuted, some from Toronto and others from points south or west of Hamilton, and a sizeable percentage stayed with family or friends, making staying in a home the modal response. The data for the cost of accommodation are consistent with this although it appears that some people in free accommodation might not have responded to the question (Table 16). The modal response was still "paid nothing" followed by "\$101-\$150" per night, which was the rate at the Sheraton. Seventeen percent rated the quality of their accommodation negatively; from the lower response rate one assumes that only those who paid for their accommodation answered the question (Table 17). Slightly over 45 % felt that the accommodation was overpriced relative to its quality.

Table 15: Accommodation choices

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Sheraton	44	30.6
McMaster U residence	14	9.7
Other hotel	27	18.8
With Family or Friends	22	15.3
Commuted / Home	37	25.7
Valid	144	
Missing	10	
Total	154	

Table 16: Cost of accommodations

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Nothing	42	32.8
\$50 or less	14	10.9
\$51-\$100	20	15.6
\$101-\$150	45	35.2
\$151-\$200	6	4.7
> \$200	1	0.8
Valid	128	
Missing	26	
Total	154	

Table 17: Quality of your accommodations?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Awful	8	7.6
Bad	10	9.5
Okay	37	35.3
Good	22	21
Excellent	28	26.7
Valid	105	
Missing	49	
Total	154	

Table 18: Accommodation cost relative to quality?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Too low	1	1.1
A bit low	3	3.2
About right	47	50
A bit high	32	34
Too high	11	11.7
Valid	94	
Missing	60	
Total	154	

Convention Venue

In 2003, after two years of conventions on university campuses, the CPA convention returned to a convention centre. The ratings of this location as a convention venue were very good, with over 60% rating it as "good" or "excellent". In 2001 and 2002, the two university campuses received these ratings from fewer than 40% of respondents (Veitch et al., 2001; Veitch et al., 2002). Although few negative ratings were reported in any of the three years, it is evident that this convention centre was preferable as a site to either of the two university campuses.

Table 19: Overall convention venue

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Awful		
Bad	10	6.7
Okay	46	30.7
Good	75	50
Excellent	19	12.7
Valid	150	
Missing	4	
Total	154	

Respondents were also asked two open-ended questions about the features of the convention venue - the best and the worst features. One-hundred and seventeen of the randomly-selected respondents listed at least one good feature; a few listed as many as three. Of these, the most-frequently mentioned features were the interior layout of the convention centre (31), the central city location (21), the connection between the hotel and the convention centre (19), and the quality of the meeting rooms (16). Eleven praised the overall quality of the venue and its suitability for the convention. No other feature was mentioned by more than ten people as a good feature of the venue.

In response to the query for bad features of the venue, 104 of the randomly-selected individuals answered. Of these, 12 did not provide negative answers: they praised the overall quality of the facility. Of the 92 who provided critical answers, 21 comments concerned the temperature (either too cold or too hot). Eighteen respondents cited "Hamilton" as a bad feature of the 2003 convention. Thirteen expressed dissatisfaction with the availability of food, its cost, and the lack of coffee and tea as part of the registration. No other single item was named by more than 10 people.

We also asked directly which type of venue would be the better choice for future CPA conventions. Hotels and convention centres are the preference of 45% of the sample, while university campuses are preferred by ~20%. However, a large percentage are undecided (Table 20).

Table 20: Better venue choice for future conventions

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Hotel	25	18.8
Convention Centre	35	26.3
University Campus	27	20.3
No preference	46	34.6
Valid	133	
Missing	21	
Total	154	

For the first time we asked participants to rate the importance of various considerations in convention site selection (Tables 21-26). All were rated on scales from 1 - 5, in which lower numbers reflect lower importance. Although all of the considerations were considered to be important by large numbers of people, a pattern is evident from the mean scores. Overall it appears that convenience is the dominant consideration. The highest mean scores were given to having convention activities all in one building, close to hotel accommodations, and in an easily-accessible city. People appear to be more focused on the convention than on the city venue, with lower importance given to being close to local attractions and being in an interesting city.

Having cheap accommodations was important to 66% of respondents overall (Table 23). As one might expect it was more important to the student respondents than to others, although 48% of non-students also placed importance on it.

Table 21: All convention activities in one building

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very unimportant	2	1.3
Unimportant	2	1.3
Neither important nor unimportant	7	4.7
Important	59	39.6
Very Important	79	53
Valid	149	
Missing	5	
Total	154	
Mean = 4.42		
SD = 0.76		

Table 22: Hotel accommodations close to the main convention venue

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very unimportant	1	0.7
Unimportant	2	1.4
Neither important nor unimportant	10	6.8
Important	60	40.5
Very Important	75	50.7
Valid	148	
Missing	6	
Total	154	
Mean = 4.39		
SD = 0.73		

Table 23: Cheap hotel accommodations (near or far)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Student</i>	<i>Student</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Other</i>
			<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Very unimportant	6	4.2	1	1.4	5	7.1
Unimportant	13	9.2	4	5.6	9	12.9
Neither important nor unimportant	29	20.4	7	9.7	22	31.4
Important	67	47.2	38	52.8	29	41.4
Very Important	27	19.0	22	30.6	5	7.1
Valid	142		72		70	
Missing	12					
Total	154					
Mean = 3.68						
SD = 1.02						

Table 24: Close to local attractions

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very unimportant	3	2.0
Unimportant	18	12.2
Neither important nor unimportant	39	36.5
Important	68	46.3
Very Important	19	12.9
Valid	1147	
Missing	7	
Total	154	
Mean = 3.56		
SD = 0.94		

Table 25: In an interesting city

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very unimportant	6	4.0
Unimportant	8	5.4
Neither important nor unimportant	42	28.2
Important	53	35.6
Very Important	40	26.9
Valid	149	
Missing	5	
Total	154	
Mean = 3.76		
SD = 1.03		

Table 26: Accessible city (Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very unimportant	2	1.4
Unimportant	6	4.1
Neither important nor unimportant	20	13.5
Important	72	48.6
Very Important	48	32.4
Valid	148	
Missing	6	
Total	154	
Mean = 4.07		
SD = 0.86		

Six people added other considerations and rated them either "important" or "very important". Three overlapped with "interesting city": "somewhere I haven't been"; "beautiful locale"; "try having the Presidential reception in an interesting locale". One overlapped with "accessible city": "direct flights available from major centres".

Other Comments

Some of the open-ended comments did not directly relate to the question asked, but provide insight into issues that were important to the respondents. These primarily concern idiosyncratic problems that arose at the convention, but they are worthy of note lest they become recurring problems:

- Two individuals reported discourteous behaviour at the registration desk and slow, inefficient registration.
- One person complained of not receiving registration confirmation or directions from CPA prior to the convention.
- One person highly rated the importance of "services in French" in response to the venue importance questions.
- One requested an easier process for online registration as an important consideration.

Discussion

Opinions of the 2003 CPA Convention

Overall, the news remains good. The CPA convention consistently has received high ratings for programme quality and value for cost in the three years for which there were systematic evaluations. In 2003, with the return to a convention centre/hotel venue, ratings of the quality of the venue were also higher. Most respondents indicated a high likelihood of return and some wrote in their delight at an opportunity in 2004 to visit Newfoundland.

Nonetheless, there is some evidence of greater polarity of opinion and higher dissatisfaction among at least a subset of respondents. There were somewhat more low ratings for most items, and more critical open-ended comments about both the content and the location of the convention. Although the convention centre venue won praise, the city of Hamilton did not.

Recommendations for Future Convention Selection

The data provide guidance for the Convention Committee in its selection of future convention cities and venues. From two directions of questioning ("Why do you attend?" and "What are important considerations?") it appears that attendees at the convention are more focused on the convention and its benefits to them and their careers than they are to the touristic possibilities in the convention city. They want to be able to get to the convention easily, and they want the convention facilities for both accommodation and meetings to be convenient. While at the convention the availability of food service very close to the meeting rooms is very important. There is no lunch break in the schedule so there is limited time to seek nourishment. However, attendees also want to be not too far from local amenities such as restaurants. In many cities this will mean a hotel or convention centre linked to a hotel, although a downtown university might also fit this description. The desire for ease of travel might limit the number of possible cities, although this will depend on developments in the Canadian air travel industry.

Recommendations for Future Evaluations

The student volunteers who collected the data in 2003 received a fee waiver for their assistance (as did other student volunteers). Some reported that the 3-hour shifts took them away from too much convention activity, or that they were too long at the task. Nonetheless, overall the strategy of incorporating the recruitment of these volunteers into the pool of other student volunteers was an effective one, with more volunteers and more data resulting. Scheduling of the training session remained problematic because the student volunteers had no single time of general availability. Direct, one-on-one instruction from one of the researchers was more useful, although even better would be to have some e-mail interaction and instruction in advance of the convention, followed by the one-on-one on-site.

The shorter questionnaire was more effective than in previous years in that there were few unfinished questionnaires and few complaints about its length. There appeared to be little confusion concerning the meaning of questions following the choice to leave out the problematic ones from prior years. Additional questions about whether or not the respondent was a presenter would be helpful.

The effort involved in analyzing the data and writing the report proved to be the biggest problem in 2003. After three years of evaluations, fatigue set in among the subcommittee. A rotation of responsibility for this activity would ensure its continuance.

Conclusions

The data for the 2001, 2002, and 2003 conventions show a consistent pattern of relatively high ratings overall and pockets of dissatisfaction with venues and locations. The people who attend CPA conventions appear to be largely contented with the convention experience. This rosy view, however, is limited in that it does not consider the unsettling historical trends of reduced convention attendance despite rising membership (800-900 is normal today, but 1400 was more usual through the 1980s). The next step in improving the CPA convention experience for all CPA members should be to probe the reasons why non-attenders choose not to attend, and to attempt to determine a course of action that would bring these members of the Canadian psychology community to the annual psychology party. A survey by mail, Internet, or e-mail during the year, rather than during the convention, is recommended as the best use of limited Convention Committee resources during the coming year.

References

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Appendix A
2003 Evaluation Questionnaire

Evaluation of the Canadian Psychological Association Convention
Hamilton Convention Centre, Hamilton, ON
June 12-14, 2003

Interviewer: _____ R V

Date: _____

1. In which province/state do you work?

2. Do you belong to any CPA Section(s)? Yes No
If "Yes" please list the section(s) to which you belong.

3. Are you a CPA member? Yes No

4. Are you a registered as a student? Yes No

5. We are interested in your primary identity as a psychologist. Would you categorize yourself primarily as a (**check one only**):

	Publicly funded organization (e.g., hospitals, universities, government – includes students)	Private Sector
Practitioner		
Scientist- Practitioner		
Scientist		
Educator		
Other		

6. Please circle the appropriate answer. When was the last CPA convention that you attended?

Never before Before 1999 1999 2000 2001 2002

7. How many CPA conventions have you previously attended? _____ (please write the number here)

8. We'd like to know why people attend conventions. Each of the following items is a possible reason for attending a convention. Please use the following scale to indicate the importance to you of each one.

1	2	3	4	5
Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Important	Very Important

- _____ Learning about advances in my specific field of interest
- _____ Giving presentations/publication credit
- _____ Learning about advances in other areas of psychology
- _____ Learn about and have input into advocacy on behalf of science, education and practice
- _____ Continuing education / building practical skills
- _____ Networking opportunities
- _____ Tourist opportunities
- _____ Association meetings
- _____ Other: _____

Overall Ratings

9. Overall, how would you rate the present convention? (Please circle one)

Awful	Bad	Okay	Good	Excellent
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10. In terms of value for overall cost, how would you rate the present convention (when you take into account the cost of registering for the convention, accommodations, and meals.)?

Very poor value for cost	Poor value for the cost	Just about right	Good value for cost	Very good value for cost
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11. *If you have attended previous CPA conventions*, how would you compare this one to previous ones?

Much worse	Worse	Same	Better	Much Better
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12. How likely is it that you will attend future CPA conventions?

Very unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Don't know	Quite likely	Very likely
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If unlikely, can you tell us why?

Convention Programme Activities

13. How would you rate the quality of the presentations you attended?
 (Please use checkmarks in the appropriate boxes)

	Very poor	Poor	Okay	Good	Very good	Haven't attended
Symposia/paper sessions						
Posters						
Conversation sessions						
Invited talks						
Workshops						
Pre-convention workshops						

Location

Accommodations

14. Where did you stay while at the convention?

15. How much did your accommodations cost per night? (Please indicate an amount, even if you did not pay it yourself.)

Nothing \$50 or less \$51-\$100 \$101-\$150 \$151-\$200 > \$200

16. How would you rate the quality of your accommodations while at the convention?

Awful Bad Okay Good Excellent

17. How would you rate the cost of your accommodations compared to the quality?

Too low A bit low About right A bit high Too high

Venue (Hamilton Convention Centre)

18. What is the best feature of this physical location for the convention? (e.g., layout, places to meet colleagues, seating, temperature, lighting, etc.)

19. What is the worst feature?

20. How would you rate the overall quality of the convention venue (e.g., layout, places to meet colleagues, seating, temperature, lighting, etc.)?

Awful Bad Okay Good Excellent

Future Conventions

21. Which is a better choice of location for the CPA Convention?

hotel convention centre university campus no preference

22. Each of the following items is a consideration in choosing a convention site. Please use the following scale to indicate the importance to you of each one.

1	2	3	4	5
Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Important	Very Important

- _____ All convention activities in one building
- _____ Hotel accommodations close to the main convention venue
- _____ Cheap hotel accommodations (whether near or far from the convention venue)
- _____ Convention and hotel close to interesting local attractions (usually a city centre)
- _____ Convention in an interesting city
- _____ Convention in an easily-accessible city (i.e., Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver)
- _____ Other: _____

Thank you for completing this evaluation!

***Nous regrettons que ce sondage ne soit pas disponible en français.
La traduction coûterait trop cher pour un congrès ayant lieu dans une région anglophone du Canada.***