

# Readers Give Valuable Feedback in *Bar Journal* Survey

**T**he verdict is in and the news is mostly good! Almost all who responded to the recent *Michigan Bar Journal* readership survey say they regularly read or browse the magazine and a majority find it to be well written, informative, timely, and wide-ranging in coverage. Readers were also pleased with changes in the design, content, and size of the *Journal*. Three readers in five prefer the current design of the *Journal* to the previous black-and-white version. Content-wise, two thirds of all respondents want the *Journal* to continue about the same ratio of theme issues to general issues.

Other survey highlights show that

- State Bar members most often read the *Journal* for articles and information of interest, updates on changes and developments in the law, and updates or changes in practices and procedures.
- The average time spent reading the *Journal* is 29.1 minutes.
- Members are most likely to read the "Orders of Discipline and Disability," "From the Michigan Supreme Court," "Plain Language," and "In Memoriam."
- The majority of readers save issues of the *Journal* for future reference.
- Readers were less likely to agree that the information in *Journal* articles was valuable as it related to their own practice and personal development. There was also some criticism that the *Journal* was not scholarly enough.
- Two-thirds receive the *e-Journal* and one-third receive the Member Newsletter, which provides easy access to current law-related news. The majority find these online resources useful.
- Nearly half of all respondents visit the State Bar's website at least once a month. A similar number visit it several times a year or less.
- Two in five readers use the *Journal's* advertisements as a resource when looking for

information on products, services, or job opportunities.

A printable copy of the survey can be found at [www.michbar.org/publications/bjsurvey.pdf](http://www.michbar.org/publications/bjsurvey.pdf). The survey, the most comprehensive ever undertaken by the *Journal*, was conducted by Digital Research Incorporated, an independent marketing research company located in Kennebunk, Maine. The printing was done in-house at the Bar to reduce costs. Six thousand State Bar members were randomly selected in March–April of 2002 to participate in the study. Data was collected through a survey mailed to 3,000 members and a supplemental online survey e-mailed to another 3,000 members. By surveying both groups, *Journal* staff and the *Bar Journal* Advisory Board hoped to gain some insight into whether any differences exist between what our "wired" members think about the *Journal* as compared to the views of our general membership. A total of 1,206 State Bar members responded, for an overall response rate of 20.1 percent. A sample this size is considered accurate to plus or minus 2.8 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

"With so many decisions confronting us as a result of Bar restructuring, budgetary pressures, and cascading technological changes, it was time to use a professionally designed and administered survey to obtain reliable data that could serve as a touchstone for the *Bar Journal* Advisory Board, and indeed, for the State Bar itself, for the next few years, when so much change and innovation will occur," noted Frederick Baker Jr., chairperson of the *Journal's* Advisory Board.

Baker also pointed to some surprises in the findings, such as that "75 percent of those surveyed reported having read or browsed all four of the most recent monthly issues; that 95 percent reported that they had read or browsed the book in general; that a much higher percentage of the group surveyed by regular mail (almost double) responded than of the group surveyed by e-mail; and that such a high percentage of the 6,000 members surveyed were interested enough in the *Journal* to respond (over 20 percent of the total contacted, which our consultant tells us is unusually high, especially without follow-up contact or any "incentive," which we could not afford.) This tells me that our members care enough about the *Journal* to take the time to give us some guidance, for which we are grateful."

Nancy Brown, the editor of the *Michigan Bar Journal* for 25 years, stressed that the magazine would capitalize on its strengths by emphasizing the diversity of its content, maintaining a well-organized layout, and setting high standards for writing. "We will also continue to work on providing information that members can use in their daily practices and we urge them to remain interested and involved readers of the magazine by writing in and voicing their opinions," she added. The managing editor of the *Bar Journal* is Valerie Robinson. Amy Ellsworth is copy editor and Blue Pencil Creative Group, Limited, in Holt, is responsible for the graphic design. ♦

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